

MTC LITE Spring 2021 – Session 2 – THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Part 2: “He Made Himself Nothing”

Last time: Christ, in very nature God

Don't ask **what** but **who**

- (there's no scale of divinity!)
- Jesus is the LORD, the God of the Old Testament

It's vital

- Because that's why we worship him
- Because only by being truly God can he truly show us what God is like

But is that still true?

What *happened* when God became Man?

- What kind of “becoming” is this?

Discuss

When God the Son became man, did he give up on any of his divine attributes?

Yes / No (Why?)

(the answer is no!)

Philippians 2:7 “He made himself nothing”

The Incarnation

Why might you think Jesus becoming man involves giving up divine attributes?

1. Something happened at the incarnation
2. It's described as “not holding on to equality with God” v6
3. It's described as “emptying” v7
4. There are some aspects of being human that don't seem to be compatible with being God (Jesus doesn't know some things, he learns, he dies etc)

Kenosis theory (“emptying”)

When Jesus became man, he gave up (lost) some aspects of his divinity

- Omniscience
- Immortality
- Omnipotence
- etc

Requires believing that God can lose these things and still be God (?).

BUT

- Can God really lose his divine attributes and remain God?
- “I the Lord do not change” Mal 3:6?

No. Instead...

Emptying by Addition

How does **Paul** explain what he means by emptying?

Phil 2:7 “by taking the very nature of a servant”

He emptied himself *by adding something on*.

Verse 6:

Older translations have

“did not consider equality with God something *to be held on to*”

But a better translation (as per NIV 2011):

“did not consider equality with God something *to be used to his own advantage*”

The result is:

One **person**
in two **natures**

This is language the church has historically *insisted* on

For example, The 39 Articles, art. 2:

THE Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that **two whole and perfect Natures**, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, **were joined together in one Person**, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man;

Divine nature	Human nature
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• spirit• immortal• invisible• unchangeable• etc!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• body and soul• mortal• visible• changeable• etc!

The Son took to himself a *human nature*
(while still also possessing a *divine nature*)

OR

The Son came to exist in a *human nature*
(while still also existing in his *divine nature*)

NOT

- The Son took on a human *person*
 - That would make him two persons (superglued together?)
- The Son took on a human *body*
 - That would make him less than fully human (God with a remote-control body, or God in a shell)

Why is this important?

Hebrews 2:17: For this reason he had to be made like them, *fully human in every way...*

Things that must be ruled out:

- Remote control human body
- Human mask/shell
- A God-man mashup
- Two persons

One person
in two natures

Heidelberg Catechism, Q16–18:

Q. Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?

A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for sin; but a sinful human could never pay for others.

Q. Why must the mediator also be true God?

A. So that the mediator, by the power of his divinity, might bear the weight of God's wrath in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

Q. Then who is this mediator—true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given to us to completely deliver us and make us right with God.

Implications

- It means He truly came to us!
 - *He who was truly God truly became truly man while remaining truly God*
- It confers incredible dignity on humanity!

Behold, the great Creator makes
himself a house of clay;
a robe of human form he takes
for ever from this day.

Hear this! The wise eternal Word
as Mary's infant cries;
a servant is our mighty Lord,
and God in cradle lies.

This wonder all the world amazed
and shook the starry frame;
the hosts of heaven stood and gazed,
then blessed the Saviour's name.

Glad shepherds run to view this sight,
a choir of angels sings;
and eastern magi with delight
adore this King of kings.

Join then, all hearts that are not stone,
and all our voices prove
to celebrate the holy One,
the God of peace and love.

(Thomas Pestel)