

Preternatural, Natural, Unnatural, Supernatural (Part One)

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This sermon is a little bit unusual in that it is a continuation of what I began on Passover on Thursday evening by giving an explanation of a necessary characteristic of one aspect of Christ dying as our Redeemer/Savior while paying for our release from the penalty that we earned by means of our sins.

Now, God's law and the penalty for transgressing them are in almost all cases reasonably clear. But not every aspect of their thoughtful purpose is understood. But we nonetheless act to sin, even though at times we have a clear understanding that we will be sinning when we do act. It seems as though it is something that is building and as it is building, we are getting a little bit more unsure of ourselves and what we are going to do. But we know that if we do go through with this thing, it is going to be not too good. We are motivated by our nature to go ahead and sin anyway, because our desire is so strong.

Such was the case with Adam and Eve. They were clearly warned beforehand that to do this, they clearly did and would bring the death penalty upon them. This was a significant event, and I want you to turn with me to Romans 5, because something happened that probably never entered their mind. It was not shocking. But we know now, because of the Bible having been written, what resulted as an offshoot from this.

Romans 5:12-14 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—for until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

What Adam and Eve never thought of, apparently, at least as far as I know, there is no notation of it that was made directly to either one of them, is that what they were going to do when they did sin is that they were going to affect every human being who has been born since, except for Jesus Christ.

Now that ought to give us pause to think of how much can be produced from one, two, sins and almost 6,000 years of an effect. I wonder how many times *we* stop to think about how much we are affecting the future of our children as an example. Is it going to have an impact on them, on their lives? Well, very likely it is going to, no matter how small it may seem to us, how insignificant. That it is only little old me doing this little thing in this little old corner, but nonetheless it just keeps unraveling, almost, it seems, forever.

These three verses are telling us that though our personalities may be expressed somewhat differently spiritually, we are all cut as it were from the same cloth as our first parents. And they too died. We will, too, as a result of our sins. Even as they sinned, we too have a desire to sin. They did not resist, they did not fight it, and all too often neither do we.

Now, here is a burning question for this sermon. Why did God not immediately execute them, put them in a grave or perhaps immediately burn them up so they became nothing but a puff of smoke that drifted off into the distance, never to be seen again? Do you ever stop to realize, I mean just think upon this: Someday you are going to see, I am going to see, all of us are going to see Adam and Eve with our own eyes. Are we going to silently blame them for all the trouble that they caused? It was just a little thing. All it was with a piece of fruit from a tree. But look what it caused.

That is there to be a warning to every one of us and that warning is that this is going to have far more effect than you ever realized. We think that we are nothing, but we are impacting history. Maybe in small events but nonetheless, as we can see, a little thing like a piece of fruit or maybe a lustful look at a man's wife brought all this down upon mankind. History unraveled in the wake of what happened there between two people. Those are profound things. There is nothing big about them, but they are profound when we realize what they cost.

Why did God not do what He did? Well, that is partly (not the whole thing) what this sermon is about. Why did He not just kill them immediately? Turn them into a puff of smoke, as I said, that drifted off into the horizon, never to be seen again.

Now here is the beginning of an answer to the question. Spiritually, there is logical and merciful reason as to why He did not just burn them up. It is largely because of one specific act of mercy of the Father and of the Son. Though God did not deliberately create us purposely to sin, He did create create us for the purpose of *overcoming the desire to sin* as a major means are producing the character that is in the image of our Creator.

We have to get this straight. God did not create us to sin. He created us to *resist* sin. We could say He knew we were going to sin. If God was a betting man, that was one He would bet on. "Yeah, they are going to sin," but He did not create us to sin. But we did anyway, even though they were warned beforehand, and that is the same thing that happens to us. We accept the blood of Jesus Christ, and we feel as though there is a measure of freedom now from at least some of the effects of our sin. But we turn around and we sin again anyway! That is pretty powerful pull that we have in us to go our own way, to do our own thing, rather than what the Creator tells us to do.

So, as I said here, I am going to give you the beginning of an answer to the question. Spiritually, there is logical and merciful reason, and it is largely because of one specific act of mercy on the part of the Father and the Son. So our calling, which we are now invited in and attending to it, is intended by God to be a growing experience. We are to grow in the knowledge of God's way of life. We are to grow in agreement with God's way of life and the reality of the devastation sin produces and of God's purposes in every area of life. That is one group of things. Then, secondly, to actually practice as a way of life, living and applying God's laws, *rarely* sinning.

Now this passage of time that we spend in our calling is necessary because God's purpose of creating us in His image requires our willing participation and cooperation within God's creative processes. Once sin occurs in any person, that person has earned the death penalty. *All it takes is one*. Our total number of sins are uncountable. But all it takes is one sin for a person to have earned the death penalty and that person will be saddled with that wage

he earned for doing his pleasure rather than God's. And the sentence is death. So why did not Adam and Eve die? We shall see.

Thus with sin in our calling we are given the responsibility of resisting sin and overcoming it, not allowing it to enslave us so that we can ultimately be freed from having to bear it at all.

On Thursday evening, we learned of the preternatural aspect of our Creator, Jesus of Nazareth—of His birth, of His life, of His crucifixion, and His resurrection. *Preternatural* is a word that we do not hear very often and it literally means "beyond nature" or in actual practice indicates something that is planned in advance. But even in that it is beyond nature.

Now as our Redeemer and Savior His life and death had been planned (before they sinned) by our spiritual Father and Son as a means of payment for our debt to Him accrued by our sins, and thus provides escape for us from immediate and permanent death from sin. I want you to turn with me to II Peter 3. We are going to jump to several widely scattered scriptures here in this chapter.

II Peter 3:1-3 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.

II Peter 1:5-6 For this [Meaning the scoffers. That word appeared in between verse 2 and 5.] they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

Peter is reflecting upon the Flood and how God controlled events that brought the Flood about. Again, the people were warned, do not sin, but they did anyway. So he reminds us that the word of God is absolute and sure. And when God gives a warning like this, He means it. It is on its way.

II Peter 1:7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved [Right now is just like right now. Right now, when Peter wrote this, is just like right now for you and me here in Fort Mill, South Carolina.] by the same word [that told them that they were all going to die], but now it is preserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

That is going to happen. God is not fooling around. He is not kidding. He was just as positive about Adam and Eve dying as He is here right now, that if they sinned that was it, they were going to die.

II Peter 1:8-9 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

If you have any feelings at all about living eternally, you can be mighty thankful for that verse. That just as surely as destruction is forecast by God for those who continue to live a life of sin, so also has God promised absolutely, ironclad, promise that there is going to be a time in which they have hope of eternal life. So it is coming as well.

God is so determined that none should perish, that He made Christ's redeeming death a landmark certainty by setting aside our Redeemer and Creator as the payment for our sins, therefore ensuring everybody has an opportunity for salvation on a level field. We saw a little bit of the impact of this in Revelation 13:6 on Passover evening. Did you catch it when I put the emphasis on that verse and told you to remember what this is saying? That the people who were cheering, hooray, hooray, praise God and so forth, were people who were *not* in the Book of Life!

Do you understand what was happening there? That God was prophesying that these people whose names were not written in the book of life had been told, "You have a chance. Here's your Savior right now, Jesus Christ, and it's because of Him that your lives have been preserved and now you have an opportunity to have salvation." That one little word—YOU. They were happy, amazed, filled with wonderment that after having died a death and

maybe been in the grave for thousands of years, they come up, they are resurrected, and now they find, as they begin to review history in their own minds and these things are revealed to them, they begin to realize that they have an opportunity for salvation, that they really did not blow it the first time around.

That was really good news to those people. They did not blow it because God had enough mercy within Him that He made Jesus Christ the Redeemer and Savior at the beginning of His purpose. That is the awesome thing. He made *sure* before He created Adam and Eve that there was a way that they could be saved and that salvation was going to come by the Redeemer and Savior. Almost, we must say, the first thing He ever did was to ensure that everybody would have an opportunity. And that is why, when Adam and Eve sinned, He did not just throw them into the ground and He did not just burn them with a lightning bolt and that was the end of Adam and Eve.

And so we, along with them, can look to their resurrection and we will see our first parents. You think they are going to be happy? Boy, you better believe they are going to be happy! Happy that God is not willing that anybody should perish. I am not going to go so far as to say that there will be *nobody* who will perish. I am saying He is giving everybody the opportunity to have salvation. And it was done because the first thing They did was it was appoint a Savior. That is pretty awesome. Every one of us ought to be thankful to God that He thought of us. Six thousand years later, here we are, and we have an opportunity too because God did that.

Today we are going to search into more descriptors of our Creator's life and death, and each is attached in some way to the term natural, as in preternatural. It is helpful to understand these terms and their application to our Savior and therefore our calling for a fuller appreciation of what He gave of Himself in our behalf so that we might share life with Him and continue following Him off into eternity.

The word natural came into the English language from French. It was derived from the term *nature* and tends to indicate qualities and characteristics derived from nature. In dictionaries natural is divided into a very large number of categories and subcategories, and it has been divided into these in order to accommodate the large number of usages it has been

given for grammatical reasons and for better understanding of its versatility. The usage of natural that seems to fit best for good understanding of our present subject is that in which natural is used to indicate a quality, skill, characteristic, or aspect that is common, not ordinarily extraordinary, not necessarily earned or developed, but nonetheless existing and having it. You may have used this terminology in this way sometime in your life, when you said, "It seemed to come to me naturally, it was just there all of a sudden," the skill to do something or to remember something or whatever.

Now these characteristics or qualities are often considered very useful, admirable, and even a source sometimes of wonderment. However, in the case of the terms that are our subjects today, each of these terms is *absolutely necessary* for Jesus to qualify Him as our Redeemer/Savior. We have already looked at one of them: preternatural. His death had to be preternatural or all those people between Adam and Eve until finally God said, "Oh, I think we need a Savior." His mercy is beyond belief that He would think of this first! How are We going to save them? Not how are we going to lose them? How are We going to make them suffer for their sins? How are We going to educate them? Are they going to come out of the grave different than they went into the grave? He had to think of all these things and say, "These are the adjustments that we have to make in order to make it possible that nobody has to be put to death eternally." That is the way He would like it.

He is not willing that any should perish, and so to provide Him almost, you might say, as a stopgap means, it was very likely the first thing that They did because He knew, and He knew that He knew, that we were going to sin. "What's the solution when I still have to tell them the wages of sin is death and to mean it absolutely." He was not kidding. So a means had to be provided that could be trusted and would be ironclad.

We saw in the opening preamble to the service on Thursday evening, that His death was preternatural. Therefore it was planned in advance, and thus His sacrifice was lying in wait, as it were, for thousands of years until it was available for usage. When God determined that the time had arrived that He would send the Savior forth from heaven to carry out His assignment in behalf of those of mankind who truly repent of their sins.

Now our first word for today is "natural." This has an interesting bearing on Christ's death. Our first word today is natural, having in this case no prefix or suffix at it. By this, I specifically mean Jesus' death was natural. It resulted from the beating and crucifixion He received, was fully intended by those who planned it and ordered it. It was not unusual. It was not a surprise that He died.

Let us go back toward the end of the Bible to Revelation the first chapter and we will see what Christ said about this.

Revelation 1:18 "I am He who lives, and was dead [He was not lying.], and behold, I am alive forever more. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

Revelation 2:8 "And the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead and came to life.'

Just in case you feel you need two scriptures to prove it, there is Jesus Himself said, "I was dead." He does not lie, and "I came to life."

Those who directly planned and intended Jesus' death included four categories of participants, and these are those four:

1. The Father and Son for Their purposes, and They had a purpose in that.
2. The ones who made the judicial decision. That was Pontius Pilot, the Roman governor of Judea. He could have stopped Jesus' death. However, he apparently ordered it because of his fear of inciting a major civil disturbance that he believed would have made him look weak in the eyes of the Roman authorities.
3. The Jewish religious class, who clearly inspired and motivated Jesus' murder.
4. Those who literally followed through on what they were ordered to do. That is, the Roman soldiers.

Before we go any further, let us look a little bit more closely at the term "natural" as applied to Jesus' death. It is natural, not at all uncommon, for a human to die. Death is a normal part of human life. It may be brought about even in the womb or in childbirth due to a flaw in the birth process. It can also be brought about by disease shortly after birth, by old age, or by accident due to injury or murder at any time. Thus it can be seen that humanly death is natural and commonplace, and we take it for granted in some ways until it hits us directly.

But in this case, do not overlook who is the subject here. It is important who we are sometimes. This was pretty important because we find back in Genesis 3 a very familiar scripture. But nonetheless it points out very clearly who He was. In verse 15, it says,

Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity [God is speaking.] between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

This one that we are speaking about was the long-promised Savior/Redeemer of mankind, who is prophesied here in this scripture to crush the serpent's head, thus dealing a death blow to the major enemy of mankind.

Now the biblical reality is the Savior's death was a real death that any human would die from. It was natural, considering its vicious severity. And even though He absolutely was God in the flesh, He was also, at the same time, fully human. No human could survive what He was put through. There was *absolutely nothing about His death that was faked in any way!* Please understand this. He really was dead! That is why I read what He Himself said. "I was dead and I came alive again." So there was absolutely nothing about his death that was faked in any way.

The Father and Son determined before the foundation of the earth, the Savior of mankind had to be fully human in order for His sacrifice to be fully meaningful. It could not be any old Joe that is walking up and down the street. It could not be a super-human personality, somebody that was above death because they were super. No, He was human. Just like you and me, and His death, considering the severity, it would have killed anybody.

Now, as we will see, God willing, in the sermon on the next holy day, Jesus was prepared for it. To the best of our understanding, to the best of our knowledge, to the best of what is revealed in the Bible, no other personality that had been God had ever gone through this—to prepare for death as a human. This gets more and more amazing as we go along. He was the first one, as far as we know, in the history of living humanity, for a God to die—literally die. He suffered a death that was natural for somebody who was also human.

Let us go through a number of statements either made by Him or made about Him regarding who He was and what He did in a variety of contexts. We are going to go back to Luke the fourth chapter. This is a familiar scripture, and I will read through it with very little comment, because I know that you know of it. But I want it to be in your memory banks as to who this Personality was.

Luke 4:16-19 So he came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; and He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

You understand what He is talking about there. This is what is going to be worked out through Jesus Christ. But what if He is dead? It will never get done.

Luke 4:20-30 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." [That went over like a bomb. A bomb that went off when He said that.] So all bore witness to Him and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph

son?" [They were beginning to question who this Man is.] He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!' [In other words, do those things here like you are reported to have done elsewhere. In other words, put your brain back in place. That is basically what they said.] Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country." And He said assuredly, "I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel at the time of Elijah the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of a hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went his way.

When Jesus told those people, His fellow townspeople, by the way He said, explained, what He had just given to them, He was telling them, "I am God." So among His first public utterances He was faced with death because He claimed He was God. Only God could go through that prophecy in the way that Jesus did.

Now we are going to turn from here to another extraordinary contexts. It is going to be one that you are more familiar with.

John 8:48-59 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death. [He is pushing Himself right to the front and right toward the edge of another cliff by claiming that He is God again.] Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word [they knew He meant the Bible] he shall

never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and I keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was I AM."

Again, by doing it as He did, He is clearly telling them from His own mouth, "I am God. I am divine. I am your Creator and your life-giver." And this is very clear that it is why they sought to kill Him. Because, according to Jewish teaching, what He said was blasphemy. Please turn to Luke 2. You see, what we are going through here are the threats that were made against Jesus and how God kept intervening to keep Him from getting killed. Because He was very, very open before the people as to who He really was.

Luke 2:49-50 And He said to them [the He is Jesus, them is His parents], "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

They did not get it, yet. Incidentally, this is just an aside, but it is an amazing thing. Do you know how many times that Jesus referred to God as "*My Father*"? It is very personal. The Jews had a way of using the name father that is pretty much the way nominal Christianity has. They get down on their knees and they pray to our father in heaven. Notice the pronouns. "Our Father in heaven." Do you know how many times Jesus called God His personal Father, "My Father," as we just read in John 8? It was another way in which He revealed Himself. Forty times just in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It was always "*My Father*." Everybody else said "our Father" in a very general sense, but Jesus did not make it general at all. He said, "It's *My Father*."

Let us go to Matthew the eleventh chapter. John the Baptist was having a little bit of a crisis while he had been thrown in prison there as to whether Jesus really was the Savior. It says,

Matthew 11:2-6 And when John heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up [It is very likely that He had raised some people from the dead, even as He was beginning His ministry. That is a pretty good indication of resurrecting people—raised up.] and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

So here He is, being asked a different question and the question is, "Are you the Messiah?" His answer was not as direct this time. But John, God's prophet, accepted it directly. Yes, this is the One who is God's co-worker there.

Now take a break for just a second. Was He a lying madman? Or was He telling the truth? Did He have the works to give irrefutable evidence proving His claim? Well, He certainly healed a large number of people, did He not? But we are going to look next at the apostle Paul's testimony. Paul, remember, at one time was an avowed enemy, and Paul provides a statement that, considering the Bible is God's inspired and true message to mankind, in one sense ends all arguments on this subject from all sources other than Jesus Himself.

So let us turn to Romans, the ninth chapter. We are going to look first of all at verses 1-5.

Romans 9:1-5 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the

adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

I am going to read this from the Amplified, and you will notice that it is a much plainer, clear translation.

Romans 9:5 (AMP) To them [meaning the Israelitish people] belong the patriarchs, and as far as His natural descent was concerned, from them is the Christ, Who is exalted and supreme overall, God, blessed forever! Amen (so let it be).

He called Him right, straight, flat-out—this former enemy of Jesus Christ—he called Him *God*! That is pretty clear. I will tell you. You cannot find a more direct statement than that. Jesus of Nazareth as a human was still God! We will get more of this later on and that is kind of interesting. So Jesus of Nazareth as a human was still God. God doesn't die. Or does He? This God did. Let me go to Acts the 20th chapter. Slowly but surely, brethren, we are building a case here. Now, in this context, the apostle Paul is giving his goodbyes to many of his friends around the city of Ephesus and in verse 27, Paul says this,

Acts 20:27-28 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. [He did not hold anything back. He gave everything full bore, and he did it in such a way, though, that it was really acceptable for those people to listen to.] Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Paul is basically saying that he feels comfortable about his carrying out of his responsibilities before God and to the church members, not only those in the Ephesian congregation, but wherever he preached. We just saw that, he called him God, right plain out. Paul states what appears to say in the way that it is translated, that God the Father purchased the freedom of the members by means of His own blood by giving His life and dying for them.

However, we know, of a truth, that when the grammatical confusion is straightened out by historical truths from within the Bible, the Father did not do so. It was the Son, who was also God, as John 1:1-3 also clearly states, was the One who gave His life's blood as the purchase price. So Paul was referring to the Son as God even though He was born to human Israelitish parents. Now those in attendance with Paul knew exactly who he was referring to, and that is the patriarchal ancestor he is referring to in Romans 9.

Let us look at an interesting reference in the Old Testament. This is kind of interesting. It is all the way back into the book of Zachariah in chapter 13. Remember He has not even been born yet at this particular point in time. But we have this prophecy of Him coming. And we also have a prophecy that He is going to shepherd a group of God's people.

Zechariah 13:7 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My companion," says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones."

We do not have to go any further because there is something within there that is not quite translated very well.

The King James Version translates that verse a little bit differently than does the New King James. Here is how the King James translates it.

Zechariah 13:7 (KJV) Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

Well, there is not much change there but the little change that is there is pretty significant. Where it says "my fellow." Now here is how the Living Bible translates this,

Zechariah 13:7 (TLB) "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, the man who is my associate and equal [What does that tell you?]," says the Lord Almighty. Strike down the Shepherd and the sheep

will scatter, but I will come back and comfort and care for the lambs.

Barnes Notes Commentary makes this comment on this verse during which *Barnes* applies its fulfillment to Christ being taken and crucified at the end of His human ministry. Now *Barnes* comments on this verse in this manner:

The envy and hatred of Satan, the blind fury of the chief priests, the contempt of Herod, the guilty cowardice of Pilate, freely accomplished the death which God had before carried for the salvation of the world.

In other words, God was well aware of what he was going to do because they had set aside Christ to be the One who was going to die for mankind's sin. But God did not reveal it all that clearly in the Old Testament at all. But just as the Old Testament is about to end, people began to break through what was really being said here. Now *Barnes* comment continues and the focus of his comment is the identification and death of One who is variously identified in that verse as fellow, companion, and equal. Take your pick. Now, putting these pieces of information together, this is what *Barnes* says,

We have a key piece of truth that unlocks any mystery. Here is the change of the translation of fellow to companion and equal. This was done because the Hebrew term within the context indicates a greater and more personal relationship than a mere friend or a mere companion or associate when added knowledge from other portions of the Bible identify the Hebrew term as meaning His equal.

That makes it a lot clearer. Who was His equal? Well, John 1:1-3 solves that in a hurry then. So *Barnes* meaning then is, the sword, an instrument of pain and death, shall be aroused against My Shepherd, who not merely described as a companion or fellow friend, but God's equal, One who is also God, will be put to death.

That is a biblical truth for that term, as used within the Bible in other places. Therefore, the verse means, when these are included in the events of Christ ministry, I will allow the Christ, the Preacher of the gospel, the founder of the church of God, to be smitten by the Jews and further, by the sword, he

indicates constant attention, alienation, persecution, and, ultimately, a murderous death, long before it literally happened to the One who was God in the flesh. That is right in Zechariah.

We are slowly working around to where we are getting to the place where this God is a human being and He is going to die. So then the next question. How could one equal to God and is also God, die, especially eternally? Let us go back to Philippians 2 and we are going to read a twelve verse section here. The answer is, He had to be a human. He had to be changed to be human. That is the only way that He could die.

Philippians 2:1-12 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. [What Paul is doing here is he is defining characteristics of Jesus Christ as *we* are to become.] Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind that each esteem others better than himself. [I want you to think about this. What is it that kept Jesus Christ from feeling that He was more than anybody else and still He had to be human?] Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but He made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

This section that we have just read through has at least a major portion of the answer to Christ becoming human and dying. It does not have all of it

because they do not tell us how it was done, and I have no idea how that was done. But it was accomplished and God accepted it. And when it was completed, He no longer, get this, when this transformation was completed, he was no longer an eternal being. He was every bit as human as you and me. That is why He died. However, he nonetheless retained His identity as God, according to what Paul writes here.

But He was God in the flesh, subject to death. The Father remained in heaven. The Son came to the earth with a godly nature. He could be tempted, though. Recall that Satan tempted Him mightily in both Matthew 4 and Luke 4. What was the purpose of it? To get him to sin. But He resisted. He would not sin.

The apostle Paul was carefully selective in his use of the terms used to teach this aspect of Christ's existence. And this was because His being both God and human at one and the same time is exceedingly, critically, vitally, important to His life and death being of sufficient value to pay for the sins of all who repent, and who was both preternatural and natural at one and the same time. That is an important function there to get both of. He was both preternatural, that is, planned in advance, and natural, subject to death.

He could have sinned, and Satan tried in the hardest way to get Him to sin and thus bring the death penalty upon Himself. But he would not sin. Unlike Adam and Eve, He did not sin. He did not give in. He did not cave to the persuasions that were used by him that would have tempted virtually everybody else who ever lived to bring the penalty upon themselves. Now this was because, His being both God and human at one at the same time, is critically and vitally important to His life. If He is not God, then His life was no more than anybody else's. Because if He was not God, He would have sinned. But He did not. He resisted.

The vital phrases that Paul used here are in verses 6-7. However, the entire thought that Paul gives in this paragraph expresses, as considered by Scottish Presbyterian commentator William Barclay, to be Paul's greatest declaration of what was so outstanding regarding Jesus Christ. According to Barkley, he said it was His humility. He subjected Himself to God and God's will in every case, regardless of what He Himself felt.

Let us think of it from this direction. There is nobody who loved God like Jesus Christ. There is nobody who loved fellowman like Jesus Christ. But love consists of a great number of characteristics. But in using the general term love, it tends to blur what may be a truly outstanding individual characteristic that is hidden using the general term love. Now, what is hidden in this case was Christ's humility. Whatever God permitted, He was humble enough to subject Himself to regardless of what it cost Him.

Do you understand that? We are looking here, I think, at perhaps the most important characteristic that has to do with not sinning. I want you to remember this. He would take anything God handed out to resist sin regardless of what it cost Him. He was humble enough, He did not think Himself more than God.

Paul brings attention to Christ's humility clearly in II Corinthians 8 and he does it this way:

II Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor [That is, He became human.], that you through His poverty might be rich.

Now understanding what Paul teaches in this paragraph is very helpful to avoiding sin. Its helpfulness is giving support to grasping what the Father and Son literally accomplished in this transition that prepared Him to become the Savior but not revealing in any way as to how it was actually done.

In Philippians, Paul is pleading with certain members to shed their personal ambitions and thus their desires that give clear evidence that certain relationships had to meet certain of their terms. Well, Paul revealed that as being a prideful act, and it had to be gotten rid of. And this is his answer. It was in that context that he described Christ's humility in this manner. Now listen carefully. In verse 6, it says, "who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God." What Paul is doing in this phrase is showing the unchangeable Godhead of Jesus Christ. That is why He came

through this and He was still God. But He was a God who could die. He came through this and so we see that when He was on the other side of this transition, He was still God.

I will explain. In other words, though a transition took place from divinity to humanity, His being God did not change. Now two terms are important to grasp here. First, is the Greek word for *being*. This term in Greek is *hyparchon*. Barkley explains that this is not the ordinary Greek term for being. Instead, it describes that which a man is in his very essence and which cannot be changed. Very convenient to have a language that is like that and I am sure God had something to do with that. Making sure words like this are part of the Greek language. It describes that part of a person which in any circumstance, regardless of what is happening, whether for good or bad, the person remains unchanged. It does not change their character, in other words. Their character remains the same.

So Paul is saying by that that Jesus was in His being essentially an unalterably God. That could not be changed. He was still God, though now He was a God who could die because He was human, too. In that same verse, he goes on to say that Jesus, this is still verse 6, was in the *form* of God. Again, the Greeks had two words for form. They were: 1) *morphe*, and 2) *schema*. We use that: he was scheming to do this, that, or the other thing—*schema*. Both are translated into the English language as "form" because English has no exact enough equivalent.

However, they do not have the exact same meaning. *Morphe* is somewhat similar to *hyparchon* in its usage. *Morphe* is the essential form to be used when you as a writer or speaker want to indicate the essential form that *never* changes. There are some things that do not change. And in this case, what was it? Anybody know? God's character. That *never* changes, whether He is human or whether He is divine. God's character never changes. That is what Paul is saying. His character never changed! This is what we have to become. We change on the outside, but God wants to bring us to the place where our character is like His and never changes! We will never lie. We will never steal. We will never anything that is bad. And even though we are attempted, we will not break down because we are too humble and we will just take whatever God hands out as the penalty for being like Him.

So they do not have the exact same meaning. *Morphe* is somewhat similar to *hyparchon* in its usage. *Morphe* is the essential form to be used whenever you, as a writer or speaker, want to indicate the essential form that never changes. *Schema* would be used if you want to indicate the outward form that changes from time to time, from circumstance to circumstance, one to another. For instance, the *morphe* of any human is humanity, and this never changes. We are always human. But the *schema* is continually changing as we age. We begin as a newborn and we age and our form changes to a young child, a teenager, a young adult, middle aged, and old age. The *morphe* never changes but the *schema* is almost constantly changing regarding Jesus being in the form of His *morphe*. His essential being never changed. He was always God. He was always divine.

This is not easy. It requires a great deal of thinking. And however His *schema* might be altered in being in His being beaten and therefore changed, His *morphe* remained the same.

So verse 6 reveals more of His character in that it says that Jesus "did not think it robbery to be equal with God." The word translated robbery more literally means snatched at or grabbed or clutched. And that term is *hypogamous*, and this phrase can mean either of two things. It can mean that equality with God was not to be clutched at because He already had it as His essential being, thus indicating He gave it up willingly. He laid down his life for the sake of mankind.

Verse 7 says that He emptied Himself. He made himself of no reputation. The verb *reconoun* literally means empty. It can be used of remain, of removing things from a container like a box or a bag, and pouring out a liquid or whatever until nothing is left.

Humanity's carnality is self-centered to such an intense degree that understanding that Jesus had to voluntarily abandon the glories of divinity is almost impossible to understand. That is too mind bending for me. And this is because it resulted in what the next phrase states, "He took upon himself the form of a bond servant." Incidentally, it does not say that he was taking on the form of a slave. He did what He did deliberately, and He voluntarily emptied himself. Form, here in this verse, is *morphe* once again. He took on Himself the form of a servant, but He was still God in the flesh.

I think it would probably be best that I just stop right there because this is getting awfully mind bending. And it would probably be good for me to try to put this into as simple terms as I possibly can, because, like I said, They did not tell us in the Scriptures how They did it.

They depended completely and totally on the character of Jesus Christ that He would not be changed in His essential being so that He remained God, and therefore as God, His life was worth all of the lives of everybody who has ever lived. But on the other hand, He was so humbled before God, you could not *make Him sin!* All of that extreme torture that was expended upon Him and He would not give in and feel sorry for Himself. He just took it.

But I think we are going to learn something about that, too, that perhaps you never thought of before. I will give you a little headline here and that is this: How do you always picture Jesus during the crucifixion? He is just barely hanging on to a thread of life. Do you know it was not like that? He retained His mind. He retained, even though the tar was beaten out of Him, He never gave in even one time to let them know that His life was being taken from Him. His life was not taken to him. He *gave* it. And even at the end of His crucifixion, it even remarks, "Then He bowed His head." Not until the end did He bow His head.