

Series: God Saves #1404

**Title: Romans 8.29a; John 1; Philippians 2
Jesus Emptied Himself**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Working in concert with one another we have before us two Bible passages. Our main text is Romans 8, verse 29 which speaks of the foreknowledge of God. And yesterday I brought to your attention John's Gospel in which we will meet Jesus Christ who will speak about His own foreknowledge. This makes perfect sense because Jesus *is* God. In John's Gospel Jesus is God in human form. The God-Man. And so we put one Bible verse in dialogue with other Bible verses to build our case for the foreknowledge of God as essential in *how* God saves a person from their sin. If you have been saved, rescued, and delivered from your own vile and wicked iniquity, then you know this is a deeply valuable study to have.

I have several points to make, and I began in John chapter 1, verses 1 and 2 to establish that Jesus *is* God. Here again is John chapter 1, verses 1 and 2. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God."** The Word here (notice capital W, indicating a noun), the Word here is used by John to describe Jesus. So we can legitimately read this, "In the beginning was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was with God, and Jesus Christ was God. Jesus Christ was in the beginning with God." Let me say more. The beginning here is the Greek word that refers to the beginning of the universe as described in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1. You know that text says, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."**

So John is saying that when what Genesis 1.1. describes happened, Christ was already in existence. And since only God was in existence before the beginning, then Jesus Christ *is* God. Jesus was not (is not) a created being. He precedes creation. He has existed from all eternity. He is eternal in the sense that He always was before the beginning of this physical universe; before even time began. Listen to Marcus Dods in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, quote, "The Word did not then begin to be, but at that point at which all else began to be, He already was. In the beginning...the Word already existed. In other words, the [Word] is before time, eternal." And I remind you the Word is Jesus Christ.

Let me repeat these insightful words from the commentator, "The Word did not then begin to be, but at that point at which all else began to be, He already was. In the beginning...the Word already existed. In other words, the [Word] is before time, eternal." And the Word is Jesus Christ. Furthermore, let's look at the Greek language here, which demonstrates the perfect truth that Jesus is eternal, therefore Jesus is God, because only God is eternal.

Let's take up this word "was," because this will tell us something very important about Jesus. "Was" is a simple three-letter word. John uses it *four times* in two verses. And each time it is the same Greek word. The word is *eimi*. E-I-M-I. This is a verb and it is used in the imperfect tense. So this speaks of continuing action in the past (continuing action in the past). I hope you're with me. The word "was" here speaks of continuing action in the past indicating this: Jesus was continually in existence before the beginning! Did you get that? Jesus was continually in existence before the beginning!

Pastor John MacArthur, in his always insightful commentary on the Gospel of John, raises another point. He says, "Even more significant is the use of *eimi* instead of *ginomai*. [That] term refers to things that come into existence. Had John used *ginomai*, he would have implied that the Word [Jesus] came into existence at the beginning along with the rest of creation. But *eimi* stresses that the Word [Jesus] always existed; there was never a point when He came into being (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 1-11, 16*)." Unquote.

Christian, student of the Bible, all who listen grasp this! Jesus Christ *is* God. Because Jesus is God He was before the beginning (eternal), He was at the beginning, He now is and He forever will be. And yes, He lived on this earth for a period of time. God became Man. Still in John chapter 1, let me quote verse 14. John 1.14 says, **"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us..."**

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...” The Word is Jesus. “Jesus became flesh, and dwelt among us.” And why is it so important to me to emphasize this to you? Well, for many reasons, but specific to our current series, note this: Jesus is God, and therefore everything God knows, Jesus also knows. God is omniscient (all-knowing). Jesus is omniscient (all-knowing). Jesus possesses foreknowledge, because Jesus *is* God. So the definition of foreknowledge, as we have it applied to God, must also be applied to Jesus. This is how John 1.1 and 2 connects to Romans 8.29.

And this allows us to get into the earthly, the human life of Christ further in John’s Gospel where we will see on display the knowledge and the foreknowledge of Jesus. But first, there is something we must address. For many of you who think logically this may have already crossed your mind. Let me put this issue in the form of a question: how can Jesus be both God and Man at the same time? Didn’t Jesus have to cease being God, or at least limit His deity, while He was Man? This is a very good and appropriately timed question. As usual, the answer can be long and intricate involving many texts, but let me see if I can be brief and to the point?

We have to bring in another text of Scripture to answer this question, and that is Philippians chapter 2, verse 7. For some context, I am going to read Philippians 2, verses 5 through part of verse 8. You may know this Scripture well. Philippians, another of the Apostle Paul’s epistles, chapter 2, beginning in verse 5, **“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself...”** Verse 7 and this phrase is what we want to highlight: Jesus quote “emptied Himself...” Unquote.

The Greek word for “emptied” is *kenoo* and it primarily means to empty. From this word the theologians get the word kenosis. The question is: of what did Christ empty Himself? That is, the Man Jesus, He emptied Himself of what? Does this mean that Jesus emptied Himself of His deity? Did He cease to be God when He was human? I answer: no. Jesus did *not* cease to be God, He did *not* empty Himself of His deity. Never. Ever. The Bible makes that clear in many passages. We will see some of them in John. Here, I think is the most biblical way to look at it.

And I want to site the writing and theology of Paul Enns. He was a very capable pastor and theologian, a seminary professor who wrote the classic *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. I quote from this sometimes here on *God Is*. I like it because Dr. Enns is accurate and concise. He says, “The emptying of Christ was not setting aside His deity but the humiliation of taking on human form and nature to fulfil the service of God (639).” End quote. In other words, Jesus only temporarily emptied Himself of the exaltation of being God so that He could take on human form and nature specifically to fulfil the task that God the Father had given Jesus to do.

What is that “service of God,” what is the task God chose Jesus for? It is to be the Perfect Man who will then represent all imperfect men and women, going to the cross and dying to pay the penalty in full for our sin. It takes a perfect Man to be the sacrifice for all men and women. Jesus had to empty Himself of His exaltation, He had to be made in the likeness of men, He had to be found in appearance as a man, Christ had to humble Himself in order to be the sacrifice for sin for which He was chosen and sent by God.

Tomorrow, we will pick up here talking about the kenosis as we continue to walk into the Gospel of John. Join us for God Is!

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