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Jesus Lacked Awareness

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Was Jesus aware at all times of all things? In other words, since He was fully God and fully man, was He exercising the divine attribute of omniscience? If not, how could He claim to be God? If you said He was fully aware at all times that would raise questions about the reality of His humanity.

How could He be omniscient and experience the stages of human growth? At the moment of His birth did He consciously possess an awareness of everything? If so, did He pretend to learn language and acquire knowledge? If you said He wasn't fully aware then how could He be fully God? After all, omniscience is a divine attribute. Take it away and you no longer have God.

A careful reading of the gospels clearly demonstrates that Jesus lacked full awareness of all things at all times.

The Questions Jesus Asked

For instance:

In Matthew 5:31 He asked, "Who touched me?"

In Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

In Mark 6:31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. As it’s written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’” Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it wasn’t Moses who gave you the bread out of heaven, but it’s My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven." Yet, once they approached the shore a large crowd met them. If fully aware wouldn't He have known the crowd would meet them?

In Mark 6:38"For I’ve come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

In Mark 9:16 Jesus asked the disciples, "What were you arguing about?"

In Mark 9:21 Jesus asked the father of the demonized boy, who was experiencing a demonically induced seizure, "How long has this been happening to him?"

In John 11:34 He asked Mary and those with her where they had laid the body of Lazarus.

In Matthew 24:36 Jesus said He didn't know the day or hour of His return.

In John 18:34, after Pilate asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews, Jesus asked Pilate, "Do you ask this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

Did He Use Omniscience Only When Needed?

The above nine passages make it clear Jesus did not exercise His divine attribute of omniscience during the incarnation. Of course, there are also passages where Jesus demonstrated an awareness that goes beyond human understanding. For instance, in John 1:48 when Jesus first met Nathaniel and called him a man of integrity, Nathaniel asked Jesus how He knew him. Jesus replied, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Wasn't that an example of divine omniscience?

Or, how about when Jesus talked with the woman at the well in Samaria? He asked her to go to town and return with her husband. She said she had no husband. Jesus replied, "You're right when you say, 'I don't have a husband,' for you've had five husbands, and the man you now live with isn't your husband." How would Jesus know the details of the woman's life? Wouldn't that instance prove Jesus was fully aware of all things at all times? Wouldn't it prove His omniscience?

Some believe that Jesus only exercised His nontransferable attributes, such as omniscience and omnipotence, when needed. Most of the time He thought and acted as a mere man, like when teaching or walking. But when needed, he could activate His omniscience and know all things. Or, activate His omnipotence and heal the sick or walk on water. Kinda like a divine transformer.

Emptied, Yet Fully God

But there's another point of view which I think better aligns with Scripture and provides an example we can follow. Namely: During the incarnation Jesus limited the exercise of His divine attributes. Philippians 2:5-7 tell us, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men."

I interpret the idea of Jesus emptying Himself as a reference to the laying aside of the exercise of his nontransferable divine attributes. That does not mean He stopped possessing the divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, omnipresence. It means He chose not to exercise them during the incarnation.

As an example if you closed your eyes you would still possess the attribute of vision. But by closing your eyes you would be choosing not to exercise it. In a sense, that's what Jesus did during the incarnation. He closed His eyes to the exercise of the divine attribute of omniscience. He chose not to be fully aware of all things at all times.

That raises an important question: How then did Jesus see Nathaniel and how did He know the secrets of the Samaritan woman's private life? I'll address that question in the next post: He Lived by Revelation, Not Omniscience.