

KENOSIS THEORY – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

This is a heresy arising from the misrepresentation of Philippians 2:5-11 whereby Christ is said to have *emptied* Himself of the attributes of deity. Were it true, our Lord could sin, make mistakes, etc.

Nothing in this passage says or teaches that our Lord emptied Himself of either His God nature or His attributes. Only the outward and visible manifestation of Deity were removed, being veiled beneath human flesh (Hebrews 10:20).

God may change form, but He cannot cease to be God.

5 ... Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in **the form of God**, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But **made** himself of no reputation, and took upon him **the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

2:6: “form” (Greek = *morfē*, = *morphē*) means the external appearance to the viewers’ eye. But it is an external form that is a true indication of the inner nature from which it sprang.

Here it is of utmost importance to distinguish between personal and positional equality with God. As to His Person, Christ always *was, is, and will be* equal with God. But positional equality is different. From all eternity Christ was positionally equal with His Father. But when a world of lost mankind needed to be redeemed, He was willing to relinquish His positional equality with the Father. Thus, He was willing to come into this world and endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself.

2:7 But made Himself of no reputation. The **literal** translation is: “But He emptied Himself.” The question immediately arises, “Of what did the Lord Jesus empty Himself?”

For instance, some even say He was subject to the limitations of all men, that He became liable to error and accepted the common opinions and myths of His day! This is a blasphemous lie!

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He voluntarily laid aside His God power and no longer made use of His other attributes of Deity such as all-knowledge. Indeed, He could no longer be in all places the same time. *What He did was to empty Himself of His positional equality with God and to veil the glory of Deity in a body of human flesh.* The glory was all there, though hidden (yet it did shine forth on occasions, such as on the Mount of Transfiguration).

There was no moment in His life on earth when He did not possess all the attributes of God even though He refused to use them. He hid His Godhood in a veil of clay and performed His entire ministry purely as an *unfallen* man, having the Spirit without measure, and operating under the guidance of, & with the gifts of, the Holy Spirit (John 3:36; Heb.2:4).

He did not empty something from Himself: He emptied Himself from something – **the form of God!** (vs. 7)

It is similar to pouring water from a pitcher into a glass; the form is different, but the substance remains the same.

It was like a king temporarily clothing himself in the garb of a peasant – all the while remaining a king even though such was not outwardly apparent.

His *person* did not change, only His *outward appearance*.

“He emptied Himself.” The words that follow provide the explanation. He emptied Himself from having the form of God by taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of man. God became Man – that was the emptying of Himself. He did not lay aside His deity, but His place in heaven and even that was only temporarily.

Christ always existed, but came into the world **in the likeness of men**, meaning “as a real Man.” – although an “unfallen” one (no sin nature – like Adam before he disobeyed the Lord). The humanity of the Lord is as real as His deity. He is 100% God and at the same time 100% man.

2:8 He humbled Himself by becoming *obedient* to the point of death. He obeyed even though it cost Him His life – He obeyed to the end. Truly, He was the Merchant who went and sold all that He had to purchase us – the pearl of great price (Mat. 13:46).

Even the death of the cross: death by crucifixion was the most shameful form of execution. He was not allowed to die a natural death in bed. His was not to be an accidental death. He must die the shameful death of the cross. Adam was *disobedient* unto death; Christ was *obedient* unto death (Rom.5:19).

2:9 Observe the abrupt change. The previous verses describe what our Lord *did*.

But now we turn to consider what *the Father* has done. Because the Savior humbled Himself, in stark contrast, God has highly exalted Him.

As He did not seek a name for Himself, God has given Him the Name which is above every name – “King of kings and Lord of lord’s” (Rev.19:16).

2:10 The Father was so completely satisfied with the redemptive work of Christ that He determined every knee should bow to Him — of beings in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Since He bent His knees in service to others, the Father has decreed that every knee shall bow to Him – Isaiah 45:22-23, every knee will bow to the name of Jehovah (God).