

# **Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christology, Session 20, Systematics, Humanity of Christ, Communication of Attributes, Exercise of Attributes, Two States, Philippians 2:1-11**

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christology. This is session 20, Systematics, Humanity of Christ, Communication of Attributes, Exercise of Attributes, Two States, Philippians 2:1 to 11.

We continue to study the communication of attributes, which is a scriptural phenomenon whereby, within a single sentence, not only a passage but in a single sentence, scripture refers to Christ by a divine title but attributes to him what does not correspond to divinity but humanity.

It uses a human title to give him a divine title, to give him a human quality within the same sentence. We see it in 1 Corinthians 2 as well. Paul spoke in a situation where the Greeks valued rhetoric, a persuasive speech that could wow others.

In that context, Paul comes to Corinth, and he preaches about a crucified man. This is not going to win him friends and influence people. He determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And he says that Christ is a stumbling block to Jews and is foolishness to Greeks. Nevertheless, he is the wisdom and the power of God. Paul affirms that God does have wisdom.

Let me start with chapter 2. And I, when I came to you brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom, which was the Greek way. These orators would be paid significant money to speak at banquets, give speeches in public, and so forth. And the one would try to outdo the next one in terms of eloquence, rhetoric, and persuasion.

For I decided to know nothing among you, 1 Corinthians 2:2, except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling. And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.

So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God, yet among the mature, we do impart wisdom. Although it's not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. There's another one.

To crucify the Lord of Glory is most definitely a divine title. Lord of glory, or we could render it glorious Lord. Obviously, the human quality again is mortality, being mortal, being capable of death.

As a matter of fact, being killed via the terrible method of crucifixion. The rulers of this world showed their utter folly in what they thought was great wisdom. It was utter folly, utter foolishness, and ignorance of God and his ways.

For they crucified the glorious Lord. Divine title, Lord of Glory. Human quality, crucifixion.

Being mortal. Not only being able to die but dying. This, again, is the communication of attributes.

What's the cash value of it? It emphasizes the unity of the person of Christ. Because he is referred to by a divine title. And in the same breath, what is said about him pertains to his humanity, not his deity.

Let's correct it again, I say in quotation marks. They adored the Lord of Glory. They lifted up their hymns in praise to the Lord of Glory.

That's not what it says. Neither does it say they crucified this man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That would be human designation, human ascription.

In the other case, it is divine designation, Lord of glory, divine ascription. Worthy of worship and praise. No, it crosses over.

It communicates. It shares one nature with the other by calling him God. But very much ascribing to him what it has to do, not with God, but with human affairs. Perhaps most strongly is 1 John 1. This would drive Greeks absolutely bonkers.

Oh, my word. What this says about God is utterly contrary to Hellenistic philosophy. That which was from the beginning, John says, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

Life was made manifest, and we have seen it, testified to it, and proclaimed to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. We proclaim that which we have seen and heard to you so that you, too, may have

fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. For a Greek to hear this, an unsaved Greek, is incredible. They could not believe it.

Because the word of life, or it could be rendered living word, the same value, is a reference to God. The word of God, it's a person that he's talking about, not just some words on a page, not even the scriptures, because they heard it, they saw it, and they touched it. This is just blasphemous to a Greek.

You saw God? You heard God? And here's the killer, you touched the word of life? You fools, you can't touch God. Well, it is true that God in heaven is invisible and doesn't have a body like we do. But exactly the point is, God on earth in the incarnation does have a body like us.

So that the one the apostles saw and heard and even touched with their hands was the word of life, the creator of all things, as the agent of the Father. That is astonishing. Divine title? Word of life.

Human quality? Being susceptible to the senses. Being able to be seen and heard and touched. Cash value? For every one of these.

It emphasizes the unity of the person by calling him God and then saying about him what is pertinent to humanity, not to God. Let me correct it. They bowed down in worship.

They prostrated themselves before the word of life. Divine title? Divine verb, if you will. Human quality.

Worship goes with God. Or they saw, heard, and touched the man from Nazareth—the son of Mary.

Whose father we know, Joseph and his brothers and sisters. Human title? Human verb, human attributes. That's not what's going on here.

He's called the word of life. And yet what is said of him does not pertain directly to his being the word of life. But rather, it pertains to his being.

Taking to himself a genuine human nature. Thus, the communication of attributes is a biblical way of speaking that underscores the unity of the person. This one person has two natures.

He is God and man at the same time. I would also add Luke 1:43 where Elizabeth welcomes Mary. And I don't know how Elizabeth knew this.

Maybe the Lord revealed it to her. In those days, Mary arose, Luke 1:39, and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah. And she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth.

And when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb. John the Baptist can't wait to get going. He's in the womb, and he's already starting his ministry, so to speak.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. That often goes with speaking, with prophesying. And she exclaimed with a loud cry, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And why is it granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that there would be fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord. The mother of my Lord.

Lord, divine title. I'm not sure how much Elizabeth understands of that, but that's not our point right now. God understands.

Divine title. Does God have a mother? What? Well, yes, in the sense that the eternal, almighty God, the second person of the Godhead, became a genuine human being exactly by virtue of the virginal conception of his humanity in Mary's womb. So that he's the Lord, divine title, and what is said of him is not relevant to deity, but humanity.

Humans have mothers, and so did he. Once again, it emphasizes the unity of the person. I do not, with great respect, endorse the notion of an ontological sharing of attributes from the divine nature to the human so that Jesus' humanity is ubiquitous.

With respect, I agree with Calvin. The human Christ, the divine-human Christ, is at the right hand of the Father, from which we look for him to return. So, are you saying this is merely a way of speaking? Yes.

Merely a literary device? Yes. A powerful one. It's not talking about anything, any change in ontology.

But it's talking about the miracle of the unity of the person of Christ. The Reformed and the Lutheran did agree, however, that there was a communication of properties in this sense. What was said of one nature in the Gospels pertains to the whole person.

There never is a separate, and there was a separate Son of God before he became incarnate. But there's not a separate humanity. So, when the Scripture speaks of his humanness, of his weakness, of his not knowing, of his struggling, of his being hungry or thirsty or tired, or dying, it says it of the person of Christ.

There's no mere man. That is Nestorian. Nestorian.

I should perhaps give this out, this taxonomy. Over here is Nestorianism. Dividing the Christ into two.

Here is Reformed theology. It is not Nestorian, but it's closer to that than it is over to here, to Monophysitism or Eutychianism. Here's Lutheran theology.

Oh, it's further away from Nestorianism than Reformed theology is. Here's Monophysitism or Eutychianism, which, contrary to saying he could be two, says the two natures are blended. So that he's neither God nor man, but he's a combination.

He's a hybrid, a tertium quid, and a third, something else. Now, just as the Reformed are not Nestorian, so the Lutherans are not Eutychian or Monophysite. That's terrible.

And yet, there is a continuum here. The Reformed are closer to Nestorianism than to Monophysitism. And I've heard many a person in Sunday school say, when I asked him about something, he'll say, oh, the man.

Now, did they mean to separate the person? No. But were they careful to say the person with reference to his humanity? No. And I'm glad because that's why they need teachers like me.

That was an attempt at humor, obviously a failed one. And likewise, Lutherans are not Monophysites. Yes, Monophysites.

They don't hold to Monophysitism. They're not Eutychians. But their notion of the communication of property surely puts them closer to that than it does to anything like Nestorianism on the other side.

We have one more area to discuss. And it is under the unity of the person of Christ. And that is the exercise of our Lord's attributes.

How are we to conceive of Christ's exercise of his divine and human attributes while not harming the unity of his person? We have to be careful here. We have to be careful. Plainly, the scripture speaks of him in divine terms, gives him divine titles, and sometimes performs divine works.

At other times, it speaks of him, and that is well said; that's the key each time: it speaks of him, the person, in human terms. As being tired, or weak, or being tempted, or dying. I've got two things to say.

I've said them before, but systematic theology does exactly this. It repeats its truths under categories that hopefully make them clearer, better understood, and more memorable, especially in their relation to other biblical statements and theological truths. Number one, all biblical statements speaking of the Son of God incarnate are to be attributed to the whole person.

Although some statements make special reference to one nature, every statement of the incarnate one is a statement of the incarnate one. They're not separate statements of God or of his humanity.

There's no separate humanity. And the eternal word, the eternal Son, became fully incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. So, when we read of him in John 4, being weary from the journey and sitting down at Jacob's well, that is said not of the man Jesus.

It is said of the God-man Jesus. Surely, not with special emphasis to his divine nature, but with special evidence, special emphasis to his human nature. When he says in John 10, I'm the good shepherd.

I lay down my life for the sheep. That's said of the person of Christ with reference to his humanity. God in heaven can't die.

Astonishingly, Hebrews 2:14 tells us that God came down from heaven exactly so he could die. Oh, not only so he could die. Jesus taught, for example, but surely he came mainly to die.

Since, therefore, in Hebrews 2:14, the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Because he loved the children of God. The son of God partook of their flesh and blood so that he might die and defeat the evil one and redeem his people.

God on earth did die. The God-man died. That kind of passage surely emphasizes his humanness.

But let's be careful and not veer toward Nestorianism. It's not the man Jesus. It's the incarnate son with special reference to his humanness who dies to redeem his people and defeat the evil one.

Back to John 10. I lay down my life, and I take it up again. No one takes it from me.

I do it of my own accord. Humanity, humanity, humanity. The Father has given me commandment to do this.

Humanity, I lay down my life, and I take it up again. Deity is the divine-human Christ who raises himself. I'm specifically not separating the person.

You see what we're saying now as we avoid Nestorianism on the one hand and Eutychianism on the other. We are applying the truths of Chalcedon that the son of God is incarnate without confusion, the natures. He is one person with two natures without confusion and without change.

That opposes monophysitism, Eutychianism. And without separation and without division. That opposes Nestorianism.

Can we understand everything the Bible says about him perfectly? No. Can we parse out every statement with some kind of big grid? Oh, this he does as a man, this he does as God. No, we can't.

But at times, certain verses emphasize one of the other natures. But my point now is all biblical statements speaking of the Son incarnate must be ascribed to the whole person, not to one nature or the other. Although they pertain to one nature or the other, sometimes some statements have special reference to his divinity.

As in, I have the authority to raise my life. Resurrection is the work of God. And only in John 2. Destroy this temple, and in three days, I'll raise it up.

In John 10, I lay down my life and I take it up again. Does Christ raise himself? Yikes. That is astonishing.

It's always the Father, either directly or by what we call the divine passive. Jesus was raised. And not always, but mostly.

And then sometimes, I don't know, a half dozen times, the resurrection is ascribed to the spirit. Never anywhere else to Jesus. The divine Christ in the fourth gospel raises himself.

Oh, of course, to be complete, we would say the Trinity raises the Son. As a matter of fact, I guess I would say especially the Father, but also the Spirit, and at least in one place, in one book, the Son. All biblical statements speaking of Christ, even those that lay heavy emphasis on either his humanity or deity, are to be ascribed to the whole person.

Don't talk about the man. There's no separate man. Although it is technically true, the Logos remains a sarkos in a sense; the Trinity is intact, and the incarnate Son does certain things by virtue of his being outside of the incarnation, as unwieldy as that is.

We're not talking about that. Number two, our Lord incarnate voluntarily subordinated the exercise of his divine attributes in obedience to the Father's will. Assumed here is that he retained his divine attributes in full.

There is no kenosis. He didn't divest himself of certain attributes, even those omnis that are hard to conceive in terms of an incarnation. For example, can an incarnate person be everywhere present at the same time in the body? No.

But we say he retains that property as the Son who remains fully outside of the incarnation. But once again, that's not our emphasis. Christ retains all his divine powers in full.

He doesn't give up the possession of them, the ontology of them, the having of them. He gives up their independent exercise of them. So, therefore, he's a depotentiated Christ.

He lacks those powers. No, he doesn't. He's got the powers.

Oh, yeah, but he never uses them, as some good evangelical Christian philosophers say today. Following Steve Wellum, I strongly, respectfully, these guys are good men of God, no question, doing a good apologetic work. I don't want to name names deliberately.

If you want to find out, read Wellum's book toward the end. He names names, of course. He treats them respectfully, quotes from them, and receives them not only as brothers but as outstanding brothers.

But it looks like to him and me, the tendency with philosophers sometimes is instead of exercising sola scriptura, is exercising sola philosophia. It looks like their reason is sitting over the Scripture at that point. Boy, I say that without any malice intended.

Because the Scripture ascribes to the incarnate Son divine works, your sins are forgiven you, he tells the man in Luke 2, who cannot walk. Well, any charlatan could say that.

To prove he's not a charlatan, he says, and in fact, his enemies, as Jesus exercises divine knowledge to understand their minds and hearts. Oh, you say, come on, he can see it on their faces. You and I can see it on their faces, but he knows for sure by looking at their hearts.



Even as he did, could he see in the Samaritan woman's face? She had five husbands. No, I don't think so. By the same token, he didn't know the time of his second coming when he was on earth.

He didn't always exercise these divine attributes. He did not exercise his divine power of knowledge. But he sure did in this case.

And he had forgiven the man his sins. Not the way we do it. Oh, sister, would you please forgive me for speaking against you? Oh, yes, brother.

That's great. That's not what we're talking about. Jesus is saying, I forgive you the way God forgives sinful human beings.

Wow. Invisible miracle. Anybody could claim that.

Oh, yeah. That's right. Okay.

So that you know the son of man on earth has the authority to forgive sins. I'm going to do a visible one. Take up your bed and walk.

And he did. Jesus, doing the visible miracle, showed he had performed an invisible miracle and exerted divine powers in forgiving sin. When they come to arrest him, who are you? Are you Jesus of Nazareth? I am, John 18.

Bam, they fall down. John repeatedly does this kind of thing. He shows that Christ does not go to the cross in weakness, but he goes to the cross in power.

John 13. During supper, the devil had already put it into Judas' heart to betray him, Judas Simon's son. Believe me, other people named Judas were glad for little things like that.

Or Judas, who's also called Iscariot. Other disciples who were named Judas and other followers were really happy to have those qualifications. Yikes.

Jesus, John 13:3. Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper, laid aside his outer garments, took a towel, tied it around his waist, and washed the disciples' tootsies. What's John doing? He's showing that Jesus is a divine Christ who's utterly in charge, and he is willingly submitting himself to the death on the cross. Yes, sometimes the Son, who has all of his divine powers, uses them only when it is in the Father's will.

Raising himself from the dead is not a human work. It was the Father's will for the Son to say in John 2 that he would raise himself from the dead. John 2, is it 19 and 20? John interprets Jesus' abstruse remark.

If you and I stood in the court of the Gentiles, or perhaps in the court of the women, and heard him say, destroy this temple, and in three days I'll build it, I'll raise it, that sounds crazy. The Jews said it took 46 years under Herod the Great's program of refurbishing the temple to build this temple. You're going to raise it up in three days? John gives an editorial comment, which is one of his literary features.

But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this. When he was raised from the dead.

They believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken because his words were already being accepted as being on par with the holy word of God. Our Lord incarnate subordinated the exercise of his divine attributes, which he retained in full in obedience to the Father's will. He only used his divine powers when it was the Father's will.

There was no reduction but a veiled manifestation of his divine powers. So, in the matter of transfiguration, I say it this way: the lampshade was taken off, and the wattage was turned up. But usually, the lampshade was on, and the light was turned way down.

No halo. He is who he is, but he does not always manifest who he is, as he does when it's the Father's will for him to display divine powers. We need to wrap up our course by considering the doctrine of the two states.

After the Reformation, both Lutheran and Reformed theologians gave consideration to certain truths. The Reformers affirmed these truths, but it was their theological heirs that articulated them in the so-called two-states doctrine. Philippians 2, which we looked at a couple of times, Philippians 2:6 to 11, presents the two states doctrine as nowhere else in Scripture.

Have this mind among yourselves, verse 5, which is yours in Christ Jesus. The purpose of this great Christology is to present Jesus as an example of humility that the Philippians, especially Euodia and Syntyche, might follow to promote unity in their healthy, healthy church, who thought he was in the form of God, Philippians 2:6, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. These verses speak of the state of humiliation.

The two states, the two states doctrine says, our Lord passed through two chronological phases, from his conception and birth to his burial, is the state of humiliation that we just read. It includes his conception, his birth, his temptations, the struggles in his life, his death, and, shockingly, his burial. God was buried? No, but the God-man was buried.

That is outrageous. That's a symbol of humankind's disrespect for him. Then, the verses that follow in Philippians 2, namely 9 through 11, describe the state of exaltation.

That is, a chronological phase with corresponding conditions going from his resurrection to his second coming. Therefore, since he humbled himself to the point of death on the cross, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The two states of Christ are his state of humiliation, humiliation, and his state of exaltation.

Two chronological phases with corresponding conditions. Humiliation, exaltation. This whole rubric is a way to explain how Jesus in heaven now is different than Jesus was on earth.

The difference is not, as many Christians assume, he gave up his humanity. Wrong. The incarnation is permanent.

The difference is he existed in a state this time period, 33 and a half years, of humiliation, weakness, vulnerability, need, and suffering, culminating in his death on the cross. No, culminating in his burial. But thankfully, therefore, God has highly exalted him, and so forth.

His state of exaltation consists of his resurrection, his ascension, his sitting at God's right hand, his pouring out the Spirit at Pentecost, his making intercession for us, and his state of exaltation and whole ministry is consummated in his second coming. Two problems attend this Philippian passage, and I have alluded, more than alluded to them, mentioned them a couple of times previously. One problem is, every knee's going to bow, every tongue's going to confess.

Is that right? Doesn't that mean everybody's saved? And number two is, does this passage teach the deity of Christ? The answer to the two questions is: no and yes. Isaiah 45 is the background. Yahweh is the speaker right on through this chapter.

I am the Lord, there's none other, 45:18. There's no other God beside me. There's none beside me, 21.

I am the Lord, there's no other, 22:23, by myself I have sworn, a solemn utterance, from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return. To me, Yahweh says, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.

And Yahweh becomes Jesus in Philippians 2:9 to 11. He is God. There are bookends here.

There's an inclusion. At the beginning and end of the passage, he existed in the form of God. And whether form means essential nature, as B.B. Warfield and other great scholars taught, or a more recent view, whether it's parallel with the form of a servant and means outward form, which I think it does, still, it could be said of no one else but God that he existed in the form of God.

The Son is God at the beginning of the passage, and he is Yahweh, before whom every knee bows and to whom every tongue confesses. So, it is every tongue. Yes.

It is every knee. Yes. Then everybody's saved, right? No.

I say that not only for the sake of coherence of the biblical teaching. The New Testament is so plain, Jesus being the main author of this teaching, that everybody is not saved and that there will be hell. But the next two verses in Isaiah 45 clear up the matter.

Every knee bows, every tongue swears allegiance, but only in the Lord it shall be said of me, our righteousness and strength. Isaiah 45, 24. To him shall come and be ashamed.

Oh, they will bow the knee, and they will confess with their tongues. All who are incensed against him, the lost, the wicked, will be constrained to acknowledge the mistakes of their, the big mistake of their lives, a low estimation of the Son of God, a refusal to bow the knee and confess his Lordship in this life. Others, in the Lord, all the offspring of Israel, that is, whether believing Jews or believing Gentiles who make up the New Testament Church of God, which is indeed the true Israel, all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory.

All bow, all confess, but not all are saved. So, the two problems are solved in this way. Universal acknowledgment of his Lordship, but not universal salvation.

Many who will bow and confess are lost. And they are incensed against him, but it does them no good. They cannot defeat him.

They are humbled before him and acknowledge that they give him glory unwittingly, not as worshippers, but as those who are subject to him who is God incarnate. The other problem is that some would question his deity; it is not to be questioned. He

existed in the form of God; he took on the form of a bond slave, and the Father raised him and exalted him.

Oh, it's to the glory of the Father. The passage is plain. But the language of Isaiah 45, which pertained to Yahweh, is now directly made over to the Son of God. So, we conclude by again glorifying Christ in his ministry.

The first time, he came to die for his people and to be raised again on the third day, promising eternal life to all who believe in him. Eternal life now, in new life and regeneration. Eternal life at the end of the age when Jesus returns in the resurrection of the dead.

God will be glorified in that. Everyone will glorify Jesus. And Christ will be acknowledged as Lord.

All will bow, all will confess with their tongues to be systematically complete in 1 Corinthians 15. At this point, the Son will then hand over the kingdom to the Father so that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit might be all in all. Praise his holy name.

Amen. That concludes our course on the doctrine of Christ. We explored and looked at the patristic historical theology or Christology.

And we saw that to a man and to a woman, they started from above with the divine Son of God who became incarnate in Jesus. We explored modern Christology, which, for the most part, had a very different starting point. I acknowledge you could start relatively from below for the sake of apologetics or communication to modern people.

I get it. But that's not what I'm saying here. Modern theology absolutely has started from below, again and again, most of the time.

And the result is a human Christ who is not divine and who's not able to save us from their sins. It is no surprise to me that churches and denominations that emphasize that are dwindling. There's no gospel in that.

There is no gospel in that. We then took our time and worked through the great biblical teachings concerning our Lord. He preexisted.

The Son of God existed before he became the Son of Man in Bethlehem. The incarnation is the great miracle of God. I don't mean to take away from the cross and the empty tomb.

Surely, they're the center of the gospel. But no incarnation, no cross. No incarnation, no empty tomb.

But there was an incarnation. Miraculously, mysteriously, the eternal, almighty God, the Son, became one of us. Whew! The result is he is God.

And we looked at his deity in great detail with the five great historic proofs. He became a genuine human being apart from sin, which is not an essential part of humanity. Adam and Eve showed it.

Jesus exemplified it. And in the resurrection of the dead, we will live it by God's grace. We thought about his uni-personality and some of the things that entails.

Avoiding the Charybdis of Nestorianism on the one hand, dividing him into two, and the Charybdis on the other side of Monophysitism or Eutychianism that blends him into neither God nor man. Sort of a third hybrid. We concluded by thinking about the exercise of his attributes.

And all this is to say that we who know and love him, worship and adore and serve and bear witness to the Lord of Glory who became a servant for us sinners and our salvation. Praise his holy name.

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