



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.5.2.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Sharing of Attributes: of Majesty – Omnipotence and Omniscience

Because of the false teachings of Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and others, the early Christians were driven to study very carefully all the Bible passages that talk about Jesus and His work. They noticed that there were some passages that speak of Jesus being given certain qualities and characteristics. Since Jesus as God cannot be given anything, because as God He already has everything, they recognized that these various divine qualities were being given or being shared with Jesus' human nature. This is what is meant by the *genus majesticum*, the sharing of majesty.

For example, John 1:1-2 tells us that Jesus as God has all the characteristics of deity from eternity: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."** But in many places the Scriptures speak of Jesus being given such divine characteristics as omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and divine honor. These passages must therefore mean that these divine characteristics are being given to Jesus as man. The majesty of Jesus' divine nature is thus shared with Jesus' human nature.

In Psalm 45 the Son of God is described as being given certain things by God: grace, a blessing, an anointing: **"Grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever... Therefore God has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions"** (Psalm 45:2, 7). Jesus once told His disciples: **"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father"** (Matthew 11:27). John the Baptist testified concerning Jesus: **"He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand"** (John 3:34-35).

On the other hand, the Bible never speaks of human qualities being given to the divine nature in order to give the divine nature greater glory or to enhance the divine nature. The divine nature cannot be enriched by any characteristic or attribute of the human nature. The Bible clearly teaches: **"I am the LORD, I do not change"** (Malachi 3:6). The divine nature cannot be enhanced by receiving anything from the human nature, but the human nature, however, can be enhanced by receiving something from the divine nature. The divine nature has divine characteristics because it is divine. The human nature, on the other hand, has divine characteristics as a gift. **"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father"** (Matthew 11:27).

This sharing of divine characteristics with Jesus' human nature began already with His conception. That is when **"the Word became flesh"** (John 1:14). But although the human nature possessed these divine attributes as a gift from the time of Jesus' conception, these attributes and characteristics were not always used during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. We will discuss this more fully when we speak of the two states of Jesus' existence: His state of humiliation and His state of exaltation. At this point we shall only print the passage that teaches these two states in Jesus' life: **"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 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 of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:5-11).

One divine characteristic that was and is shared with Jesus' human nature is omnipotence or almighty power. Jesus, as man, was given this almighty power when He was conceived, but He voluntarily gave up the use of this power in order to be our Savior. For example, Jesus' human nature, although possessing omnipotence, gave up its use in the Garden of Gethsemane, for the Bible says: **"Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him"** (Luke 22:43). Later that night Jesus seemed powerless when **"the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him"** (John 18:12). The very next day Jesus seemed to be totally helpless, for **"when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him"** (Luke 23:33). Ordinarily Jesus did not use His omnipotence – His almighty power. We read, for example, that Jesus was **"wearied from His journey"** (John 4:6) when He and His disciples came to Sychar and Jacob's well.

Nevertheless, Jesus' human nature was given omnipotence at His conception, and there were times when He used it. This use of omnipotence began at a wedding in Cana when Jesus changed ordinary water into excellent wine: **"This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him"** (John 2:11). It was during Jesus' state of humiliation that John the Baptist said of Jesus: **"The Father... has given all things into His hand"** (John 3:35). Jesus Himself said: **"He has granted the Son to have life in Himself"** (John 5:26).

After Jesus rose from the dead, He made full use of the omnipotence given to His human nature. He said to His disciples: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"** (Matthew 28:18). The apostle Paul asserted: **"He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church"** (Ephesians 1:22). The omnipotence given to the Son of Man was foretold the prophet Daniel: **"Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed"** (Daniel 7:14).

Another divine characteristic that was and is shared with Jesus' human nature is omniscience, that is, knowing all things. Although omniscience was given to Jesus' human nature at His conception, He refrained from using it for the most part during His state of humiliation. As Jesus grew up, He learned things just like any other child, as the Bible says: **"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"** (Luke 2:52). His family's neighbors in Nazareth had no idea who Jesus was because He did not display His omniscience or any of His divine characteristics as He was growing up. When He began to teach in the synagogues, they were amazed and said to one another: **"Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simeon? And are not His sisters here with us?"** (Mark 6:2-3). During His state of humiliation Jesus made only rare use of His omniscience. For example, in speaking of the day of judgment, He said to His disciples: **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"** (Mark 13:32).

Nevertheless, there were times during His state of humiliation when Jesus used the omniscience that was given to His human nature. When the four men brought a paralyzed man lying on a bed to Jesus, **"Jesus saw their faith"** (Matthew 9:2). When the Pharisees were thinking in their minds that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy because He had forgiven the paralyzed man, **"Jesus perceived their thoughts"** (Luke 5:22). In fact, every time Jesus proclaimed a Word from God to the people without quoting the Old Testament to prove what He was saying, He was revealing His omniscience, for we are told: **"The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him"** (John 1:18). Jesus revealed the thoughts of God because He knew what no one else knew, as it was given to Him.

Jesus knew Nathanael before He ever met him, saying to him when He saw him for the first time: **"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit,"** and a bit later: **"Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you"** (John 1:47-48). This was enough to convince Nathanael that Jesus was the Son of God and the King of Israel. When Jesus was in Jerusalem, many were impressed by His miracles, but John commented: **"Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all**

men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25). In a conversation with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, Jesus surprised her by saying: **“You have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband”** (John 4:18). This led the woman to say to the townspeople: **“Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”** (John 4:29).

Our human minds find it difficult to understand how a person can be given omniscience and then not use it. We cannot understand how he could say that there are things he does not know. But we must accept every statement of God’s Word, even though we cannot fully understand it.

Questions

1. What led the early Christians to study all the passages about Jesus so carefully?
2. Why do the passages that speak of divine characteristics being given to Jesus indicate that His divine nature is sharing things with the human?
3. When did Jesus’ human nature receive the divine nature’s omnipotence?
4. How often did Jesus use His divine omnipotence during His state of humiliation?
5. Give some evidence that Jesus did not always use His omnipotence.
6. Give some evidence that Jesus sometimes did use His omnipotence.
7. What is true of Jesus’ omnipotence in His state of exaltation?
8. When was divine omniscience first shared with Jesus’ human nature?
9. Give evidence that Jesus did not always use His omniscience.
10. Give evidence that Jesus sometimes did use His omniscience.
11. Why is it important to accept God’s Word even if we don’t fully understand it?