



The preexistence of Christ, Part 2.

Defending the second-greatest glory of God's Son.

Aaron Welch contends Jesus Christ “came to be in the likeness of humanity” thirty years after His birth.



For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, 6 Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, 7 nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, 8 and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus Christ's greatest glory—in weight, not chronology—was humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death,

even the death of the cross. This is what saved us all. His second greatest glory was, thirty-three years earlier, emptying Himself from the form of God, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity and being found in fashion as a human. Without become an Adamic human, He could not have died for our sins. This took nearly as much guts, love and sacrifice as going to the cross.

It is this second-greatest glory that Aaron Welch robs from Christ, torturously interpreting the above passage and others so that misguided expositors attempting to prove the Trinity might have less ammunition. Yes, this is Aaron's chief motivation—to rob Trinitarians of an already illicit “proof text.” Trinitarians *require* the preexistence of Christ as the foundation of their fallacy, so Aaron says, “Oh, no you don't.” But instead of merely saying “Oh, no you don't” and setting the truth of the preexistence of Christ away on a high shelf—away from the Trinitarians—he attempts to blow up the truth of the preexistence of Christ so that no one can misuse it. This is akin to punching one's fist through the Mona Lisa so that no one will steal it.

Philippians 2:5-8 is not the only passage that Aaron strains to re-explain, but it is the only passage that I will address in this edition. Next week, we'll look into the abuse of Colossians 1:15-18.

I wouldn't be criticizing my friend Aaron unless his was a giant mistake. And it is. This mistake weighs about 300 tons, belches CO₂ and serves stale peanuts. I can't stand to see this done to Christ's Double Masterpiece of Sacrifice; I won't abide it. I'll use Scripture and common sense to refute it. I will be firm and respectful, but not nice. This enterprise (refutation) is distasteful to me. No one ought to imagine that I enjoy this. I'd rather have two or three teeth filled.

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The third article in Aaron's attempt to dismantle a foundational glory of Christ is titled, “A consideration

of passages thought to reveal the preexistence of Christ: Paul's letters to the body of Christ." He follows with a note, namely— "Note: In this post (and in subsequent posts) I will be examining passages thought by most Christians to be in conflict with the position defended in the previous two-part article." Only two passages that Aaron comments upon in this issue are consequential, so I will examine the passage referenced above, namely, Philippians 2:5-8 and save Colossians for next week. I will highlight only the essential point of Aaron's argument which, strangely, is the point that proves his theory unworkable—nay, impossible.

JESUS CHRIST'S HUMANITY DID NOT BEGIN UNTIL HE WAS 30 YEARS OLD?

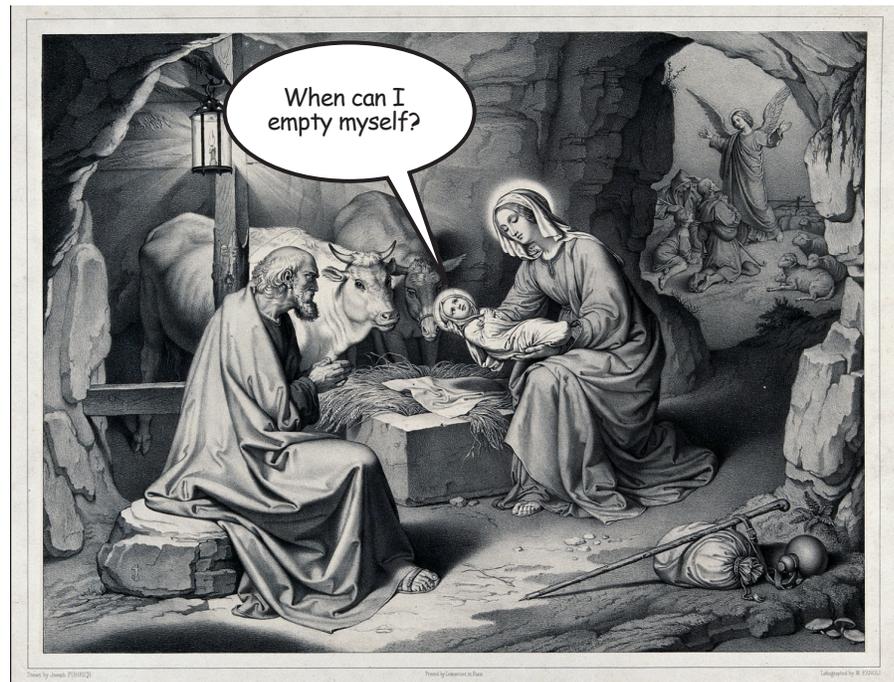
I believe that what Paul had in mind here (Philippians 2:5-8 —*Ed.*) was Christ's earthly ministry – a ministry which began when Christ was baptized and anointed with the Spirit of God (Luke 3:21-22), and which later culminated in his "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The words "coming to be in the likeness of humanity" are not about a non-human being who, at some point, came to have the "likeness" of a human. Rather, these words are about a human being who, despite being unique and in certain ways unlike every other human (being the "Son of the living God"), chose to live and act in such a way that gave him the "likeness" of the rest of humanity (i.e., humanity in general). Rather than using his God-given power and authority in a way that elevated himself above the rest of humanity (and above all the various evils that are common to humanity, including death itself), he "took the form of a slave" in relation to God, and conducted himself in a way that reflected humanity's complete dependency on God – even to the point of death.

Aaron's astounding contention here is that Jesus Christ's "coming to be in the likeness of humanity" (and, correspondingly, His "being found in fashion as a human") did not begin until 28 A.D., in the Jordan River, when Jesus was thirty years old, at the moment when John the

Baptist sprinkled water on His head, i.e., "when Christ was baptized." It is at this time and not before—according to Aaron Welch—that Jesus Christ "chose to live and act in such a way that gave him the 'likeness' of the rest of humanity (i.e., humanity in general)." It is at this time and not before—according to Aaron Welch—that Jesus Christ refused to use "His God-given power and authority in any way that would elevate Himself above the rest of humanity, and above all the various evils that are common to humanity, including death itself." It is at this time and not before—according to Aaron Welch—that Jesus Christ "emptied Himself."

Really? Is Aaron Welch seriously contending that, before 28 A.D., Jesus Christ was somehow full? That His "emptying Himself" in 28 A.D. was a remarkable lowering of Himself from His previous manner of life? That before



His baptism in the Jordan River Jesus enjoyed some sort of rich, privileged, wonder-infested existence that, when He walked out of the Jordan River at age thirty, caused people to exclaim, "Wow, what a humbling! Look how much lower He is now!"?

(The exact opposite is the truth, as we shall see.)

If Jesus Christ lived such a remarkably different life (a humbler life) prior to His baptism that would distinguish it from the life He lived subsequent to 28 A.D., then what was He doing growing up in the crap town of Nazareth as the son of a common working man? What was He doing obeying His parents? What was He doing getting the end

of His penis cut off by a temple official eight days after His birth? Going back further, what was He doing when He was soiling Himself—while lying in a feeding trough built for animals—waiting for His mommy Miriam to change His diapers? I suppose the case *could* be made (assuming Aaron’s argument for the moment), that Jesus Christ could not rightly *choose* anything as a baby. But what about later, say, between the ages of twelve and thirty?

The last we see of Jesus Christ before His baptism in the Jordan is when, at age twelve, He discusses Scripture in the temple with the teachers. Here’s the passage, from Luke 2:46-51—

Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. *And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them;* and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Did not Jesus, between the ages of twelve and thirty, refuse to use His God-given power and authority in any way that would elevate Himself above the rest of humanity? He certainly did. He refused to elevate Himself even above His parents. His life was so common to humanity, in fact, that we hear nothing about it. From the age of twelve until His baptism in the Jordan River, according to the divine

record—or lack thereof—Jesus did nothing *but* refuse to elevate Himself. Instead, He subjected Himself to the will of his sin-laden, foible-ridden mother and father. We have no record of Him levitating during this time, walking through walls, playing with the arc of the sun, throwing the moon out of orbit, or ousting the Romans from Israel. He raises not a single person from the dead, unstops the ears of not a single deaf person, and changes not a single drop of water to wine. Yet Aaron says that this disposition was not in Him until *after* His baptism in the Jordan River. Aaron contends that Jesus did not empty Himself—giving Himself over to the likeness of humanity—*until* teaching the age of thirty. How could anyone insist upon something so contrary to fact—unless there were some other agenda afoot?

180 DEGREES

In fact, Aaron’s argument is so back-asswards that the very opposite of what he insists, is true. Up *until* age thirty, Jesus Christ fits the very definition of what Aaron says didn’t happen until *after* He was thirty: He refuses to use “His God-given power and authority in any way that would elevate Himself above the rest of humanity, and above all the various evils that are common to humanity, including death itself” and He also “chose to live and act in such a way that gave him the ‘likeness’ of the rest of humanity (i.e., humanity in general).” This describes His life to a T from His birth to the time of His baptism, but certainly not after.

For what happened *after* He turned thirty? Great question. What happened after He turned thirty is the very opposite of what Aaron insists happened. It is at *this* time that Jesus Christ actually *stops* refusing to use His God-given power. It is at this time that He actually *stops* choosing to live and act in such a way that gave him the likeness of the rest of humanity. For now begins a very uncommon-to-humanity miraclefest of historic proportions.

Tell me if you think any of the following could possibly be construed as examples of Christ acting in such a way that gave Him the likeness of the rest of humanity. Tell me if you think that any of the following could possibly be construed as Christ refusing to use His God-given power and authority in any way that would elevate Himself above the rest of humanity, and above all the various evils that are common to humanity, including death itself. And these are just a few examples—

When can I live like a normal guy?

Fifteen more years.



- ▶ He turns water into wine
- ▶ He walks on water
- ▶ He raises the dead
- ▶ He commands the weather and it obeys Him
- ▶ He glorifies Himself on the Mount of Transfiguration
- ▶ He miraculously feeds 5,000 people
- ▶ He drives demons from the possessed
- ▶ He makes blind people see
- ▶ He makes deaf people hear
- ▶ He makes crippled people walk

Enough said? Rather than submitting Himself to the various evils common to humanity, “including death itself,” He exercises His power—almost daily for three years—*over* the various evils that are common to humanity—including death itself.

Thus, Aaron Welch has turned the truth 180 degrees out of whack. Jesus Christ’s emptying of Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity and being found in fashion as a human began at His birth and continued to His baptism. It is only *after* His baptism that He put these human commonalities on hold to perform miracle after bloody miracle as the Son of God, behaving in the opposite manner insisted on by Mr. Welch. It is only shortly before His death that He resorts to the common human lot (He “humbled Himself”—Philippians 2:8), becoming obe-



dient unto death, even the death of the cross. Yet listen to this remarkable statement from Aaron (emphasis mine)—

Although Christ inherently had great privileges and rights due to his status as the Son of God (as John says, this status entailed his being “equal to God,” in the sense of *being able to do certain things that God – but no one else – had the authority to do*), Christ relinquished whatever privileges/rights he had *during his ministry*, and (as Paul says) took “the form of a slave” and came to be “in the likeness of humanity.”

Astounding! Are we to believe that Jesus Christ *relinquished* the privilege of being able to do certain things that only God had the authority to do—during His ministry? This is so obviously not true. It was during His ministry that He *exercised* these privileges. He relinquished them at His coming into flesh in Bethlehem, taking them up again *beginning* with His public ministry.

DRAW THE LINE

Who invented this arbitrary line of the Jordan River baptism as the point at which Jesus Christ finally emptied Himself and “[came] to be in the likeness of humanity”? Aaron Welch did. Why not draw the line at Jesus’ dedication? Or at age twelve when He’s teaching in the temple? Why not make it at His trial? At His crucifixion? It’s as though Aaron closed his eyes, opened up the gospels and randomly poked his finger. (The inauguration of His earthly ministry turns out to be an unfortunate choice.) Aaron invented this line because he needs a line other than the obvious one in order to hopefully shoehorn non-critical thinkers into his argument against the non-preexistence of Christ. Fog must be blown onto the scene to obscure the true line of emptying, which was Jesus Christ’s birth. That this is Aaron’s cornerstone argument against the natural interpretation of Philippians 2:5-8—the argument that the “emptying” of Christ begins at the inauguration of His public ministry and not before—demonstrates the desperation and silliness of the argument. Not a single Scriptural fact supports Aaron’s conclusion. Every single Scriptural fact that I know of begs against it. Common sense itself recoils from it and leads us to the natural reading.¹

“COMING TO BE”

When Paul wrote that Christ was “found in fashion as a human,” he wasn’t suggesting that Christ once existed as something other than a human; rather, he meant

¹ Aaron has to find another location for the emptying because he refuses the obvious, Scriptural location, which is from heaven to earth. Heaven to earth is the natural reading. He has to find the line *only* on earth because, according to him, Jesus never existed in heaven. Yet this is never proven, only assumed. That his unproven position *forces* him to find the emptying on earth explains his awkward interpretation.

that, since Christ was a human, he was able to “empty himself”/“humble himself” to the point of being “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” That is, the fact of Christ’s being “found in fashion as a human” is what made it possible for him to die. And Christ’s mortality as a human is what allowed his decision to “empty himself” to find expression in the act of perfect obedience to God that resulted in his death.

I’m not sure that we need anyone to tell us what Paul *meant* to say when he said that Christ was “found in fashion as a human”? What Paul meant so say, according to Aaron, is that since Christ was a human anyway, then He could die. Well—*yeah*. Who’s arguing that point? But how did Christ come to be a human in the first place? Did He just show up as one, or did He consciously empty Himself to become one? This is the million-dollar question. In the greater context, Paul answers this question, making a far greater and more shocking point than that supposed by Aaron Welch—and this is what Paul *did* say, not what he meant to say—namely, that there was a time when a Being “came to be” both in the likeness of humanity *and* in fashion as a human, not against His will, but by consciously emptying Himself. And no one can empty Himself

Who does not preexist. Here’s the greater context, in verses 7 and 8—

[Christ] empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, *coming to be* in the likeness of humanity, and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Aaron comments—

The words “coming to be in the likeness of humanity” are not about a non-human being who, at some point, came to have the “likeness” of a human. Rather, these words are about a human being who, despite being unique and in certain ways unlike every other human (being the “Son of the living God”), chose to live and act in such a way that gave him the “likeness” of the rest of humanity (i.e., humanity in general).

Aaron’s first sentence, above, is flabbergasting. He basically says, “The words ‘coming to be in the likeness of humanity’ are not about a non-human being who comes to be in the likeness of humanity.” This is like saying, “God being the Savior of all humanity—1

Timothy 4:10—is not about God being the Savior of all humanity.” Paul says that Jesus Christ “came to be” in the likeness of humanity. Aaron Welch starts with Him already *being* a part of humanity, and has Him “coming to be” a *humble* human being—even though this was a thing that He already was. Aaron misses the main point of the entire passage, which is the sacrifice of Christ in becoming a human being *to begin with* (rather than becoming a more humble type of human being).

Paul’s point (the gigantic, elephant-in-the-room point that Aaron apparently can’t see, or refuses to see), is that there was a Being (Christ), who consciously emptied Himself and came to be, not only in “the likeness of humanity,” in terms of manner, but “found in *fashion* as a human,” in terms of constitution. Aaron claims that this decision occurred when Jesus Christ was thirty years old at the Jordan River. As we have seen, this theory is embarrassingly unwork-



able. It is unworkable with the phrase, “in the likeness of humanity” (because Jesus Christ was like the rest of humanity from His birth on—*until* His public ministry) but it is especially unworkable with the phrase “found in fashion as a human”—for it assumes that Jesus Christ never looked like an Adamic human until age thirty, at His baptism.

WHAT AN INSULT

How insulting Aaron’s unworkable theory is to Christ! According to Aaron’s theory, Jesus Christ was sent here involuntarily, just like the rest of us. He didn’t really sacrifice anything more than any other common human martyr. The baby that came into existence in Bethlehem had absolutely no intention of being here, or coming here, or doing anything noble or worthy. It’s divine task was forced upon it, just like any other human martyr’s. He walked toward death, just like any other human martyr.

According to Aaron Welch, this baby grows up in a poor working family, is raised in the slums of Galilee, obeys all the Jewish laws, and does nothing remarkable with his life. At age twelve the baby turned boy goes to the temple and finds out that he’s pretty smart. At the Jordan River, as a man, he gets baptized by his cousin and a dove lands on him and God says, “This is my Son.” The son then walks out of the river and says, “I’m going to empty myself, starting today. I’m going to *really* become like every other human, starting today. Starting today, I’m going to take my Adamic commonality to new levels. This is it, the Big Emptying. Time to become a real Joe.” From this time forward he turns gallons of water into wine, raises several dead people, controls the weather, walks on water, feeds thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish, projects himself into the future, levitates and glows on top of a mountain, and cures hundreds of people of hundreds of diseases.

Nice way to empty yourself, Jesus. *Oops.*

My main point is that, not only does Aaron insult our intelligence with this “I’m really going to humble Myself after my baptism” thing, but he destroys the beautiful truth of the *willing* (not forced) sacrifice of the Son of God, Who consciously decided to submit Himself to the perils of humanity and to therefore become subject to death—all of this in the likeness of Adam, who, because of his love for his wife, voluntarily joined Eve on the

other side of the iron curtain of sin and death. If Adam, who was not deceived in Eden, is a type of Christ in that He *voluntarily* joined his wife to be with her in the throes of her curse, then who will *dare* point to the Greater Man and suggest that at no time did this Man *ever* want to come here, or desire to be here with us in the throes of this curse, or desire to become an Adamic human so that He *could* die for us, but that the whole enterprise was forced upon Him apart from any predisposition on His part to noble sacrifice. If this be the case, then truly Adam is greater than Christ.



TWO-PART EMPTYING

There are two parts to Christ’s decision to come to earth as an Adamic human being; that is, there are two parts to His sacrificial emptying—1) “coming to be in the likeness of humanity,” and 2) “being found in fashion as a human.” One speaks of manner of living (“humanity”), the other of constitution (“human”). These distinctions are purposeful and important, but Aaron never properly distinguishes them. He neglects to differentiate both “likeness” from “fashion,” and “humanity” from “human.” Certainly in his articles he focuses more on “likeness of humanity” rather than “found in fashion as a human.” Little wonder; the coming to be of the literal, physical body of Jesus Christ “in *fashion* as a human,” blows Aaron’s Jordan River scenario to bits.

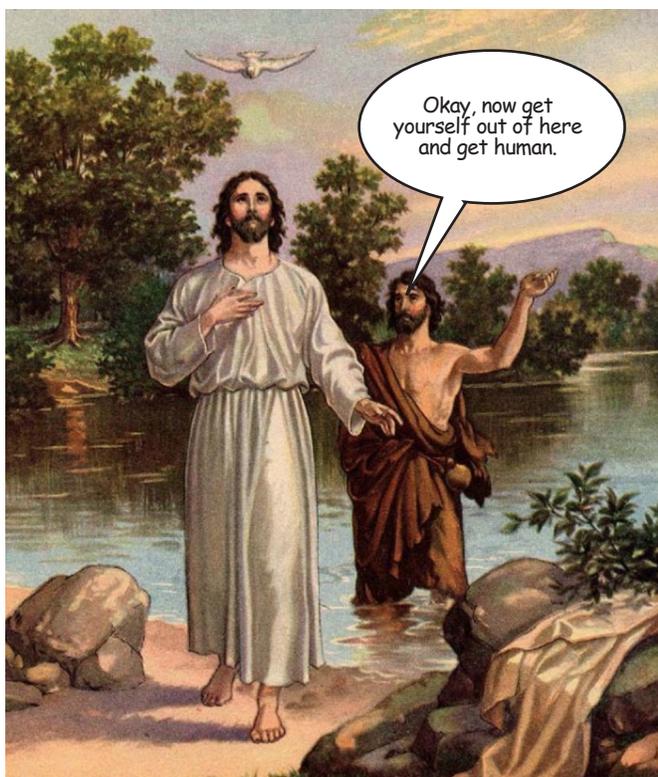
“FOUND IN FASHION AS A HUMAN”

“Coming to be in the likeness of humanity” and, “being found in fashion as a human” are, as I have said, different aspects of the same event. “In the likeness of humanity” describes human mannerisms; “in fashion as a human” describes the common number of arms, legs, toes, and so forth—including the presence of a head and the usual number of ears—that made Jesus Christ look like every other son of Adam.

Both of these things “came to be.” But when?

The word “fashion” is translated from the Greek word *schema*, whose English element is FIGURE. The Greek-English Keyword Concordance to the *Concordant Literal New Testament* defines *schema* as “the prevailing form.” Not only did Jesus Christ—up to His baptism—act like every other human being, but He looked like every other human being for, again, *schema* speaks of prevailing form.

Here is the two-part emptying of Jesus Christ that Paul is anxious to describe to us: His manner and His constitution. As these two things (manner and constitution) are two different aspects of the same event (of Christ emptying Himself), how is it that Aaron emphasizes one and barely comments on the other? It’s because the coming of Christ’s literal human body (Philippians 2:7)—not the mere existence of that body but the *coming* of it—sends his premise off the cliff.



That Christ not only came to be in the likeness of humanity but also came to be in the form of a human (as a result of consciously emptying Himself), negates Aaron’s contention that this could have occurred thirty years after Jesus’ birth at the Jordan River. Did Jesus Christ suddenly come to be “found in fashion as a human” then? As He emerged from the Jordan, did He suddenly sprout arms and leg? Toes? Was it in 28 A.D., thirty years after His birth, that Jesus Christ grew a head and assumed the proper number of fingers? Did He, only at this late date near the end of His life, suddenly began walking on His two feet? Was it at the baptism of John that—for the first time—people pointed at Him in complete shock as He exited the water and exclaimed, “Oh, my goodness! It’s a human!”

Of course this is absurd—and thus so is Aaron’s argument. Jesus Christ was found in fashion as a human, not thirty years into His life, but in Bethlehem, when He emerged from His mother’s womb looking like every other baby in Israel—and in the rest of the world for that matter. This was also the time when He came to be in the *likeness* of humanity—insofar as acting in the manner of every baby human in the world—crying, nursing from His mother’s breast, eliminating waste matter into his diaper.

The only way that our Lord could have *chosen* to take the fashion of a human (for, as Paul writes, *He* “empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity and being found in fashion as a human...””) was if He preexisted His arrival in Bethlehem. Which He did. For it was in Bethlehem that He came to be in fashion as a human.

* * *

Not only did Jesus Christ empty Himself of His pre-existent glory with God to take the form of a human and to behave like a human but—*as* a human—He also humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. These are Christ’s twin glories and His preeminent boasts, and may no man—no matter what manner of strange and contrary wind of teaching he may bring—rend it asunder. —MZ

Next week: *How To Torture Colossians 1:15-18 And Not Get Away With It.*