

Systematic Theology for the Local Church

#36—Christology—Part II¹

The Event of the Incarnation

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The next study will be on the results of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Helpful for that study are sections 29 and 30 in House's *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*. For this study you may read in Reymond, pp. 253-265.

The spirit of the western world today, with its in-your-face promotion of self, is nothing new. Take the self-esteem movement, that says I need to be loved in order to function, I must feel good about myself, I need a good self-image and a sense of self-worth. When the therapist encourages his patient to repeat, with positive thinking, "I'm somebody!", it's no different from what Walt Whitman said 147 years ago (*Laws for Creations*, 1860):

What do you suppose Creation is?

What do you suppose will satisfy the Soul, except to walk free, and own no superior?

What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred ways, but that man or woman is as good as God!

And that there is no God any more divine than Yourself?

And this is just what Nebuchadnezzar said in Dan. 4:30:

Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?

In the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, we find the antithesis of this. The pre-incarnate Son put himself last for the sake of others. 'Incarnation' is a word made from Latin words and means roughly 'in flesh.' The incarnation began in space and time with the virgin conception and became visible with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, as prophesied in Micah 5:2, which not only predicts the place of his birth, but also asserts his pre-existence:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

The passage that takes us deeper into the theology of the incarnation than any other is Phil. 2, where the incarnation is set against the background of self-denial. Unlike the self-esteemers, Walt Whitman and Nebuchadnezzar—and our own hearts!—we find one who literally embodies the opposite of such sinfulness.

The pattern for the incarnation: the bondservant

This passage tells us the human pattern for the outcome of the incarnation: the first-century Mediterranean-world bondservant. The New Testament has several Greek nouns (and related verbs) that involve the concept of servant: The words θεράπων (*therapōn*), ὑπηρέτης (*upēretēs*) and διάκονος (*diakonos*) are used of servants fulfilling various roles of providing for other people. The word λειτουργός (*leitourgos*) is used of special

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service, including serving in spiritual things. There are two words that refer to slavery: παῖς (pais) refers to someone who is a slave, but could be a personal servant of someone, including the idea of a fond relationship. Finally, δοῦλος (doulos) refers to someone who is the property of another person. This is the word that is found in Phil. 2:7.

There are several features about the bondservant in the ancient Mediterranean world that we should notice:

1. His time and abilities are totally at the disposal of someone else.
2. He must let others have first priority.
3. He is trained to and expected to notice the needs of others.
4. He has to put his own safety and welfare last.
5. He cannot own property.
6. He is not his own master, has no rights and is not respected. We might refer to him today as a ‘non-person.’

All of these features are relevant to the role of the Lord Jesus Christ as a bondservant.

The textual and theological details of the incarnation

The second Person of the Holy Trinity, the divine Son, under the eternal agreement of the Godhead, voluntarily took on the nature of a human bondservant. The details of the Philippians text are very important, so we will treat them very carefully. I have studied this passage in the Greek text and for its theological significance for many years and as far as I know my conclusions differ from any other published studies. We should see the passage as having three parts:

- 1) Verses 1-5, which constitute an exhortation to the Philippians to pattern their lives after the example of the Son as he was joined with humanity;
- 2) Verses 6-8, which describe the act of incarnation and the death of the incarnate one on the Cross, and
- 3) Verses 9-10, which give the Father’s response to the obedience of the Son.

The following is my own translation, which is true to the Greek text and which I believe brings out the important theological features better than any published translation. I provide the Greek text of the passage and the King James for reference. In my translation, the underlined portions have the same verb—phroneo—which can roughly be defined here as referring to a way of thinking or viewing something.

- 1 If there is any encouragement in your association with Christ, if there is any comfort produced by love, if there is any fellowship produced by the Spirit, if there are any compassions and tendernesses (and there are!), then
- 2 make my joy complete by having the same way of thinking, having the same love, being knit together in your souls, focusing your minds on one thing,
- 3 doing nothing because of strife or empty glory, but with humility regarding each other as being better than yourselves,
- 4 not paying attention—each of you—to your own affairs, but also to the affairs of others.
- 5 Have this way of thinking among you that was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 Who, although He existed with the nature of God, did not regard living the way God lives as something to be retained in His grasp,
- 7 but emptied Himself by taking the nature of a bondservant, entering into a correspondence with human beings; and outwardly appearing just like any human being
- 8 He humbled Himself by being obedient to the point of death, and a Cross-death at that!

9 For this reason God lifted Him to the heights and graciously bestowed on Him the name that is above every name,
10 in order that at the name of Jesus every knee of those in heavenly realms and earthly realms and sub-earthly realms might bow,
11 and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord—to the glory of God the Father!

2 Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἀγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί, ²πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαρὰν ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε, τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες, σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἐν φρονούντες, ³μηδὲν κατ' ἐριθειαν μὴδὲ κατὰ κενοδοξίαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν, ⁴μὴ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστος σκοποῦντες ἀλλὰ [καί] τὰ ἐτέρων ἕκαστοι. ⁵Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,

⁶ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, ⁷ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὔρεθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος ⁸ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

⁹διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ¹⁰ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνου κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων ¹¹καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς. ²

King James Version

¹ If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, ² Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ *Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ³

Here are the key terms and syntactic features from vv. 6-8 that contribute to the picture of the theology of the incarnation. I provide both my translation and the corresponding King James for comparison and to support the discussion.

²Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., & Wikgren, A. (1997, c1982). *The Greek New Testament* (Php 1:30-2:11). Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies.

³*The Holy Bible : King James Version*. 1995 (electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version.) (Php 2:1-11). Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- 1) PK: in the nature of God; KJV: in the form of God

The word μορφῆ (morphē), which I translate ‘nature,’ refers to the essence of a thing. You have the morphē of a human being. Hence, ἐν μορφῆ θεοῦ (en morphē theou) refers to the essence of Godhood. Jesus really was God in every way. The interpretation found in the King James has been used by many to assert that whoever Jesus was before Bethlehem he was less than God, having only a form of God or a likeness to God.

- 2) PK: although he existed; KJV: being

There are three things to notice about this. First, this entire translated phrase is drawn from a form of the verb ὑπάρχω (huparchō), which refers to existence. The pre-incarnate Son really existed as deity. The second thing to notice is the fact that this is a present-tense participle that I interpret as presenting an ongoing state: the son had a continuous existence as God that was in effect at the point of the incarnation. But, as we will see, it was not interrupted or terminated by the incarnation. The third thing to notice is that the word ‘although,’ implied in the participial form of ‘exist,’ powerfully sets up the reader for a contrast, which is fulfilled in the second part of v. 6—‘did not regard living the way God lives as something to be retained in His grasp.’ We are immediately told that the incarnation involved things that were not expected in the normal course of things. Stated simply, we should not regard the changes that the Son went through as business as usual. Something astounding is happening here.

- 3) PK: did not regard. . . as something to be retained in His grasp; KJV: thought it not robbery to be

We are concerned here only with the first and last part of this portion of this text at this point. Many have concluded that the Greek text here speaks of something that Jesus avoided claiming, and so we find translations such as “he did not try to become equal with God.” This, of course, reveals the assumption that Jesus was not God to begin with and never was God. This interpretation/translation flies in the face of the many places in the New Testament that assert Jesus’ deity and also fails to understand the meaning of μορφῆ (morphē) at the beginning of the verse. My translation supports the full deity of the pre-incarnate Son and highlights his willingness to give something up in the incarnation. What he gave up is found in the next phrase that we consider.

- 4) PK: living the way God lives/KJV: be equal with God

This little phrase, which is a translation of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ (to einai isa theō), is the first of two keys that are crucial for unraveling a problem that has plagued interpreters for a long time. Most interpreters take the phrase to refer to the qualities of God, and so translate it in ways similar to the King James: ‘equal with God.’ In doing so, they take ἴσα (isa) to be an adjective. When combined with the rest of the verse, this becomes in the hands of many interpreters a description of Jesus’ turning from or avoiding *being* God. Hence we have the King James translation: ‘thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation.’ This kind of interpretation means either that he gave up his deity or that he was never God to begin with. For those that assume that the pre-incarnate Son was deity, this view of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ (to einai isa theō) as referring to the qualities of God, when combined with the emptying of v. 7 (what the King James translates as ‘made himself of no reputation’), has led many to conclude that the deity of the pre-incarnate Son changed in some way—if he was God before Bethlehem, he emptied himself of deity in some way to live on earth. For those that assume that the pre-incarnate Son was not deity (it is, of course, a contradiction to have one who exists before birth being simply a human being; pre-existence implies deity), ‘be equal with God’ is simply what Jesus never attained.

The answer to this interpretive puzzle lies in the meanings of ἴσα (isa) and εἶναι (einai). The word ἴσα (isa) has universally been misidentified. It is a neuter plural form of the Greek word ἴσος, which is an adjective that is equivalent to ‘equal’ in English. But ἴσα (isa) is not an adjective. It is an adverb, equivalent to English ‘equally’ or ‘in a similar way’ or ‘in a way similar to.’ This meaning is found in the most respected lexicon of ancient Greek.⁴ I have been able to find examples of the use of this word in Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey that are remarkably similar to what Paul writes here. In the Iliad (Scroll 5, lines 69-72; translation by Samuel Butler) we find this phrase:

Meges, moreover, slew Pedaios, son of Antenor, who. . . had been brought up by Theano as one of her own children, for the love she bore her husband.

The phrase ‘as one of’ is a translation of ἴσα (isa) and means ‘in the same manner.’ Theano brought up Antenor *in the same manner as* she brought up her own children.” While I could provide more examples, this is sufficient to show what ἴσα (isa) means. It does not refer to a quality but to *a way of doing something*. Once again, it is an adverb, not an adjective.

The second part of the solution to this puzzle is the meaning of εἶναι (einai). Most have assumed that it is simply a connective verb, so the phrase ‘be equal’ is like ‘be blue’ or ‘be happy.’ But this verb often denotes existence, as in the English sentences “Human beings exist on the earth” or “I wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for my parents.” This meaning fits perfectly with the meaning of ἴσα (isa). Hence the two words together describe the manner of the pre-incarnate Son’s *existence*: he lived in the manner God lives. God lives in evident splendor, subject to no one and no thing. Clearly this was true of the second Person of the Trinity. And it was what he gave up.

So we find that careful use of the information found in a lexicon of ancient Greek and the examples in ancient Greek literature provides a solution to the problem that arises when people take Paul’s Greek words to refer to ‘being equal with God.’ What Paul is actually saying is that the pre-incarnate Son existed in the *manner* or *way* God exists. What Jesus did not try to retain in his grasp was existing the way God exists.

Robert Reymond⁵ is an example of someone who strives⁵ to retain the deity of the Son but misses this small but important grammatical point. Has difficulty understanding what the Son did, because he follows the traditional understanding of the phrase and fails to note that the text has an adverb, not an adjective. He is (correctly) convinced that the pre-incarnate Son did not give up his deity (v. 7—‘emptied’). So he takes a very different route and concludes that v. 6b refers to Jesus’ experience *after* the incarnation, as exemplified by the temptation in the wilderness: Satan tempted Jesus to be equal with God the Father and not subordinate (subordination *is* true of the relationship of the Son to the Father since Bethlehem), but Jesus did not yield. This interpretation leads to other problems with the understanding of the passage, which we do not have time to go into in this study.

5) PK: he emptied himself/KJV: made himself of no reputation

In combination with the interpretation that the Son was ‘equal with God’ in v. 6, this phrase has been taken to mean that Jesus gave up his deity in some way. The verb denotes some kind of emptying, but what gets emptied? We should note two important things: 1) The text does not tell us what the pre-

⁴ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 839.

⁵ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of The Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 262-3.

incarnate Son emptied himself of, so we should be careful not to jump to conclusions; 2) The meaning cannot be physical, but spiritual or metaphorical. We have to look at the next phrase to understand the emptying.

6) PK: by taking the nature of a bondservant/KJV: and took upon him the form of a servant

In this adverbial phrase lies the second main key to understanding this passage. The participle that I translate ‘by taking’ can be rendered ‘taking’ or ‘after taking’ or, as in the KJV, simply ‘took.’ However, the passage as a whole invites us to see a strong contrast between the nature (μορφῆ [‘morphē’]) of God and the nature of a servant. In fact, μορφῆ is used of both, and this is very important for understanding the passage. When we see that the participle ‘taking’ provides the content of the emptying, we gain a theological richness that is missing in other interpretations of the passage. The pre-incarnate Son metaphorically emptied himself by taking on the nature of a bondservant (μορφῆν δούλου; morphēn doulou). The emptying actually consisted of an addition! But how could this be?

The Son never changed his nature as God. Instead, he changed from living the way God lives to living the way a bondservant lives. God demands respect and honor. As we saw earlier, a bondservant can ask for neither. God acts in freedom; a bondservant is under the control of others. None of the attributes of the Son were affected. God is unchangeable; therefore, the Son could not change. But what did change was the way the Son carried out his existence. It is an emptying to live the way a bondservant does. The bondservant was the lowest of the low in Mediterranean society. If there was any way to show that someone was truly human, this was it.

In changing from the way God lives to the way a lowly human being lives, the Son put himself totally in subjection to the Father as a servant for our sakes. Raymond says that this is false, since the Son always did the will of the Father⁶. But we do not know what the interaction among the Persons of the Trinity was like before the incarnation. And we do see many examples in the New Testament text of the incarnate Son expressly placing himself under the will and direction of the Father. We will return to this in the next study.

This emptying by addition provides us with a solid exegetical base for the classic view of the incarnation as resulting in one person with two natures. Jesus was and is one person with two natures—divine and human. The pre-incarnate Son possessed the nature of deity. The virgin conception that culminated in the birth in Bethlehem *added* the nature of a human being. Theologians have referred to this as the ‘hypostatic union,’ a rather obscure way of saying that Jesus is one person with two complete natures that co-exist without become confused or intermingled. He is fully divine and fully human at the same time. I frequently use the term ‘God-Man,’ because I feel that it gets to the heart of the result of the incarnation. His deity and humanity are fully balanced, with no compromise of either.

This exegetically based understanding of the passage also makes it easy to see the errors of what is called ‘kenotic theory,’ a term that uses the Greek word that is translated ‘emptied’ in this passage. Kenotic theory says that the Son was deity but gave up some or all of his attributes (such as omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence). Not only does such a view vitiate the deity of the Son, it can be disproved by counterexamples in the New Testament, such as Jesus’ control of the weather, his knowledge of the future and his upholding the universe while walking on earth.

Nor did the Son lay aside his glory, as some have claimed. We have counterexamples of this idea, too, as when he provided a glimpse of his glory in the Kingdom at the transfiguration on the mountain.

⁶ Ibid, 260.

7. PK: entering into a correspondence with human beings/KJV: and was made in the likeness of men

This phrase poses no significant exegetical or translational difficulties but it does add important theological information. The result of the incarnation was a person who was just like other human beings in every way, except for having a sin nature. He really was human. Jesus' full humanity is essential to his saving and sanctifying work, as we will see in the next study.

Over the years those skeptical that deity and humanity could be joined have asserted either that Jesus was fully God but not fully human, or fully human but not fully God. Our exegetical finding that grammatically and lexically the incarnation consisted of an addition of one nature to the other keeps either of these views from standing.

8. PK: outwardly appearing just like any human being/KJV: being found in fashion as a man

This phrase teaches us that there was nothing special in Jesus' appearance. If you passed him on the street today and he was dressed like men dress in our culture, you would not notice him. This fact underscores his true humanity and provides an antidote to ideas that Jesus was in some way a super human in nature and appearance.

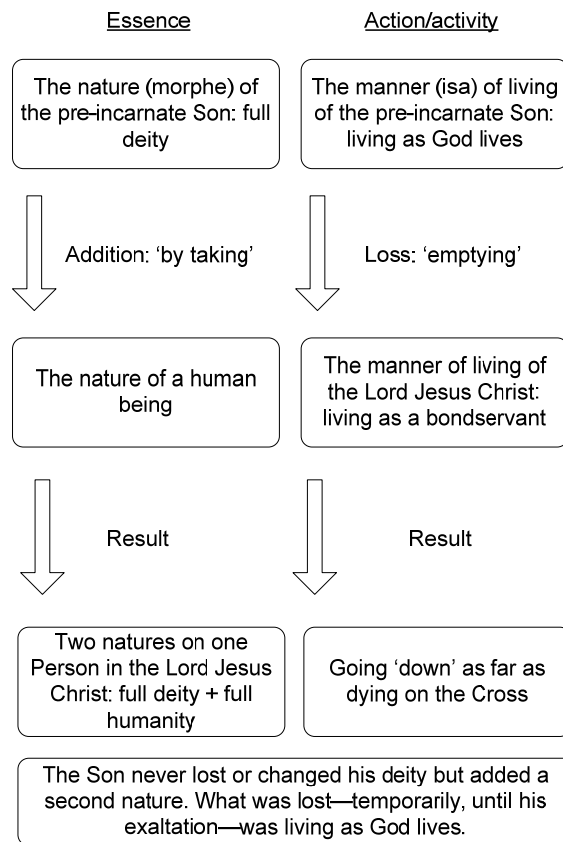
9. PK: he humbled himself/KJV: he humbled himself

The section consisting of vv. 6-8 concludes with the Son at the spiritually opposite point from where it started: living as God lives ends up with dying in total humiliation, with an emphatic repetition of the fact of the Cross—"a Cross death at that!" Such a death involved shame and suffering and was reserved for criminals and slaves. The Mosaic Law pronounced a curse on it. Gentiles considered it to be the lowest form of punishment, something that a Roman citizen could not undergo. One cannot go any lower or live any more genuinely as a human being.

By way of review, here is my translation of the key verses again:

- 6 Who although He existed with the nature of God, did not regard living the way God lives as something to be retained in His grasp,
- 7 but emptied Himself by taking the nature of a bondservant, entering into a correspondence with human beings; and outwardly appearing just like any human being
- 8 He humbled Himself by being obedient to the point of death, and a Cross-death at that!

It seems sacrilegious to attempt to portray the incarnation in a Visio diagram, but perhaps the following will help you to understand this complex passage better:



In the last verses of this passage, Paul gives the result of what the Son did in becoming incarnate and dying as a bondservant and criminal: God is glorified and the Son is lifted up and rewarded with the title of Lord. I believe that this is what Paul describes in Rom. 1:4, where the Son “was declared with power to be the Son of God⁷ by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” (notice the NIV note). It is a biblical principle that God honors those who put themselves last.

This study has considered the incarnation itself. The Bible also presents the results of the incarnation for the God-Man and the believer. We will treat these in the next study.

⁷ Or was appointed to be the Son of God with power

Study questions

1. What are the two main keys to interpreting this passage? Of what sort are they—theological, translational, grammatical, historical, social, etc.?
2. What are the things that remain unchanged at the incarnation? What are the things that change at the incarnation?
3. In what way did the incarnation constitute an emptying? Why might Paul have used this word?
4. What are the practical differences between the way God carries out his existence and the way the incarnate Son carried out his existence while on earth?

Running compilation of key definitions

1. Systematic theology: The organized presentation of all that the Bible teaches about God and His works.
2. Exegesis: The actual practice of studying or interpreting a document or other message to determine its meaning.
3. Context: Context in a document or utterance is the surroundings of a portion of a word, a word, or a group of words.
4. Bibliology: The doctrinal study of the nature of the Bible.
5. Biblical authority: The quality inherent in Scripture by virtue of which human beings are completely answerable to its content.
6. Revelation: The information about Himself given by God to human beings.
7. General revelation: God's disclosure of Himself, available directly to everyone, given through means other than dreams, visions, direct words and Christ Himself.
8. Special revelation: The disclosure of information from God that is not available directly to all human beings.
9. Inspiration: A term applied to the Bible denoting that it is the product of God's creative activity, figuratively breathed out from Him (2 Tim. 3:16); applies to the process of recording Scripture, not specifically to the people involved; actually, *expiration* would be a better term to reflect the concept of 2 Tim. 3:16; the result is *inerrancy*.
10. Textual criticism: The science and art of attempting to discover the original text of a literary work for which the original document does not exist. It is especially important for biblical studies, and the foundational endeavor to all subsequent investigation of the Scriptures.
11. Canon: Transliterated from a Greek Word meaning "standard"; as used of the Bible, it refers to books authenticated as possessing divine origin and therefore authoritative; the Jewish canon consists of thirty-nine books, the Protestant of sixty-six and the Catholic of eighty (including apocryphal books).
12. Inerrancy is a term applied to the Bible, although not specifically found in it; it denotes that the Bible, as originally written, possessed no humanly induced deviations from the message God intended to be recorded and that it is true in every respect; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:19.
13. Infallibility: Although some assert that this term has a different meaning from inerrancy, the two terms are, for purposes of biblical study, synonymous; the Bible is infallible because inerrant, and inerrant because infallible.
14. Illumination is the teaching ministry of the Spirit of God that imparts understanding of the message of Scripture to the believer; not to be confused with inspiration, which in the Bible is used of the work of God in giving Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16); 1 Jn. 2:20; Jn. 16:13.
15. Spirituality: God is not physical, but immaterial, incorporeal, invisible and alive.
16. Self-existence/Aseity: God exists independently of anything else. He is self-existent.
17. Immensity: God is infinite in relation to space.
18. Eternality: God is infinite with regard to time.
19. Simplicity: God is not a plurality and cannot be looked at as divisible into parts.
20. Pure actuality: There is nothing about God that is potential. He is not unfinished in any way.
21. Necessity: God is uncaused and exists because he must exist.
22. Immutability: God is unchanging and unchangeable.
23. Impassibility: God is incapable of being changed or disturbed by what he experiences and is incapable of suffering.
24. Transcendence: God and the world are distinct; he is not part of the world, and the world is not part of him.
25. Immanence: God is present in the world.
26. Infinity: There are no limits to God's person and his perfections.
27. Omnipotence: God can do whatever he wills.
28. Omniscience: God knows everything there is to know.
29. Omnipresence: God is present everywhere in his creation

30. Holiness: God is morally pure and separated from all moral evil and sin.
31. Goodness: A quality that describes or includes his love, benevolence, mercy and grace
32. Truth: God's person, actions, knowledge and revelations correspond to reality
33. Love: God's continual communication of himself to his creatures.
34. Benevolence: God's goodness toward his creatures.
35. Mercy: God's goodness toward those who are helpless.
36. Grace: God's goodness toward sinners.
37. Glory: The greatness of God's perfections.
38. Trinity: There is only one true God, existing as a single Being comprised of three Persons who are equal in every way, yet distinct in their tasks and relations to humanity.
39. God's decree: The decree of God is his plan for the universe that includes all things and is certain to come to pass.
40. Providence: God's care for and upholding of his creation.
41. Sovereignty: God's control over his universe.
42. Christology: The study of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
43. Incarnation: The joining of deity and humanity in one person forever. The word is based on the Latin word for flesh: the Lord Jesus Christ is God joined with human flesh.
44. Pre-existence: Used of the Son, it means that he existed before Bethlehem.
45. Theophany: An appearance of God.
46. Christophany: An appearance of Christ.