

Γίνομαι and Christ's "Becomings"

In at least twenty-seven passages that refer to the process that Christ went through in His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, and in what He is in our salvation, the verb γίνομαι, "to become, to change in state, to come into existence," is used. On the one hand, Christ is God, and the Bible states clearly that God is the same (Psa. 102:27; Heb. 1:12), that He does not change (Mal. 3:6), that with Him there is no shadow cast by turning (James 1:17), and that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). On the other hand, the use of the verb γίνομαι in the New Testament with Christ as the subject indicates that changes have taken place, particularly in John 1:14, "the Word became flesh," and 1 Corinthians 15:45, "the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." The reconciliation of these two views is the subject of this article. As we shall see, any reconciliation hinges upon our understanding of the meaning of γίνομαι and its use in describing the processes of Christ.¹

The Meaning and Use of Γίνομαι

Γίνομαι, like the English verb *become*, can be classified as a non-agentive, durative, conclusive, process verb, denoting "a change of state taking place over a period" of time (Quirk 207). It is a non-agentive intransitive verb in the sense that the subject does not perform the action, nor is it the recipient of the action (although agents may be indirectly involved in the process; for example, in the clause "I became a doctor," teachers, schools, and even patients are involved). It is a durative process with emphasis placed on the duration of the change. It is conclusive in that the process results in an attribute (either an adjective or a noun phrase complement), with the verb *becoming* functioning as a copula or linking verb.

Γίνομαι is used in the New Testament with the sense of meaning "to become," i.e., to come into existence, to begin to be, to receive being; also, to come to pass, to happen (of events); and to arise, to appear (in history). Sometimes it occurs in a passive sense meaning to be made, to be done, or to be finished. It is also related to the verb γεννώω meaning to beget or bring forth into existence (which also occurs at crucial stages of Christ's process).

From the time of the ancient Greek philosophers, there has been debate concerning the distinction between

"being" with the endurance of an unchanging fundamental reality and "becoming" with the sense of both coming into existence and of changing the state of something previously in existence. God is considered an eternal unchanging "being," while the created universe is in a state of change or "becoming."

These notions of "being" and "becoming" are significant in considering the person of Christ and His process. As God, Christ is eternally self-existing, immortal, and immutable, or unchanging (Heb. 1:11-12; 13:8). He is (11:6). This is clearly implied in the Gospel of John by Jesus' use of the verb "to be" absolutely in the expression ἐγὼ εἰμί or *I Am* (4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5-6, 8; cf. Exo. 3:14; Isa. 43:10).² In terms of essence and characteristics, Christ in His divinity does not change.

On the other hand, when Christ became a man in time, He entered the physical realm of "becoming," or of change. He entered into a different state, that of humanity (while retaining His divinity). God became a man, the immortal put on mortality, and the immutable put on changeable human nature. In the stage of incarnation the divine life and nature became mingled with the human life and nature and gained a human expression. God had a new existence in humanity. As a man He went through the changes common to human experience, including death. In the stage of resurrection when He became the life-giving Spirit, Christ in His humanity entered a change of state to become spiritual humanity. He also attained to a number of new statuses, such as High Priest, and as the life-giving Spirit, He could impart Himself into His believers and produce the church in order to consummate the New Jerusalem as His ultimate expansion and expression in humanity.

There are two critical "becomings" in this process which indicate a change in state: one when Christ as the Word became flesh (which took place in incarnation), and the second when Christ in the flesh became the life-giving Spirit (which took place in resurrection). These two "becomings" correspond to the two "begettings" of Christ: one in which He was begotten of a virgin, Mary, and the second when He was begotten as the Son of God in resurrection. In addition to these two "becomings," there are numerous other "becomings" which are equivalent to or

dependent on these two, all of which use the verb γίνομαι. In the context of these “becomings,” the verb “to be” frequently occurs as a testimony to Christ’s eternal existence.

The Occurrences of Γίνομαι in Relation to Christ’s Incarnation and Human Living

The verb γίνομαι occurs in four sections of verses concerned with Christ’s incarnation and one verse related to His human living.

Becoming Flesh

John 1:14 is a crucial verse indicating that Christ underwent a change of state: “The Word became (ἐγένετο) flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.” The expression *the Word* indicates that Christ is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. As the Word, He was in the beginning with God and was God. This refers to His eternal existence as indicated by the verb “to be.” The Word became flesh through the process of being begotten (γεννηθῆν) in Mary of (ἐκ) the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). The Word went through a change of state in the sense that the divine nature was brought forth in the human nature and the two natures were mingled together. Flesh refers to the human nature. However, it commonly denotes fallen human nature in which dwells sin and death and passions and lusts, and it is in contrast to the spirit (26:41; John 1:13; 3:6; Rom. 7:5, 18, 25; 8:4-9, 12-13; 13:14; Gal. 5:16-17, 19, 24; 6:8; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:23; 1 Pet. 4:2; 1 John 2:16; cf. Gen. 6:3, 12). However, Christ’s flesh had only the likeness (ὁμοίωμα) of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3), just like the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:9 had the form of a serpent but lacked the poisonous serpentine nature (John 3:14). This was necessary in order for Him to redeem mankind through His death and have the ability to deliver fallen humanity from the poison of sin. The confession that Christ had come in the flesh (and not just appearing to be in the flesh as a phantom or an apparition) was essential in the early church (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7; cf. 1 Tim. 3:16).

Becoming of a Woman, under Law

The second verse in which γίνομαι occurs in relation to Christ’s incarnation is Galatians 4:4: “When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born (γενόμενον) of (ἐκ) a woman, born (γενόμενον) under law.” This verse emphasizes Christ’s human source, having become or being born of a woman, and fulfilled the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 concerning the seed of the woman. Galatians 4:4 also emphasizes that He was under the law, born into and raised in a Jewish society that was

under the commandments and ordinances of the law, “subject to [the regulations of] the Law” (Amplified Bible). The following verse indicates a purpose of His coming—that He might redeem those under law.

Becoming out of the Seed of David

The third verse to use γίνομαι in relation to Christ’s incarnation is Romans 1:3: “Concerning His Son, who came out (γενομένου) of (ἐκ) the seed of David according to the flesh.” This verse emphasizes His royal lineage as a descendant of David (lit., from his seed). As a result, He became the anointed Messiah, a legitimate Heir to the throne, fulfilling the prophecy and promise to David and his descendants (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Jer. 23:5; 33:15-17; Matt. 22:42-45; John 7:42; Acts 13:23; cf. 2 Tim. 2:8). Both Matthew and Luke emphasize His descent from David in their accounts of the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:1, 17; Luke 1:31-33; 2:4-6; 3:23, 31). He descended from David both through Mary and through her husband Joseph. Romans 1:4 continues by saying that “He was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” This relates to His second begetting as the Son of God in resurrection.

Becoming in the Likeness of Men

The final set of verses that uses γίνομαι in relation to Christ’s incarnation is Philippians 2:7-8, which says, “But [He] emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming (γενόμενος) in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man.” This passage emphasizes His self-emptying of the glorious expression of God to put on genuine humanity. He took the human μορφή (the outward expression of the inward essence), He looked just like any other human being in His human likeness, and He was found in fashion as a man, being subject to all the experiences and sufferings of a regular human being. He was like us in all respects, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; John 8:7; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 3:5), only having the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3).³

Becoming ahead of John the Baptist

Γίνομαι occurs once related to Jesus’ status in His human living. John the Baptist testified concerning the Lord Jesus in terms of His “becoming” in relation to himself: “This was He of whom I said, He who is coming after me has become (γέγονεν) ahead (ἔμπροσθέν) of me, because He was before (πρώτος; lit., first) me” (John 1:15, 30). On the one hand, Jesus Christ as the eternal One existed before John. On the other hand, in time He came after John. However, He became ahead of him due to the significance of who He is and what He accomplished. Jesus’ ministry superseded John’s ministry, and John’s ministry

was to prepare the way for Jesus. John testified that he was just a voice in the wilderness and that Jesus must increase and he must decrease (3:30).

The Occurrences of Γίνομαι in Relation to Christ's Crucifixion

Γίνομαι occurs in at least three verses in relation to Christ's crucifixion. His crucifixion could only take place based upon the change of state that took place at incarnation. God became a man with flesh and blood, and thus He was able to die.

Becoming Obedient Even unto Death

In the continuation of the process of Christ's self-emptying, "He humbled Himself, becoming (γενόμενος) obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross" (Phil. 2:8; cf. Rom. 5:19). This indicates that a process was involved in Christ's becoming obedient unto death. We are given some indication in the Gospels as to what was involved in this process of becoming obedient in the final step of His earthly ministry. We can sense the anguish He felt and even some reluctance from a human perspective to experience death by crucifixion. There was need of prayer and even strengthening by an angel (Luke 22:43) to go through this process. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane so that His will was absolutely in tune with the Father's: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39), and again, going away a second time, He prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done (γενηθήτω—lit., let it come to pass)" (v. 42). Luke 22:44 records in addition, "And being (γενόμενος) in agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became (ἐγένετο) like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Hebrews 5:7-8 also refers to the process of Christ becoming obedient to death: "This One, in the days of His flesh, having offered up both petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death and having been heard because of His piety, even though He was a Son, learned obedience from the things which He suffered."

Becoming a Curse

Second, in Christ's crucifixion, in order to redeem us out of the curse of the law, He became (γενόμενος) "a curse on our behalf; because it is written [in Deut. 21:23], 'Cursed is everyone hanging on a tree'" (Gal. 3:13). In the process of crucifixion, God accounted Christ as the unique sinner, making Him sin, and laid all of the sins of the world upon Him (2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; John 3:14, 16). Then through His being put to death in the flesh, He crucified the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh (1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 8:3).

Becoming Dead

Finally, Revelation 2:8 states that Christ is "the First and the Last, who became (ἐγένετο) dead and lived again." On the one hand, He is the First and the Last, indicating that He is eternal; there are none before Him and none after Him (1:17). On the other hand, He became dead. He entered into a state of death. The word translated *dead* (νεκρός) literally means a corpse. He not only passed through death, but His physical body became a corpse in the tomb for three days prior to His resurrection.

The Occurrences of Γίνομαι in Relation to Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

There are at least eighteen verses that use the verb γίνομαι in relation to Christ's resurrection and ascension. In resurrection Christ underwent another change of state. As the last Adam, as a man in the flesh, He became the life-giving Spirit. This change of state coincided with His being begotten as the Son of God in resurrection. His humanity was uplifted into the divine sonship and was deified, fulfilling Psalm 2:7: "You are My Son; / Today I have begotten (γεγέννηκα) You" (Heb. 1:5; 5:5; cf. Rom. 1:4).⁴

Becoming a Life-giving Spirit

First Corinthians 15:45 states, "So also it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became (ἐγένετο) a living soul'; the last Adam *became* a life-giving Spirit." The process of Christ's becoming a life-giving Spirit involved Christ passing through death and resurrection. As the last Adam He terminated fallen humankind typified by Adam on the cross. He toured Hades, and on the third day He resurrected. In resurrection He changed His form to become a life-giving Spirit. Although He still possessed a physical body, which could be touched (Luke 24:39), and was able to eat (v. 43), His body was also a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44). As the life-giving Spirit, He is now in a form that is able to indwell the believers. On the day of His resurrection "He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Through the process of Christ's becoming the life-giving Spirit, the church as the Body of Christ was produced. Then the believers, as the church in Jerusalem, were baptized by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). As a result, the believers had the Spirit within for their supply and the Spirit upon them as their clothing (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13).

Through Christ's redemption and His becoming the all-inclusive, compound life-giving Spirit, the Spirit as the promised blessing of Abraham could come (γένηται) to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:14). The blessing of Abraham is the blessing promised by God to Abraham: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). This Spirit, as the living water given by the Lord

Jesus to the believers, becomes (γενήσεται) in the believers a fountain of water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). The notion of the Spirit as living water in the believers is also reiterated in John 7:38-39:

He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

These verses link Jesus' process (His death, resurrection, and glorification) to the consummation of the Spirit and the believers' experience. Although God is Spirit eternally (John 4:24), John 7 indicates that the Spirit was not yet consummated and available to be received by the believers until Christ's glorification.⁵

Becoming Better Than the Angels

Hebrews 1:4-5 combines Christ's becoming (γενόμενος) much better than the angels with His being begotten as the Son of God on the day of resurrection: "For to which of the angels has He ever said, 'You are My Son; this day have I begotten You'? And again, 'I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me'?" (v. 5). His superiority to the angels can be seen clearly in chapter 1 of Hebrews.

He was the very God in eternity past (v. 8); He was the Creator of the earth and the heavens (vv. 10, 2); He is the Upholder of all things (v. 3); He is the Heir of all things (v. 2); He was incarnated for redemption by crucifixion (v. 3); He was begotten as the Son of God in resurrection for imparting life to the many sons of God (v. 5); He is the firstborn Son of God who will come again (v. 6); He will be the King on the throne with the scepter in the kingdom (vv. 8-9); and He will remain forever and ever in eternity future (v. 12). (Lee, *Hebrews* 50)

Becoming a High Priest

Hebrews 5:5 also combines the begetting of Christ on the day of resurrection with His becoming a High Priest: "So also Christ did not glorify Himself in becoming (γενηθῆναι) a High Priest, but it was He who said to Him, 'You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.'" His becoming a High Priest implies His ascension. He entered once for all into the Holy of Holies in the heavens through His own blood (9:12, 24).

In addition to Hebrews 5:5, the verb γίνομαι occurs four more times with the modification of [*High*] Priest. He was made like us His brothers in all things so that He might become (γένηται) a merciful and faithful High Priest to make propitiation for the sins of the people (2:17). He accomplished an eternal redemption in His earthly

ministry, fulfilling and being superior to the priesthood according to the order of Aaron (9:12). He also became (γενόμενος) a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (6:20; 5:6), a priesthood with both divinity and humanity, contrasted to the priesthood of Aaron that had only humanity. He is a divine High Priest "appointed (γέγονεν) not according to the law of a fleshly commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life" (7:16). The perfect tense of γίνομαι here and in verses 20 and 22 emphasizes the resultant state, suggesting the permanence of His new status. "Having the qualifications of His divinity and His resurrected life, He is able to minister the processed God with the divine blessing, not to sinners but to those who fight for God's interest, as Abraham did (Gen. 14:18-20)" (Lee, *Hebrews* 312). He was not made (γεγονότες) a Priest without the taking of an oath (Heb. 7:20). As a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, He fulfills the Lord's promise, or oath, according to Psalm 110:4: "Jehovah has sworn, / And He will not change: / You are a Priest forever / According to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21).

In addition to becoming a High Priest to carry out His heavenly ministry He also attained to three other statuses as High Priest, He became the surety of a better covenant, higher than the heavens, and the source of eternal salvation.

Becoming the Surety of a Better Covenant

He became (γέγονεν) the surety of a better covenant (v. 2). This is based on the fact that He became a living and perpetual High Priest in resurrection, compared to those in the Aaronic priesthood who were limited in space and time by human weakness and death (5:2; 7:23, 28). "But He, because He abides forever, has His priesthood unalterable. Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them" (vv. 24-25). He has pledged Himself as the Mediator of the new covenant to fulfill it.

Becoming Higher Than the Heavens

In addition, according to Hebrews 7:26, Christ as "such a High Priest was also fitting to us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners and having become (γενόμενος) higher than the heavens." "In His ascension, Christ 'has passed through the heavens' (4:14). Now He is not only in heaven (9:24) but also 'higher than the heavens,' 'far above all heavens' (Eph. 4:10)" (Lee, *Hebrews* 379). Therefore, He is able to rescue us, to save us to the uttermost, and to supply us with the heavenly life, authority, and power that we might live a heavenly life on earth.

Becoming the Source of Eternal Salvation

As such a High Priest at the consummation of His process,

Christ also became the source, or cause, of eternal salvation. “Having been perfected, He became (ἐγένετο) to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). This eternal salvation is based on His eternal redemption (9:12). “Such an eternal salvation...is all-embracing with the divine element and nature... [Christ] is the cause of eternal salvation, of which all the effects, benefits, and issues are of an eternal nature, transcending the conditions and limitations of time and space” (313).

There are four additional verses that use the verb γίνομαι in relation to Christ’s function in the believers’ salvation, in the church uniting its Jewish and Gentile constituents, and in the universe.

Becoming Wisdom to the Believers

Christ became wisdom to the believers for all of the stages of their salvation. “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became (ἐγενήθη) wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Only when the believers get into Christ can He become wisdom to them.

Christ was made wisdom to us from God as three vital things in God’s salvation: righteousness (for our past), by which we have been justified by God, that we might be reborn in our spirit to receive the divine life (Rom. 5:18); sanctification (for the present), by which we are being sanctified in our soul, that is, transformed in our mind, emotion, and will, with the divine life (Rom. 6:19, 22); and redemption (for the future), that is, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23), by which we will be transfigured in our body with His divine life to have His glorious likeness (Phil. 3:21). It is of God that we participate in such a complete and perfect salvation, making our entire being—spirit, soul, and body—organically one with Christ, and making Christ everything to us. (Lee, *1 Corinthians* 84)

Becoming the Head of the Corner of God’s Building

Through His death and resurrection Christ became the Head of the corner of God’s building, uniting Jewish and Gentile believers. He fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 118:22-23: “Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this has become (ἐγενήθη) the head of the corner (κεφαλὴν γωνίας). This was from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7). The Jewish leaders (the builders of God’s house) rejected Him and had Him crucified. However, He resurrected and was exalted by God to become the head of the corner (or cornerstone, ἀκρογωνιάου, Eph. 2:20; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 10:4; 1 Pet. 2:6), uniting Jewish and Gentile believers in God’s house.

Becoming a Servant of the Circumcision and for the Gentiles

Christ became a servant (or minister, διάκονον) of the Jews (the circumcision) to confirm the promises given to the fathers and for the Gentiles to praise or glorify Him for His far-reaching mercy.

For I say that Christ has become (γεγενῆσθαι) a servant of the circumcision for the sake of God’s truthfulness, to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and that the Gentiles should glorify God for His mercy, as it is written, “Therefore I will extol You among the Gentiles, and I will sing praise to Your name.” And again he says, “Rejoice, Gentiles, with His people.” And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples speak praise to Him.” (Rom. 15:8-11)

Christ has become such a minister in order to embrace both Jewish and Gentile believers for His Body.

Becoming the One Who Has the First Place in All Things

Finally, according to Colossians 1:18, Christ is the Head of the Body, the church, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have (γένηται) the first place in all things (lit., He might become the One having first place in all things). This is the spirit of the Bible—to give Christ the first place, or preeminence, in all things. He has first place in the old creation, in the new creation, in the Body of Christ, and in all things (vv. 15-18). Through the heading up of all things in Christ, He will have the way to become such a One with preeminence in all things.

Conclusion

The verb γίνομαι is used by the writers of the New Testament in all of the steps of Christ’s process. Most crucially it indicates a change of state. Christ went through a change of state and entered into a new mode of existence when He became flesh. However, the divine nature was not changed in its essence and characteristics. The divine nature was mingled with the human nature, yet the distinction between the two natures was preserved. As a God-man Christ passed through human living, death, resurrection, and ascension. He became obedient unto death, became a curse, and became dead. In resurrection, He underwent another change of state. As the last Adam (a man in the flesh), He became a life-giving Spirit. He was begotten the Son of God as His humanity was uplifted into divinity. He became better than the angels, a High Priest, the surety of a better covenant, higher than the heavens, the source of eternal salvation, wisdom to the believers for each stage of their salvation, the head of the corner, the servant of the circumcision and for the

Gentiles, and the One who has the first place in all things. All of these “becomings” in the offices and statuses of Christ, which we treasure as part of our rich inheritance in Christ, are intimately linked with the two becomings of most significance—His becoming flesh in incarnation and His becoming the life-giving Spirit in resurrection. Without these two becomings, all of the becomings spoken of above are rendered vain in our experience.

by Roger Good

Notes

¹The entry on γίνομαι in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states, “Usually the term has no particular religious or theological interest in the N T” (681). Yet it is striking how frequently the word γίνομαι occurs in describing Christ in this process, occurring at least twenty-seven times.

²In John 8:58 the verb εἰμί is contrasted with γίνομαι when the Lord compares His eternal existence with Abraham: “Before Abraham came into being (γενέσθαι), I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί).” It is quite striking in John’s writings that the expression ἐγὼ εἰμί (with the emphatic addition of the pronoun ἐγὼ preceding the verb εἰμί) is almost always used to refer to Jesus and can be considered as having eternal significance. In addition to occurring absolutely, it occurs with key modifiers such as *the bread of life* (6:35, 48), *the bread that came down out of heaven* (v. 41), *the living bread which came down out of heaven* (v. 51), *the light of the world* (8:12; cf. 9:5), *One who testifies concerning Myself* (8:18), *the door of the sheep* (10:7), *the door* (v. 9), *the good Shepherd* (vv. 11, 14), *the resurrection and the life* (11:25), *the way and the reality and the life* (14:6), *the true vine* (15:1), and *the vine* (v. 5). In Revelation, ἐγὼ εἰμί occurs with the modifiers *the Alpha and the Omega* (1:8), *the First and the Last* (v. 17), *He who searches the inward parts and the hearts* (2:23), and *the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star* (22:16). For most of these modifiers the subject would need an eternal existence in order for the statement to have validity. It is striking that when Christ refers to Himself without emphasizing His eternal existence or when another person is referred to, the word order is changed, e.g., καὶ ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ, “Where I am [you cannot come]” (John 7:36), or οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός, “I am not the Christ,” referring to John the Baptist (3:28). The only exception to this occurs in John 9:9, where ἐγὼ εἰμὶ refers to the man born blind.

³Two of these sections of verses juxtapose Christ’s eternal divine being with His becoming. In John 1 Christ’s eternal being is related to the Word being with God and being God (vv. 1-2). This same Word became flesh (v. 14). Philippians 2 emphasizes His existing (ὑπάρχων) in the form of God (v. 6) prior to and continuing through His self-emptying and humbling process to become in the likeness of men (v. 7). For more concerning the significance of the Lord being in the form of God and retaining the essence of His divinity in His self-emptying process of taking the form of a slave and becoming in the likeness of men, see my article in *Affirmation & Critique*, April 2002, pp. 46-49.

⁴The matter of Christ being begotten on the day of resurrection has been confused with His being the only begotten Son. The only begotten Son refers not to a begetting in time as in Psalm 2:7 and Acts 13:33. Rather, it refers to the Son’s eternal relationship with the Father. The Son relates to the Father “as of the only Begotten from the Father” (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) in an eternal state of being begotten. Eternally Christ is the only begotten Son of God. In His incarnation the only begotten Son became a man (John 1:14; 3:16). In His resurrection He was designated the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) and He became the firstborn Son of God (Heb. 1:6; Psa. 89:27), the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29), and the Firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5).

There is a sense that Christ *becomes* in His resurrection and exaltation what He *is* by nature already from eternity. He is eternally the Son of God (Heb. 1:2; 5:8), yet He is begotten and designated, or marked out, as the Son of God in His humanity on the day of His resurrection. Similarly, God is Spirit in terms of His eternal nature (John 4:24), yet Christ *became* the life-giving Spirit in resurrection, bringing His humanity and human experience into the realm of the Spirit. This is the beginning of a new kind of humanity with a pneumatic existence. This becoming impacts not only His humanity but ours also. “As (Christ) the life-giving Spirit is the ἀπαρχή [firstfruit] of the resurrection body, so Christ (the life-giving Spirit) is the ἀπαρχή of the harvest of resurrected men” (Dunn 138). For the notion of becoming what He is eternally applied to Christ becoming much superior to angels and being made Lord of all, see David Peterson’s “The Incarnation and Christian Living” in *The Word became Flesh’ Evangelicals and the Incarnation*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003, p. 89.

⁵For greater elucidation on the expression “the Spirit was not yet,” see articles by Kerry S. Robichaux (Jan. 1996) and John Pester (Oct. 2004) in this journal.

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