

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

Doctrine of Kenosis

"Kenosis" is derived from the Greek word "KENOO" which means to empty oneself or to deprive oneself of a proper function, **Phi 2:7a**.

The True Humiliation of the Incarnation.

During the dispensation of the hypostatic union, our Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes in compliance with the Father's plan for the Incarnation and the First Advent. This means that Jesus Christ did not use the attributes of His divine nature to benefit Himself, to provide for Himself, to glorify Himself, or to act independently of the plan of God for the Church-age by any compromise of the spiritual life. One compromise of the human nature of Jesus Christ to the spiritual life and there would not be any spiritual life in the Church-age.

The objectives of the dispensation of the hypostatic union were related to the human nature of Jesus Christ. To resist temptation, the human nature of Jesus Christ must not call on the divine nature for help. He had to use the four mechanics of the spiritual life to maintain His human perfection and to be qualified to go to the Cross and be judged for the sins of the world. During the dispensation of the hypostatic union, our Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes in compatibility with His own objectives and purpose in living among men with their limitations. By so doing, He established in His humanity a spiritual life which is the precedent for the Church-age. Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes, but certain functions of deity continued to function, such as holding the universe together. Jesus Christ gave up the independent exercise of His divine attributes only during the dispensation of the hypostatic union. He did not give up His divine attributes - that is a heresy.

During the dispensation of the hypostatic union, our Lord veiled the preincarnate glory of His deity by giving up the outward appearance of God and voluntarily taking on Himself the form of man. This means that the glory of Christ was veiled, but never surrendered. In fact, this glory was temporarily revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration, and at Gethsemane there was just a flash of that glory. **Mat 17:1-5** *And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'* While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, *'This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!'* There was a flash of this glory also in **Joh 18:6** *When therefore He said to them, I am He, they drew back, and fell to the ground.*

Even though the humanity of Christ in the hypostatic union was perfect and impeccable, nevertheless, the deity of Christ was united with unglorified humanity. Jesus Christ surrendered no attributes of His deity. This is called the doctrine of the humility of Christ. The union of Christ to unglorified humanity is a necessary factor of humiliation. While the deity of Christ was united to a perfect true **humanity, He was still subject to distress, weakness, pain, sorrow, limitation, and to more temptations than we will ever face, Heb 4:15.**

It is here we find the truth of the humiliation of the First Advent. He solved these problems from the spiritual life of His humanity by the use of the problem-solving devices. The glorification of the humanity of Christ was not completed until He was resurrected, ascended, and was seated at the right hand of the Father. The essence of our Lord's deity is composed of the sum total of His divine attributes, so that a change of attribute would necessarily involve a change of essence, and this is impossible since our Lord is immutable. Therefore, during the hypostatic union, no attribute of

our Lord's divine nature was changed. There was no suppression of divine essence. In the hypostatic union, the divine and human natures are united without transfer of attributes. The divine nature of Christ was not changed by the Incarnation, not changed by being voluntarily restricted. No divine attributes were transferred to His humanity and no attributes of humanity were transferred to His deity.

Infinity cannot be transferred into the finite without destroying infinity. The attributes of deity cannot bleed over into humanity and the attributes of humanity cannot bleed over into deity. To rob God of a single attribute of His deity would destroy His divine nature. To rob the humanity of Christ of a single attribute of humanity would destroy His humanity in the hypostatic union. Kenosis is based on the fact that the union of the deity of Christ to unglorified but true humanity is a necessary factor in His humiliation. This is why He taught us in **Joh 15:20** "*A slave is not greater than his master.*" He said in **Joh 15:13** "*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*" **1Jo 3:16-17** "*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?*"

The doctrine of Kenosis recognizes that during the dispensation of the hypostatic union, our Lord voluntarily restricted the independent use of His divine attributes for the execution of God the Father's plan, will, and purpose for the Incarnation. He did this in compliance with the Father's plan for the strategic victory of the angelic conflict. For the plan for the Incarnation not only called for the judgment of our sins, the provision of eternal salvation for all members of the human race, but simultaneously for the strategic victory of the angelic conflict. Under the true doctrine of Kenosis, our Lord became true humanity in order to fulfill the Father's plan for the dispensation of the hypostatic union. The Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily took on Himself true humanity in order to redeem mankind from sin, in order to propitiate God the Father, and to reconcile mankind to God. During the Incarnation, Jesus Christ did not exercise the independent use of His own divine attributes even

once, either to benefit Himself, to provide for Himself, or to glorify Himself.

The Manifestation of Kenosis in our Lord's Evidence Testing.

The true doctrine of Kenosis is illustrated by the humanity of Christ in facing evidence testing, **Mat 4:1-10**. In all three tests, He utilized the power of the Word provided by the omnipotence of the Father and the power of the Spirit provided in the predesigned plan of God (PPOG) for His life.

The first test illustrates the principle. In the first test, **Mat 4:3-4**, Jesus had gone forty days without food and was extremely hungry. The humanity of Christ was tempted in relationship to the delegated power of omnipotence of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord used doctrine learned in the PPOG to solve the problem. He did not use His omnipotence to turn the stones into bread. In His state of extreme hunger, Satan said to Him, **Mat 4:3** *If you are the Son of God [and you are], command these stones to be turned into bread.*

Jesus Christ as God is infinite, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, and the Creator of the universe, which Satan recognized. Our Lord had the power to turn the entire universe into bread, but under the doctrine of kenosis, He did not use His omnipotence independently of the Father. He refused to function independently of the Father's plan. He refused to rely upon His own omnipotence at any time during the incarnation. The false doctrine says He surrendered His omnipotence; this is not true at all. He had it all the time; He simply did not use it. He used only the omnipotence of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Our Lord continued to be hungry, and met Satan's temptation with the quotation from **Deu 8:3** *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."* By this, our Lord established the fact that Bible doctrine had #1 priority in His life, and He used the power of Bible doctrine.

The temptation of Satan was designed to lure the humanity of Christ away from reliance upon the omnipotence of the Father for His logistical grace, and upon the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit inside the PPOG. Had our Lord used His own omnipotence to turn

the stones into food, He would have operated independently of the Father's plan. His humanity would have received food, but He would never go to the cross. Our Lord used Bible doctrine to meet the test, the doctrine He had learned inside the PPOG. For according to **Luk 2:52**, our Lord "*grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*" That is a reference to His humanity inside the PPOG for His life.

Therefore, in kenosis, the humanity of Christ in hypostatic union voluntarily restricted the independent use of divine attributes, including omnipotence, in compliance with the Father's plan for the Incarnation. Instead, our Lord's humanity depended upon two categories of divine omnipotence, which had never before been available on such a grand scale: the omnipotence of the Father in logistical grace support, and the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit only inside the PPOG. This is why our Lord did not use His own omnipotence to turn stones into bread, but instead used Bible doctrine metabolized under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The False Doctrine of What Kenosis Means.

The traditional view says that the relative divine attributes of Christ were surrendered during the First Advent. Kenotic theologians hold that the Logos (Jesus Christ), though retaining His divine self-consciousness and His imminent attributes (holiness, love, and truth), surrendered His relative attributes (omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence). The Gnostic view denies that Christ had a real body or that His body was made of some heavenly substance instead of human flesh. The Lutheran view denies that the incarnation involved any humiliation. All of them are absolutely and unequivocally wrong. It is impossible for deity to surrender an attribute without changing the character of the essence from which it came. For example, to remove any color from light destroys light. **Mal 3:6** "*For I, the Lord, do not change.*" **Heb 13:8** says, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.* The point is that God cannot change; therefore, to rob God of any attribute would destroy His deity. If Christ did not possess all the attributes of divine essence, then He did not possess true deity in the first place. It is impossible to subtract any attribute without destroying the total

essence. Therefore, there is no logical basis for distinguishing between relative attributes and absolute attributes as being more or less essential to the deity of Christ like the Kenotic theologians do. The absolute attributes imply the necessity of the relative attributes. There are three categories of absolute attributes: Spirituality, Infinity, and Perfection.

Spirituality includes the life and personality of God.
Infinity includes self-existence, immutability and His unity.
Perfection includes His holiness, truth, and love.

The relative attributes of God include:
Attributes related to time and space: eternity and immensity.
Attributes related to creation: omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence.
Attributes related to moral beings: veracity and faithfulness, which are related to His truth; mercy and goodness, which are related to His love; and justice and righteousness, which are related to His holiness.

If one category of attributes is necessary for deity, it logically follows that all others are also necessary. In fact, the purpose of the Gospel of John is to prove the deity of Christ, that He remained deity during His incarnation, that omnipresence continued in the flesh, **Joh 1:48, 3:13**.

The True Concept of Kenosis.

During the First Advent, Jesus Christ was both undiminished deity and true humanity in one person. Therefore, as undiminished deity, Christ did not surrender His divine attributes or empty His deity. However, Christ voluntarily restricted the independent use of His relative attributes in compliance with the Father's plan for the Incarnation. This was the issue in His wilderness temptations. Therefore, Christ did not use His divine attributes for His own glory. He didn't give up His deity, but voluntarily surrendered the independent expression of that deity when it would it would hinder the Father's plan. To execute the Father's plan for the First Advent, the humanity of Christ relied on the PPOG, logistical grace, the

ministry of God the Holy Spirit, and the Bible doctrine in His soul. Consequently, the independent expression of His deity and the independent exercise of His divine attributes was not "a gain to be seized and held," so that the Father's plan for the First Advent would be neutralized. Christ voluntarily took on Himself the form of a servant in order to redeem man from sin, reconcile man to God, and propitiate the Father. In fulfilling the mission of the First Advent, Jesus Christ did not exercise His divine attributes to benefit Himself, to provide for Himself, or to glorify Himself.

The Factors of Kenosis.

Christ gave up the outward appearance of God, but not the essence of God, **Phi 2:7**. Christ voluntarily took upon Himself *"the likeness of mankind," Phi 2:7*. For this reason He prayed for glorification of His true humanity, **Joh 17:4-5** *"I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."* Jesus Christ had not emptied His deity or His divine glory, but at that point He had not yet achieved the strategic victory of the angelic conflict. Therefore in **Joh 17:5**, Christ was praying for battlefield victory for His humanity, not for restoration of His divine glory, which had never been taken from Him. Part of the kenosis is the sustaining ministry of God the Holy Spirit to the humanity of Christ. Isaiah prophesied that a power system would come, i.e., that God the Holy Spirit would indwell a human and fill the soul. Jesus Christ was the first one to receive this ministry. **Isa 11:1-3, 42:1, 61:1. Isa 11:1-3** *"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;" Isa 42:1* *"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. Isa 61:1* *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the*

afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners." This ministry of the Holy Spirit is related to the virgin birth in **Mat 1:20; Psa 40:6; Heb 10:5**. Christ was constantly filled with the Spirit from birth, **Joh 3:34**. The filling of the Holy Spirit is related to the baptism of Jesus, **Mat 3:13-17**. It is related to His public ministry, **Mat 12:18, 28; Luk 4:14-15, 17-18, 21**. The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit sustained Jesus Christ while bearing our sins on the cross, **Heb 9:14**. The Holy Spirit's ministry to Christ is continued as the agent in resurrection, **Rom 8:11; 1Pe 3:18-19**. This same ministry and power is transferred to the royal family, **Joh 7:38-39, 16:13-14; 2Co 3:1-3; Eph 3:16-17**.

In the doctrine of Kenosis it is important to note that the two natures of Christ maintain their complete identity through being joined in personal union forever. The characteristics of His human nature belong to the human part of Him; the characteristics of His divine nature belong to the God-part of Him. Each nature has its own attributes that adhere to that nature. In other words, there is no mixture of the two natures.

He is never half-God and half-man or half man and half-God.

Sometimes He operates from His human nature only.

Sometimes He operates from His divine nature only.

And sometimes He operates from both natures together but not mixed.

For example, in His humanity He became hungry, **Mat 4:2** but in His deity He never hungers, **Joh 6:35**. In His humanity, He became thirsty, **Joh 19:28**, but in His deity He is the water of life, **Rev 22:17**.

In His humanity, He would say such things as **Joh 14:28** *"For the Father is greater than I."* And then in His deity He would say **Joh 10:30** *"I and the Father are one."* **Joh 5:23** *"in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."*

Sometimes He operates from both natures together but not mixed when He says such things like **Joh 14:6** *"I am the way, and the truth,*

and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." This is reason why there are so many cults out who deny the deity of Christ is because they don't understand this doctrine, or the doctrine of the hypostatic union, trinity, and the deity of TLJC. The point is that the human nature in Christ always remains the human nature and the divine nature always remains the divine nature. This is why we can refer to Him as the God-man.

In His deity He has omniscience, **Joh 2:25**, but His limitation of knowledge is concluded from the fact that Christ could be amazed, **Mat 8:10**.

In His deity He could not be tempted, Jam 1:13; in His humanity He could be tempted, **Heb 4:15**.

In His deity He is the giver of faith; in His humanity He possessed faith, **Heb 12:2**.

He has all knowledge, yet He is said to have learned in **Luk 2:52**; **Heb 5:8**. In **Mar 13:32** and **Mat 24:36**, Christ states categorically that He is ignorant of the exact time of the Second Coming, but as God He knows.

The doctrine of Kenosis is an important subject to master. With this truth, the believer becomes armed to withstand the attacks made by cults, and to defend the faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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