Philippians 2:5-8
A Critical analysis of: (1) Lexical Meanings, (2) Grammar, (3) Syntax

Phil. 2:5-8 (NASB) 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* (lit. becoming) **in the likeness of men**.
8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

I. The syntactical importance of **juxtaposition:** two things contrasted (Compare also the use of juxtaposition in Jn. 3:13 & 16:27-31).

   A. Juxtaposed: *"Being in the **form** of God"* vs. *"taking the **form** of a slave"*
      1. *"**form**"* = μορφῇ (morphe), lit. shape, appearance, observable
      2. *"**form**"* is modified by genitive nouns: *"of God"* & *"of a slave"*
      3. Juxtaposed, comparing apples to apples, opposites.
      4. Not referring to ontological nature (divine/human) but **status and roles**, **highest vs. lowest** (as the word *"slave"* proves).
      5. Trinitarians are wrong to infer "deity" (divine nature) from this clause.

   B. Juxtaposed: *"**equality with God**"* vs. *"**the likeness of men**"*
      1. *"likeness"* Friburg Gr. Lexicon: *"concretely: similarity, likeness, copy"*
      2. As Man, Jesus could not contemplate something absurdly impossible, *"equality with God"* in rank (Jn. 14:28).
      3. *"likeness of **men**"* plural of ἄνθρωπος (anthropos) **humans** (Gen. 1:27 LXX), human nature common to all humans.
      4. *"to be equal with God"* refers to divine ontological nature, **divinity**
         a. John 5:17-18 (NASB) *17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." 18* **For this reason** *therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him,* **because** *He not only was breaking the Sabbath,* **but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself** **equality with God**.
         b. The 2 possible ways Jesus could be *"equal with God"* in context:
            1. Equal in rank (A son cannot be equal in rank to his father, his superior)
            2. **Equal in ontological nature** (divinity), derived from **procreation** (God was Jesus' **OWN F**ather, His Father **exclusively**, literally begotten, only-begotten).
            3. Jesus' response shows they assumed He was claiming **equality in ontological nature**.
               a. *"The Son is **powerless** to do even one thing **from himself**."*

b. Jesus had become fully human and was "emptied" of the divine nature.

C. Vs. 6 *who, being in* **the form of God** (**role, rank,** *"the **image** of the invisible God"* – Col. 1:15) *considered* **equality with God** (**divinity**) **not a prize** *(something to be retained), 7* **BUT emptied Himself** *…"*

    1. *"not a prize"* οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν – ook arpogmon
        a. something seized, taken by force
        b. or something retained, held tightly
        c. That He *"considered equality with God"* shows that *divinity* was either His present possession or was possible for Him to seize.
            1. BU claim contrasting Satan's lie, *"you can be as gods"*
                a. That statement dealt exclusively with gaining knowledge like gods, not *"equality with God"*
            2. BU claim referring to Jesus' temptation
                b. Worshiping Satan would elevate Satan not Jesus.
            3. **"Equality with God"** must refer to ontological nature.
    2. The contrasting conjunction *"but"* indicates a juxtaposition.
    3. *"BUT emptied Himself"* defines what Paul meant when Jesus considered equality with God *"not a prize"*
        a. He could not *"empty Himself"* of something that He did not already possess. Thus *"retaining"* what He possessed was Paul's meaning.
        b. He *"emptied Himself"* of His *"equality with God"* (divine ontological nature).

D. Verse 7, *"Emptied Himself"* and the requirements of the grammar.
    1. *"But emptied Himself"* is an **independent clause** (contains subject and main (indicative) verb – *"emptied,"* ἐκένωσεν, ken-ah'-O, noun form "kenosis."
    2. *"emptied"* is aorist, active, indicative, 3rd person, singular verb.
    3. *"emptied Himself"* is modified by 2 dependent aorist participle adverbial clauses:
        a. *"**TAKING** the form of a slave,"*
        b. *"**BECOMING** in the likeness of men."*
    4. These 2 clauses function as *adverbs*, modifying the action of the aorist indicative verb *"emptied (Himself)."*
    5. Since the independent indicative verb *"emptied"* is **aorist tense**, AND the 2 modifying adverbial participle clauses are also **aorist tense**, this indicates a single historical event, the 2 adverbial clauses explaining **the means** or **immediate result** of His self-emptying. **All of verse 7 must refer to a single historical event**.
    6. *"taking the form of a slave"* is self-explanatory (role and rank).
    7. *"**BECOMING** in the likeness of men"*
        a. *"becoming"* aorist participle form of γίνομαι (ginomai)
            1. ginomai - originate, come into existence:
                a. a new event: "occurred, came to pass"
                b. a new thing originates, not existing previously

        c. a new state of being for something that already exists.

      2. Since this participle is adverbial, modifying *"emptied Himself,"* it must describe **a new state of being**.

    b. The prepositional phrase *"in the likeness of men"* defines what He *"became."*

      1. Since the Son **BECAME** *"in the likeness of men"* (mankind) when self-emptying of divinity (equality with God), He was NOT *"in the likeness of men"* previously while contemplating equality with God and being in the form of God.

      2. Therefore, He was **a conscious divine being** who chose to empty Himself of His divine nature in order to become **a human being**.

E. Verse 8 *"And having been found as **human in design**, He suppressed Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death of a cross."*

    1. *"having been found"* discovered "human" by others:

      a. 1 John 1:1-2 (LGV) *1 "That which was from the beginning, what we have heard, what **we have seen with our eyes**, what **we examined and our hands handled** regarding the Logos, the Life, 2 (and the Life was **made visible, and we have seen**, and we witness and report to you the age-enduring Life who was with the Father and **was made apparent to us**)."*

    2. *"… in fashion as human"*

      a. "fashion" -- σχῆμα (schema – template, design, cf. 1 Cor. 7:31)

      b. "human" -- ἄνθρωπος (anthropos – human)

    3. *He humbled Himself, becoming* (adverbial participle of ginomai) *obedient unto death, even death on a cross."*

      a. Same grammatical structure as vs. 7, an aorist indicatve verb (humbled Himself) modified by an adverbial aorist participle clause with "ginomai" (**becoming** obedient unto death).

F. Paul began this section in vs. 5 by saying *"Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus."*

    1. Paul spoke of **2 major historical events** in the life of Jesus Christ which provide the EXAMPLE of His mindset we are commanded to emulate:

      a. The willing emptying Himself of His divine nature in order to assume human nature

      b. After being discovered as human in design or template, He humbled Himself to become obedient unto death

    2. If Paul expected these two major events as illustrations of the "mind of Christ," it requires that his readers were already familiar with BOTH historical events which are contained for us in the Gospel accounts:

      a. The first historical event was explained by Paul in Col. 1:15-20 where Jesus Christ was placed personally as "the Beginning" (Wisdom of Prov. 8:22-31) first begotten by God, and then acting as God's Agent in creation. This was further elaborated by John in his prologue, and preexistence portrayed in many other ways such as Jn. 3:13.

3. Biblical Unitarians who insist that both of the above historical events occurred after Jesus' birth from Mary cannot explain the first historical event which the Philippians could have immediately recognized. (They cannot even agree among themselves).

4. The BU objection that verse 5 refers to Him as "Christ Jesus" His human title and name, does not require that He was already "Christ Jesus" in verses 6-7.

> a. Biblical characters are referred to by their current name even when they did not have that name during the events described.
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> b. "Abram" was always called "Abraham" in the NT even before his name was changed (Rom. 4:1-4,9-13; Gal. 3:6-9; Heb. 7:1-9; Heb. 11:8; Jam. 2:23).
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> c. We do the same with English: *"President Trump was born and raised in New York"* does not mean he was the president when he was born and raised.