

Applying the Kenosis

The application of the Kenosis in Philippians 2:5 is that, “**Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus,**” the attitude of a bond-servant. In what way and in what areas does ‘same’ apply? Christ was and is God, so there must be limitations on what being the ‘same’ means. There are many ways that we should *not* be the same as Christ. For example, we should not (1) seek glory, **John 17:24**, (2) provide salvation, **Luke 5:24**, (3) institute a new covenant, **Hebrews 10:1-12**, (4) prophesy about ourselves, **Luke 4:21**, or (5) make Messianic claims, **John 8:58-59**. We should be like Christ in:

1) **Attitude.** A bond-servant has the same attitude as Christ: (1) **John 13:34** the same attitude of love toward others, (2) **Colossians 3:13** of forgiveness (3) **1 Peter 2:19-21** suffering, (4) **1 John 2:6** our walk as Christ.

2) **Precedence.** The Apostles were bond-servants, introducing their books as either Apostles (denoting authority) or bond-servants (denoting their servant-hood). Servant-hood should take precedence for the Christian.

3) **Limitations.** The Kenosis is about limitations and surrendered rights and giving up my will. A servant with one Master must say no to competing allegiances and give up his own ambitions. Christ said ‘no’ to offers made to Him (**John 6:15**). We can only serve one Master at a time (**Matt. 6:24**).

4) **Submission.** The Kenosis is a lesson in voluntary submission to injustice. Christ voluntarily submitted himself to godless liars, both Jew and Gentile (**Luke 18:31-34**). This is practical – do I give up my rights for the sake of others, or to injustice? Christ chose not to exercise his rights, and He was God! Kenosis means ‘to empty’. God classes greatness in terms of emptying, or servant-hood **Luke 22:26**. So did Paul in **1 Cor. 9:15-18**.

5) **Position and condition.** One application of the bond-servant concept is that of a legal *position* entered into by the servant (once for all), yet an ongoing love relationship to the Purchaser in a daily *condition*. **Ex. 21:1-6**, and **Deut. 15:12-18** show a healthy servant-to-Master relationship. He could be purchased by his Master for life. We mirror this in our salvation. Christ is our Purchaser, and we are the purchased, having a legal and love relationship.

Can you pray John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer to apply the Kenosis? “*I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; . . . I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal . . . And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. Amen*”

The Kenosis (Emptying) of Christ

Falcon Baptist Church. March 2015

Philippians 2:1-11.

Sermon notes

Sentence Sermon: To live like Christ is to live as a humble servant

The kenosis is the unseen foundation to every verse about Christ in the Bible.

- 1) It is important *evangelistically* - “*you say Jesus is God and man*”?
- 2) It is important *intellectually* - *settle your theology*
- 3) It is important *doctrinally* - *key to Jesus dying, not God dying*
- 4) It is important *historically* - *7 church councils fought it out*
- 5) It is important *contemporarily* - *is your church imbalanced?*
- 6) It is important *practically* - *key to humble service*
- 7) It is important *personally* - *changed my life, gospels now clear*
- 8) It is important *theologically* John 7 and 1 John 2:22_____

Explaining the Kenosis

On earth, Jesus was fully man – He possessed the essence of humanity

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|-------|---------|-----------------------|---|
| i) | Words | John 8:40 | He called himself a man |
| ii) | Words | John 19:5 | Others called him a man |
| iii) | Works | Mark 4:38 | He suffered human constraints |
| iv) | Past | Matthew 1:1-23 | He claimed human ancestry back to Adam |
| v) | Present | Matthew 26:12 | He had a normal physical, human body |
| vi) | | Matthew 26:38 | He had a human soul |
| vii) | | Mark 2:8 | He had a human spirit |
| viii) | | Luke 2:52 | He suffered human development |
| ix) | | John 4:6 | He suffered human limitations |
| x) | | John 19:33 | He suffered a human death |
| xi) | Future | John 20:27 | He retained His humanity (in some form) |

On earth, Jesus was fully God - He possessed the essence of God

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|------|---------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| i) | Words | John 8:58-59 | He called Himself God |
| ii) | Words | Luke 9:20 | Others called Him God |
| iii) | Works | Luke 5:19-31 | He did works that only God can do |
| iv) | Past | John 1:1-3 | He claimed pre-existence as Creator |
| v) | Present | John 10:30-33 | He claimed equality with God |
| vi) | Future | Matthew 24:1-31 | He accurately foretold the future |

Yet, how were those two natures combined? Some? All? Not at all? The clearest and most detailed explanation is found in Philippians 2:5-11.

1) The Attitude Philippians 2:5-6

Christ is God, always. Yet, for his time on earth, he **voluntarily surrendered His rights as God** and chose to do only that which the Father commanded and allowed Him to do (Jn. 5:30). The surrender of his attitude pertains to his office, not his nature as God. It pertains to his function, not his essence as God. It pertains to his position, not his character as God. Christ 'lost' nothing. God cannot cease to be in any way (past, present or future).

2) The Abandonment Philippians 2:7a

What, then, did Christ abandon? One thing! **He abandoned the right to exercise His attributes** independently of the Father, effectively placing a self-imposed limitation on Himself. Colossians 2:9 states that the fullness of the deity lives in Christ in bodily form. For the most part, however, Christ veiled that fullness on earth, until appropriate times for unveiling occurred, such as the Transfiguration in Matt. 17:2. God never became "less-than-God." Think of the kenosis as **limitation** not **loss**. That limitation applied to all of His attributes as God, for example:

- Omnipresence He was limited to one place at one time
- Omniscience He was subject to learning and asked questions
- Omnipotence He got tired and hungry
- Impassibility He wept and felt anguish
- Judge He rescued people, not judging them
- Sovereignty He served as a subject instead of ruling as king
- Eternality He had a human body that could live and die

3) The Addition Philippians 2:7b-8a

What form did Christ take on earth? His form was that of humanity. The one thing Christ added to himself was the 'clothing' or 'identification' of humanity – **a normal, physical human body**. This made him recognizable to us, veiled his full glory and also made it possible for him to die.

The whole Kenosis revolves around the two points listed above. "When Christ became man He never ceased being God. The Incarnation was not the subtraction of deity; it was the addition of humanity." Norman Geisler. And, "[Jesus Christ] must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation. The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they come together in one person and one hypostasis." The Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451

The Kenosis comes down to one minus (-) and one plus (+); the subtraction (-) of the independent use of rights, and the addition (+) of humanity.

Not dealt with here are how these two natures of Christ a number of auxiliary questions surrounding those details—an ongoing controversy. The combining of these two natures is sometimes known as the hypostasis, hypostatic union, or the hypothetical union. Four resources to dig deeper: (1) Arnold Fruchtenbaum *Christology*, mp3 series from Ariel Ministries, (2) Anselm of Canterbury *Major Works*, Oxford Classic, ISBN 0192825259, (3) Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, free online version available from many sources. See Book III, Treatise on the Incarnation, and (4) John Piper *The Passion of Jesus Christ, 50 Reasons Why Jesus Had To Die*, ISBN 1-58134-608-5.

4) The Act Philippians 2:8b

What function did all of this serve? The function was for Christ to be **obedient to death** on a cross – the ultimate humiliation and primary purpose of His mission as Matthew 20:28 teaches. Christ died as a ransom for many, but not all accept that result. The innocent became guilty so the guilty could become innocent. Acknowledgement is voluntary now, but not in the future!

5) The Appointment Philippians 2:9

What resulted from this death? The **reversal** of the humiliation Christ suffered in limiting himself for our sake. The Father exalts Jesus to the highest position in the universe. The Father bestows Lordship on Jesus and appoints him head over the church. That exaltation began at his burial, not his resurrection or ascension. See Ephesians 4:8-10.

6) The Affect Philippians 2:10-11

What does this mean? That the Father demands universal acknowledgement of Christ! Our destiny is literally dependant on our attitude toward the work of Christ on the cross. **The whole world is reconcilable**, meaning that Christ has to do no further work to enable people to come to Him. The obligation is on us. The result of the kenosis is reconciliation, which is "To change a relationship from enemy to friend". *When God created man, man and God were 'face to face.'* *When man sinned, he turned his back on God. As a result, God turned His back on man. When Christ died, God was satisfied with the result, and so God turned to face man again with outstretched arms. It is now the responsibility of each person to in turn face God by accepting the offer from God."* Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Comprehension test: Mark 4:35-41
Matt. 24:27-30

John 10:17-18
Matt. 24:34-37