

Philippians 2:6-11: ⁶ ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ, ⁷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὐρέθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος ⁸ ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ· ⁹ διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ¹⁰ ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων, ¹¹ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.

| Verse 6: | Grammar/Syntax: | Translation: |
|-----------------|---|--|
| ὃς | pronoun, relative, nominative, singular, masculine. Relative pronoun, expresses an equalitative relationship between the clause it introduces and the substantive it modifies (Ἰησοῦς) | “who” |
| ἐν | preposition of manner | “in” |
| μορφῇ | noun, dative, singular, feminine, prepositional object of the preposition ἐν. | (the) “ form” |
| θεοῦ | noun, genitive, singular, masculine, qualitative genitive. to express a quality or internal characteristic of the main noun in this case that noun is Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) from verse 5. | (of) “God” |
| ὑπάρχων | verb, present, active, participle, singular, nominative, masculine. Form of “to be”. Circumstantial participle, used to express the conditions, or circumstances, under which either an action occurs or a substantive (noun) exists. | “though he was” |
| οὐχ | conjunctions , logical correlative, negative. | “not” |
| ἄρπαγμὸν | noun, accusative, singular, masculine. Double accusative functions as the object of the verb’s action with regard to the first object. | “a thing to be plundered /grasped/ seized” |
| ἠγήσατο | verb, aorist, middle, indicative, third person, singular finite verb (did) “regard/consider” Middle voice here signifies that the subject of the verb is being affected by its own action or is acting upon itself. | (did) “regard/consider/count” |

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|-----------------|---|------------------------|
| τὸ εἶναι | verb, present, active, infinitive. The subject, Jesus, is doing the action. The article “τὸ” is an article of attribution, adding definiteness to the meaning. | “to be” |
| ἴσα | adjective, accusative, plural, neuter, predicate adjective, direct object of the verb ἠγήσατο. | “equal/consistent” |
| θεῶ | noun, dative, singular, masculine, dative of respect indirect object of the verb ἠγήσατο. | (with) “God” |
| Verse 7: | Grammar/Syntax: | Translation: |
| ἀλλὰ | conjunction, logical correlative, adversative conjunction used to express contrast between preceding clause and the immediate clause. | “but” |
| ἑαυτὸν | pronoun, reflexive, third person, accusative, singular, masculine. reflexive pronoun is used to designate the subject as the object of the active verb “emptied” ἐκένωσεν. | “himself” |
| ἐκένωσεν | verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular, finite verb | “emptied” |
| μορφῆν | noun, accusative, singular feminine, direct object of the verb/participle λαβῶν (by taking). | “form/essence” |
| δούλου | noun, genitive, singular, masculine, qualitative genitive expressing an internal quality or characteristic of the main noun “he” (Jesus). | (of a) “servant/slave” |
| λαβῶν | verb, aorist, active, participle, singular, nominative, masculine, “by taking/receiving” circumstantial participle, used to express the conditions, or circumstances, under which either an action occurs or a substantive (noun) exists. | |
| ἐν | preposition of manner | “in” |
| ὁμοιώματι | noun, dative singular, neuter. Prepositional object of the preposition ἐν. | “likeness” |

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| ἀνθρώπων | noun, genitive, plural, masculine. Qualitative genitive expressing an internal quality or characteristic of the main noun (Jesus) | “(of) men” |
| γενόμενος | verb, aorist, middle, participle, singular, nominative, masculine circumstantial participle used to express the conditions, or circumstances, under which either an action occurs or a substantive (noun) exists. | “to become” |
| καὶ | conjunction, logical connective, connecting this immediate clause, word, or phrase to a previous idea. | “and” |
| σχήματι | noun, dative, singular, neuter. | “form/appearance” |
| εὑρεθείς | verb, aorist, passive, participle, singular, nominative masculine. The subject (he/Jesus) is being acted upon. | “being found” |
| ὡς | conjunction, adverbial comparative. | “like/in” |
| ἄνθρωπος | noun, nominative, singular, masculine predicate nominative. | “man/human” |

Verse 8: **Grammar/Syntax:** **Translation:**

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| ἐταπείνωσεν | verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular, finite verb. | “to humble/bring low” |
| ἑαυτὸν | reflexive pronoun, third person, accusative, singular, masculine, direct object. The use of the reflexive pronoun here is to reference the subject as the object of the verb ἐταπείνωσεν. | “himself” |
| γενόμενος | verb, aorist, middle, participle, singular, nominative, masculine, circumstantial participle used to express the conditions, or circumstances, under which either an action occurs or a substantive (noun) exists. | “by becoming” |
| ὕπηκοος | predicate adjective, nominative, singular, masculine. | “obedient” |
| μέχρι | preposition of degree, which expresses extent. | “point of” |

| | | |
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| θανάτου | noun, genitive, singular, masculine, prepositional object. Here the genitive case points to the extent of type of obedience. | “death” |
| θανάτου | noun, genitive, singular, masculine. Appositive used to clarify or add to the meaning or significance of another word or clause, in this case “death.” Not just any kind of death. | “death” |
| δὲ | logical ascensive conjunction. Emphatic conjunction, which is used to intensify the word, to add force to it. | “in fact/even” |
| σταυροῦ | noun, genitive, singular, masculine, qualitative genitive expressing an internal quality or characteristic of the main noun (Jesus) | “(on a) cross” |

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| Verse 9: | Grammar/Syntax: | Translation: |
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|------------------------|---|---|
| διὸ | logical inferential conjunction. A conjunction used to state the conclusion of a previously mentioned matter. | “therefore” |
| καὶ “and/even/also” | emphatic adverb, emphatic conjunction which is used to intensify the word, to add force to it. | |
| ὁ θεὸς | noun, nominative, singular, masculine, subject. | “God” |
| αὐτὸν | pronoun, personal, third person, accusative, singular, masculine. Direct object of the verb ὑπερύψωσεν (exalt). | “him” |
| ὑπερύψωσεν | verb, aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular finite verb. | “has highly exalted” “exceptional honor” |
| καὶ | logical connective, copulative conjunction. A conjunction used to bind two words together in a close logical relationship. | “and” |
| ἐχαρίσατο | verb, aorist, middle, indicative, third person, singular, finite verb. | “gave graciously/bestowed” |
| αὐτῷ | pronoun, personal, third person, dative, singular, masculine, | (on) “him” |

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| | indirect object of the verbs “exalted” and “bestowed.” | |
| τὸ | attributive article, accusative, singular, neuter, adds definiteness to the noun ὄνομα. | “the” |
| ὄνομα | noun, accusative, singular, neuter, direct object of the verbs “exalted” and “bestowed.” | “name” |
| τὸ | article, accusative, singular, neuter. Functioning as a pronoun here. | “that is” |
| ὑπὲρ | preposition of location. Shows the physical relationship between one thing and another. | “above” |
| πᾶν | attributive adjective, accusative, singular, neuter. Modifies the second use of “name” in this verse. | “every/all” |
| ὄνομα | noun, accusative, singular, neuter. Object of the preposition πᾶν. | “name” |

| Verse 10: | Grammar/Syntax: | Translation: |
|------------------|---|---------------------|
| ἵνα | conjunction, adverbial purpose, purposive subordinate clause. Indicates the goal or aim of the action in which clause or word it is joined. expresses the purpose for which the main verbal action is done. | “in order that” |
| ἐν | preposition of means. Used to express the means of the action, in this case the name of Jesus. | “at” |
| τῷ ὀνόματι | noun, dative, singular, neuter, prepositional object of the preposition ἐν. | “the name” |
| Ἰησοῦ | noun, genitive, singular, masculine, possessive genitive. Showing ownership in this case the name above all names “the name” | “Jesus” |
| πᾶν | attributive, adjective, nominative, singular, neuter. modifies the subject γόνο. | “every” |
| γόνο | noun, nominative, singular, neuter, subject. | “knee” |
| κάμψη | verb, aorist, active, subjunctive, third person, singular finite verb | “should bend” |

| | | |
|------------------|---|---------------------|
| | probable or intentional, subjunctive=possible more than probable | |
| ἐπουρανίων | adjective, genitive, plural, masculine, attributive genitive. | “in heaven” |
| καὶ | logical, connective, copulative conjunction. A conjunction used to bind two words together in a close logical relationship. In this case the words knees bowing “in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” And tongues confessing. | “and” |
| ἐπιγείων | adjective, genitive, plural, masculine, attributive genitive. | “on earth” |
| καὶ | logical, connective, copulative conjunction. A conjunction used to bind two or more words together in a close logical relationship. In this case the words knees bowing “in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” And tongues confessing. | “and” |
| καταχθονίων | adjective, genitive, plural, masculine, attributive genitive. | “under the earth” |
| Verse 11: | Grammar/Syntax: | Translation: |
| καὶ | logical, connective, copulative conjunction. A conjunction used to bind two or more words together in a close logical relationship. In this case the words knees bowing “in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” And tongues confessing. | “and” |
| πᾶσα | attributive adjective, nominative, singular, feminine. modifies the subject γλῶσσα. | “every/each/all” |
| γλῶσσα | noun, nominative, singular, feminine, subject. | “tongue” |
| ἐξομολογήσεται | verb, aorist, middle, subjunctive, third person, singular finite verb. Verb is acting upon itself, possible v. probable | “confess” |
| ὅτι | conjunction, substantial content, substantive subordinate clause A conjunction that introduces a clause that functions grammatically as the subject, predicate nominative, or direct object within a larger clause. Here it functions as the direct object of the main clause. | “that” |
| κύριος | noun, nominative, singular, masculine. Predicate nominative of the subject Jesus Christ. | “lord” |
| Ἰησοῦς | noun, nominative, singular, masculine, subject. | “Jesus” |

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|---------|---|---------------|
| Χριστὸς | noun nominative, singular, masculine, subject. | “Christ” |
| εἰς | preposition of purpose. Purpose for which the verbal action of the expression “Jesus is lord” occurs. | “to” |
| δόξαν | noun, accusative, singular, feminine, object of the preposition εἰς. | “(the) glory” |
| θεοῦ | noun, genitive, singular, masculine, possessive genitive. Showing God’s ownership of the glory. It’s his. | “God” |
| πατρός. | noun, genitive, singular, masculine, appositive. used to clarify, or add meaning and significance to a word or clause. | “father” |

My Translation: Who in the form of God, though he was, did not regard equality with God a thing to be seized, but emptied himself by taking on the essence of a servant to become like man. And being found like man in appearance, humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, death even on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. In order that at the name Jesus, every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and each tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. –**Philippians 2:6-11**

ESV: “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” –**Philippians 2:6-11**

Diagramming:

I. Identify the main clauses and the subordinate clauses:

Phil. 2:6

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (**Independent clause**)

Phil. 2:7

but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant (**Independent clause**),

being born in the likeness of men. (**Dependent clause**)

And being found in human form, (**Dependent Clause**)

Phil. 2:8

he humbled himself (**Independent clause**)

by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (**Dependent Clause**)

Phil. 2:9

Therefore God has highly exalted him (**Independent clause**)

and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, (**Independent clause**)

Phil. 2:10

so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, (**Independent clause**)

in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (**Dependent clause**)

Phil. 2:11

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, (**Independent clause**)

to the glory of God the Father. (**Dependent clause**)

II. Label the parts of the main and subordinate clauses.

Phil. 2:6

who, (**Relative Clause**)

though he was in the form of God, (**adverbial participle**)

did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (**Relative Clause, epexegetical infinitive**)

Phil. 2:7

but (**conjunction**) emptied himself, (**relative clause**)

by taking the form of a servant, (**adverbial Participle of means**)

being born in the likeness of men. (**adverbial participle of means**)

And being found in human form, (**Temporal, adverbial participle**)

Phil. 2:8

he humbled himself (**relative clause**)

by becoming obedient to the point of death, (**adverbial Participle of means**)

even death on a cross. (appositive)

Phil. 2:9

Therefore (**conjunction**) God has highly exalted him (main verbal clause)

And (**Conjunction**) bestowed on him the name that is above every name (**second verb, prepositional phrase, object function**)

Phil. 2:10

so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, (**purpose statement**)

in heaven and (**conjunction**) on earth and (**conjunction**) under the earth (**genitive locative clause**)

Phil. 2:11

and (**conjunction**) every tongue confess (**second verb**)

that Jesus Christ is Lord, (**indirect statement**)

to the glory of God the Father. (**prepositional phrase**)

III. Relate the function of the subordinate clause to the main clause.

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷

but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,

being born in the likeness of men.

And

being found in human form,

⁸he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him

And

bestowed on him

the name that is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven

and

on earth

and

under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

IV. Diagramming Designations

who, though he was in the form of God (**association, relationship, advantage**), did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ (**Concession, possession,)**

but (**contrast, comparison, separation**) emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, (**disadvantage, condition**)

being born in the likeness of men. (**condition, circumstance**)

And

being found in human form, (**condition, circumstance**)

⁸he humbled himself (**assertion, condition, action**)

By (**means, manner**) becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (**result, action**)

⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him (**action, result, place, sphere, measure**)

And

bestowed on him (**result, action,**)

the name that is above every name, (**separation, relationship, possession, measure**)

¹⁰so that (**purpose**) at the name of Jesus (**basis, condition, agency**) every knee should bow,

in heaven

and

on earth

and

under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, (**action, response, result**)

to the glory of God the Father.

Theme Statement of Passage:

In its broadest context, within Paul's letter to the Philippians, the passage at hand (v.6-11) fits into Paul's exhortation section of the letter (1:27-2:18; see also 4:2-9). It seems to me that the narrower, context that contains verses 6-11 is that of unity and Christ's example of humility (2:1-11).

Verses 1-4 contain Paul's exhortation to unity within the body of believers, while verse five serves as a hinge point connecting the previous verses with those that follow. Verse five shows believers what type of attitude they are to exhibit among each other; they are to imitate Christ's exemplary attitude. It is both highly doctrinal and ethical. Verses 6-11 speak of the dimensions of Jesus' humility (v.6-8) and his exaltation by the Father (v. 9-11), in one of the New Testament's most profound Christological passages.

Commentary: Philippians 2:6-11

I. Introduction: Background and Context

Philippians 2:6–11 is one of the most informative proclamations in the Bible on the nature of Christ's incarnation. It declares, "...his preexistence, his equality with God, his identity with humanity, and the costly nature of that identity" (Thielman, 109). The passage also provides understanding as to Christ's status after his incarnation and for the future submission of all created beings to his authority (Thielman, 109). Before looking deeper into this beautiful passage, we need to understand context in which it is found.

Paul first opens his letter to the church at Philippi with a greeting (1:1-2), thanksgiving and prayer for the believers and what God is doing in their lives (1:3-11), and then proceeds to share his personal circumstances of imprisonment for the gospel (1:12-26). In verses 27-30 Paul begins to switch gears into the exhortation section of his letter (1:27-2:18) by commanding his readers to live a life worthy of the gospel (1:27-30). Chapter 2:1-4 contain Paul's exhortation to unity, selflessness, and humility within the body of believers. He speaks of these characteristics as being a mindset, a way of thinking, or an attitude each member of the community should have toward one another. The next section, the Christ hymn, can be divided into three parts: "an introductory sentence (v. 5), an account of Christ's condescension (vv. 6–8), and an account of his exaltation (vv. 9–11)" (Thielman, 116). Verse five serves as a hinge point connecting the previous verses with those that follow. Paul constructs a bridge in chapter 2:5 between being mindful of others and serving them well, and the Christ hymn (2:6-11). As the readers move across this bridge, "...their attention turns from the attitude of mind which they express in their relationships with one another to the attitude of mind Christ Jesus had, expressed in his humiliation on the cross" (Hansen, 118).

In verse five, Paul is prompting believers to express their new identity in Christ in their relationships with one another by having the same attitude and mindset Jesus had (Hansen, 122). Although Paul does not use the hymn to set forth, "7 Steps to imitating Christ", he is calling Christians to shape their communities to reflect the self-sacrificing humility that Jesus showed in his life. The ethical imperatives of chapter 2:1-5 are grounded in the doctrinal indicatives found in the hymn that follows (2:6-11). G.W. Hansen says it well, "The indicative of the union of our minds in Christ compels us to obey the imperative to think in harmony with one another in our Christian community" (121). Keeping all this in mind, I think it will be beneficial to address briefly the nature of the hymn before moving into the main exposition of the text.

II. Hymn or no Hymn?

Did Paul compose this beautiful hymn in a spontaneous burst of inspiration, or was he merely quoting something that he had learned from the early church? It is highly debated whether or not chapter 2:6-11 is in fact an early Christian hymn, in which Paul inserts into his ethical exhortation.

Also debated is whether or not Paul is the author of this hymn or if he is merely using it in his argument. All theories are highly speculative. I do not think that either option can be conclusively proven. We don't know if Paul is the author or not. This being said, what is important to keep in mind is that Paul put his stamp of approval on this passage and incorporated all aspects of it into his theology and ethics (Hansen, 132-133). These are the inspired words of Scripture without a doubt.

There are two basic views: the kerygmatic and the ethical (Thielman, 112). To oversimplify for the sake of this brief commentary, those who hold to the kerygmatic view interpret chapter 2:6-11 as a hymn which is primarily doctrinal in nature and summarizes the gospel in which the Philippians believed (Thielman, 112). Contrarily, those who promote the ethical view tend to not see the text as a doctrinal hymn, but rather as an example for us to live by, a continuation of Paul's exhortation rather than an interruption (Thielman, 113). Neither view completely rejects the other, they just hold strong contrasting priorities. According to the kerygmatic view, the Philippians are urged to have the attitude that someone who is "in Christ" is required to have. Their attitude should reflect their union with Jesus. Who are "in Christ"? Those who believe the gospel that the Christ hymn summarizes (Thielman, 113). Those who hold the "ethical" interpretation of the passage believe that Paul is admonishing the Philippians to follow Christ's example of humility, obedience, and self-sacrifice. Why the differences? It has to do with Paul's lack of supplying a verb for the second half of verse five.

Those holding the ethical view translate verse five, "Let this mind be in you that *was* in Christ Jesus" (Hansen, 119). In the ethical interpretation Christ's attitude portrayed in the hymn is regarded as an ethical model of the attitude that Christians should express in their communities (Hansen, 119). The kerygmatic translation differs translating it, "Think this way among yourselves which also you *think* in Christ Jesus" (Hansen, 119). This way of interpretation calls the reader to have the same attitude in their community as they do in their union with Christ. So what do we do with this?

It seems to me that the literary form in this passage is significantly different from the literary form of the surrounding context (1:27-2:5; 2:12-18). Though the entire hymn is connected in numerous ways to its context G. W. Hansen advocates that,

“...the way that this hymn is set in this letter like a perfectly cut, absolutely clear diamond in a gold ring suggests that Paul acquired this precious jewel from the Christ-centered worship of the church rather than from the creative work of his own mind. ...it is so complete in itself and so much more majestic than its context that it is very easy to see that this hymn could have existed independently on its own before it was inserted by Paul into this letter” (127-128).

The focus in Paul's ethical exhortation is on the readers of the letter, note the second person imperatives, while the Christ hymn focuses on the actions of Jesus, God, and all created beings (notice the third person indicatives). As Hansen notes, "In contrast to a list of directions for the church to follow, the hymn is a lyrical contemplation of Christ" (127). Paul does not typically develop Christian ethics from the pattern of Jesus' life, but rather from the believer's participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14; 1 Cor. 6:11-20; Col. 3:1-4) and from the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:16-26) (Thielman, 114). Though not his go to, Jesus' life used as an example for believers of how they should conduct themselves is not unknown in Paul's writings (Rom. 15:3, 7-9; 1

Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 5:1–2; Col. 3:13; cf. 1 Tim. 6:13–16). It would make sense that, “. . .in a letter that twice entreats its readers to imitate other Christians (3:17; 4:9), an admonition to imitate Christ does not seem unlikely” (Thielman, 114). However, the ethical view has a difficult time, in my opinion handling verses 9-11 as convincingly as the kerygmatic.

It seems to me that this passage is a hymn. I do not think that either view is incompatible with the hymn. I think that both are important pieces in understanding the whole scope of the passage. However, I do believe that the purpose of the hymn is primarily doctrinal, proclaiming the Christ event, without down playing the secondary ethical implications. I believe that by placing the Christ event in the hymn after his moral exhortation, Paul is pointing to the power for moral transformation (Hansen, 120). Christian behavior is predominantly motivated and empowered by our salvation in Christ, though it is not detached completely from the example of Christ (see verses mentioned above).

III. The Hymn's Poetic Structure and Outline

Since we are dealing with a hymn, there are certain poetic elements to the structure of this passage that will be helpful to point out, so there is a frame of reference to work from as we move forward. There are many proposals as to the layout of the hymn. I will note three prominent proposals here. In Joachim Jeremias arrangement (three stanzas, four lines per stanza), there are three stanzas portraying: the preexistence, the earthly life, and the heavenly glory of Christ (152). The benefit of his arrangement is the way it highlights parallelisms in the hymn. Ralph Martin proposes six couplets as to be chanted like an early creed, or a call and response type of exhortation (36-38). The final proposition, and the one in which I find most satisfying is that of Ernest Lohmeyer.

In Lohmeyer's six stanza bipartite approach, the first three stanzas depict the attitudes and actions of Jesus on his journey of descent and condescension from his original state of glory and equality with God all the way to his death on the cross (v.6-8); the last three stanzas proclaim the actions of God resulting in the universal worship of Jesus to the glory of the Father (v.9-11) (8). The poem portrays a divine descent from glory to the cross and an ascent from the cross back to glory (Lohmeyer, 9). It is a narrative poem beginning and ending in eternity.

In using this approach, Hansen illuminates that, “Each three-line stanza expresses a consequence that becomes the ground of action in the next (124). It works like this. The first stanza shows Jesus' attitude in his original state of equality with the Father, that is he did not consider this advantage as one to be exploited. The second stanza reveals that the result of Christ's attitude was his action of emptying himself by taking the form of a slave and becoming like man (Hansen, 124). The third stanza speaks his humbling himself and obedience unto death on a cross.

A double conjunction, “therefore, also” separates the first three stanzas from the last three. God is the subject of the two verbs “exalted” (active voice) and “gave” (middle voice) in the fourth stanza (v.9), he is the one doing the actions of exalting Christ back to glory and bestowing upon him his own name, “Lord” Yahweh. The last two stanzas are the consequences of God's actions (v. 10-11), centered on the two verbal phrases: every knee will bow, and every tongue confess.

Don't miss the parallelism here between the first and second half of the hymn. The first and fourth stanzas both point to divine actions (Hansen, 124). In each half of the hymn, the two stanzas that immediately follow the divine action give the consequences of that action. The actions in the

second and third stanza, self-humbling and self-emptying, are the result of the decision made by the one who is equal with God that he wouldn't use his status to exploitatively. The verbs we have seen above, "exalted" and "gave", in the fifth and sixth stanzas are the result of the decision God made toward his son, to give him the name. G.W. Hansen is helpful in closing, "The word *name* is repeated three times and like the repeated drumbeats at the end of a symphony lead to the grand climax heard in the acknowledgment of all creation that Jesus Christ has the divine name: *Jesus Christ is Lord!*" (124).

IV. *The Christ Hymn: Humility (2:6-8)*

Verse 6a: "who though he was in the form of God..."

The first stanza of the hymn speaks of Christ preincarnate state of mind or attitude. That is, he did not consider his divine form, equality with God a tool of exploitation. The participle *ὑπάρχων* "though he was" is a form of the verb "to be" and can also be translated "existing" or "being." However one translates *ὑπάρχων*, it is a present active, circumstantial participle, used to express the conditions, or circumstances, under which either an action occurs or a substantive (noun) exists (Lukaszewski). Here it is describing the state in which Jesus, the antecedent of "he", existed in his preincarnate state. He was in the form of God. The prepositional phrase "in the form of God" describes the location of Christ's preincarnate existence. The standard Greek lexicon defines "form" as, "outward appearance and shape" (BDAG, 659). In the Septuagint, "form" consistently refers to something that can be seen (Judges 8:18; Job 4:16; Isa. 44:13). Hansen comments,

"This lexical meaning of *form* seems to work well for both uses of the word *form* in the context of this hymn. In the parallel phrases, *the form of God* and *the form of a slave*, the word *form* refers to outward appearance. The one existing in the outward appearance of God took the outward appearance of a slave." (135)

At this point, some may pose the question, "can the form of the immaterial, invisible God be described?" The Greek Gods had physical sensual forms, but in Judaism it would be unthinkable that Yahweh would reveal himself in sensual form (Hansen, 135). Anthropomorphisms overflow in the OT. God has a face (Num. 6:25-26), eyes (Prov. 15:3), ears (Psa. 116:1-2), mouth (Isa. 34:16), arms (Deut. 4:34), fingers (Exod. 31:18), and a back (Exod. 33:23). All of these references to the physical form of God are figurative expressions because God is invisible, he is spirit (Jn. 4:24; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17). The prohibition against making any image of God (Exod. 20: 3-4; Lev. 26:1) demonstrates the conviction that, "the transcendence of God must not be diminished by human attempts to objectify the divine form" (Hansen, 135). So how do we interpret this predicament?

Commentator F. Thielman proposes that Paul is not interested in the different physical characteristics of a being with a single substance, but in the equality of Christ Jesus with God (115-116). When Paul uses this same word in verse 7 to speak of Jesus taking the form of a slave, he means that Jesus became a slave in his "very nature" (Thielman, 116). He concludes then that Paul viewed divinity and servanthood as compatible, not contradictory, roles. According to J.B. Lightfoot the phrase "in the form of God" means participation in the being, and sharing in the essence of God (132). G.W. Hansen shares that a number of different interpreters have defined the meaning of "the form of God" by the numerous references in the OT that specify that the glory of God is the outward appearance of the presence and majesty of God (136). The apostle Paul develops this line of thinking

in Romans one (see also 2 Cor. 4:6), God's glory as the outward appearance of His power and magnificence. Hansen comments,

“The form of God in which the preincarnate Christ was clothed was the glory of God. In both the OT and NT, the glory of God is the manifestation of God's power, the revelation of God's nature in creation and redemption, and the radiance of God's being.” (137)

If we follow this logic, that the form of God means the glory of God, and that his glory is intimately connected to his very being, then we will inevitably come to the conclusion that Christ's being in the form of God means that he, in his preincarnate state, being in his very nature God (Hansen, 138). Thus the hymn asserts the intimate union of Jesus Christ with the being of God the Father. The one existing in the form of God, Jesus, is not different from or less than God. They are equal, yet two distinguishable persons. This speaks of the union of two of the three members of the Trinity, one essence three persons, and both are worshiped as one God (V. 11).

Verse 6b: “...did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,”

The natural human tendency is to take opportunities to exploit personal advantages of position and power for our own selfish purposes. This is not the God we serve. Hansen states this decision and action of Christ profoundly,

“The great rulers, heroes, and gods of the citizens of Philippi were famous for exploiting their positions of power. When did the emperors, Caligula and Nero, the great conqueror Alexander the Great, or the gods Apollo and Zeus ever not regard their positions as advantages to exploit? But the one existing in the form of God said No to selfish exploitation of his position in the form of God and said Yes to the form of a servant.” (146)

Christ's equality with God led him to view his status and position as one of service, of unselfish giving rather than one of privilege and exploitation. “Equality” from Genesis to Revelation consistently has the meaning of equaling something in weight, measure, quality, honor, essence, or sameness. The same word for equality ἴσα is used in John 5:18b, “... but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” The word ἡγήσατο can be translated “regard, count, or consider.” ἡγήσατο is an aorist verb in the middle voice, which signifies that the subject of the verb is being affected by its own action or is acting upon itself (Heiser and Setterhoom). This denotes a thought process and a decision within Christ. Thielman adds that, “Christ's condescension to the form of a slave was made possible, according to verse 6, by his own attitude toward equality with God: He did not consider it “something to be grasped” (116).

Defining ἀρπαγμὸν (grasp, seize, exploit, plunder etc.) is difficult and unclear, because it appears nowhere else in the NT or Septuagint, and rarely in Greek literature of the time (Hansen, 142). However, what we know to be true in the witness of Scripture, at the end of this hymn even (v.11) is that Jesus is equal with God. Jesus is not grasping for something he does not possess yet. The question is not if Jesus rightfully possess something, but how he uses his equality with God. He did not give up his equality with God, but rather he expressed his equality with God in a certain way. N.T. Wright comments, “The pre-existent son regarded equality with God not as excusing him from the task of (redemptive) suffering and death, but actually as uniquely qualifying him for that vocation (83-84). The obedience of the Son in his death on the cross revealed the true nature of God (Hansen, 145).

Verse 7a: “but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

Thus far we have discussed the mindset or attitude of Christ. It is pure, unselfish and astonishing. However, an attitude is abstract and remains somewhat mysterious until it is expressed in a concrete fashion. Verses seven and eight demonstrate the actions of Christ as they flow out of his attitude. But there is a question that needs to be addressed right off the bat: What does it mean that the one existing in the form of God and equal with God “emptied himself”? It should be noted that there is a wide spectrum of interpretations when it comes to the doctrine of kenosis. However, there are a few that merit closer evaluation as we try to understand the self-emptying of Christ. As Hansen summarizes well they are:

“(1) *The kenotic theory*: Christ emptied himself by divesting himself of divinity: divine attributes, divine glory, or divine power. (2) *The incarnation view*: Christ emptied himself by becoming a human being in the form of a slave. (3) *The Servant of the Lord portrait*: the metaphor of emptying is an echo of the scriptural picture of the Servant of the Lord, who “poured out his life to death” (Isa 53:12).” (146)

In the kenotic theory Jesus literally surrendered his nature of being in the form of God. Hansen points out that, “A kenotic Christology based on this view denies to some extent or other the fullness of Christ’s divine nature as a result of his incarnation” (147). But does the grammar support such an interpretation? The verb ἐκένωσεν (emptied) does not require a second object in addition to the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτὸν “himself.” ἑαυτὸν is the direct object receiving the action of the subject. Christ emptied what? The answer is himself. Secondly, the conjunction ἀλλὰ “but” introduced the word “emptied” divorces this verb from the phrase “the form of God” so that it cannot be the object of the verb (Hansen, 147). Thirdly, how did he empty himself? The verb “emptied” is defined by the participles that trail it: he emptied himself by **taking and becoming**. Jesus’ self-emptying was accomplished “not by subtracting from but by adding to” (Hansen, 147). Fourthly, it seems to me that emptied is used metaphorically. Hansen asserts, “To press for a literal meaning of ‘emptying’ ignores the poetic context and nuance of the word” (147). So before we discuss the other views, what does emptied mean in this context?

The verb “emptied” appears merely four times elsewhere in the NT all of which occur, “in Paul’s letters, and all use the term, not literally to refer to emptying something of qualities it possesses, but figuratively of nullifying something, making it of no account” (Thielman, 116-117). It seems to me the verb is used metaphorically by Paul in this hymn and defined by what surrounds it. “Emptied” means made nothing or rendered powerless, and can be observed in Paul’s use of the same verb in his other letters for example: “lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17); “faith has no value” (Rom. 4:14, NIV). N.T. Wright asserts that the verb “emptied”, “does not refer to the loss of divine attributes but—in good Pauline fashion—to making something powerless, emptying it of apparent significance” (84).

The incarnational view is concerned primarily with the humanity of Jesus. Christ’s “voluntary act of self-surrender is defined by the two phrases: *taking the form of a slave* and *becoming in the likeness of human beings*” (Hansen, 148). The word “form” in verse seven has the same meaning as discussed above in verse six. The “form” and “glory” of god are intimately wed. It is the outward appearance that reveals the inward nature. All can agree that the form of a slave is the opposite of anything glorious. A slave does not have high rank, great power, or exercise dominion over much if anything at all. A slave has possibly the lowest position; he or she is powerless; they have little to no

claim or right to anything. As Hansen says, “He (the slave) has no glory: no honor; only shame. This contrast points to the extent of Christ’s self-emptying” (148). “Emptied” the kenosis of Christ is the incarnation.

The servant of the Lord portrait theory draws parallels between the Christ hymn and the servant song in Isaiah 52 and 53 (Hansen, 149). The precise quotation of Isaiah 45:23 (“every knee will bow, every tongue will swear”) at the end of the hymn (Phil. 2:10–11) adds to the evidence as well to this theory of interpretation. Jeremias, a proponent of this view, however, believes that the phrase “he emptied himself” is a reference to the death of Christ, not to the incarnation of Christ (Hansen, 149). It seems to me that the structure of the hymn doesn’t support Jeremias’s interpretation.

All three of the above interpretations contain some of what it meant for Christ to empty himself. The two participial phrases, “taking the very nature of a servant” and “becoming in the likeness of men”, both take place simultaneously and describe how Jesus’ act of self-emptying was accomplished (Hansen, 151). Taking the nature of a slave Jesus demonstrates that he came not be served, but to serve. John 13:3-5 (the washing of the disciples’ feet) illustrates the meaning of the former participle phrase mentioned above. Jesus himself said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28). The participle *γενόμενος* “becoming” is a circumstantial participle in the aorist tense, indicating that something is being entered into, a new condition or state of being (Lukaszewski,). In contrast to the present tense participle “existing” (denoting continuous existence) in verse six, “becoming” indicates a new state of being. Hansen comments that,

“The use of the word *becoming* in this context is similar to its use in other contexts (John 8:58; Rom 1:3; Gal 4:4) to denote “being born.” While the hymn does not offer a narrative of the birth and infancy of Christ, it does contemplate the entrance of Christ into human history.” (151-152).

There is a textual variant here at the end of verse 7. Instead of *ἀνθρώπων* (mankind) several early witnesses read *ἀνθρώπου* (man), singular verses plural forms of the word “man” (Metzger, 545). Metzger comments further saying it is most likely that, “the singular number is merely a non-doctrinal conformation to the singular *δούλου* (slave) and the following *ἄνθρωπος* (humanity)” (545).

The word *ὁμοιώματι* “likeness” means, “having common experience and being similar in appearance” (BDAG, 707). I like how Hansen puts it when he says, “Christ’s entrance into history was *in the likeness of human beings*” (152). He uses the TNIV translation which I think is a better translation than the ESV’s “likeness of men” because in this context the Greek word is gender inclusive. Christ identified with humanity as a whole not just the male gender, therefore the emphasis is not on his masculinity, but on his human likeness (Hansen, 153). The extent of Jesus’ identification with a fallen and broken humanity is what 2:7-8 are all about. In his “self-emptying, his slave form, his human likeness, his human appearance, his humiliation, his obedience, and his death on a cross” Jesus displayed just how much he humbled himself (Hansen, 153). In verses 6 and 7 Paul speaks of the equality and unity of Christ with God, and then proceeds to describe a profound way in which Christ expressed his deity, his equality with the Father. Jesus didn’t, “exploit this status but manifested it in humble service by becoming a slave and a human being” (Thielman, 118).

Some may still ask the question, “How can God stop being God to be human?” My answer is: I do not know. God can do things I can’t understand, since He is God, after all. We cannot limit our

believing to our understanding. However, here is where I come out on the kenosis of Christ. Remaining who he was, fully God, Christ became what he was not, human. He did not lose his divine attributes, rather, he of his own will, gave up the independent exercise of those divine rights and privileges and emptied himself not by giving up deity, but by taking on a fully human nature, the form of a servant, and death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 8:9). Therefore, his deity was veiled, not forsaken.

Augustus Hopkins Strong uses two illustrations that are helpful in thinking through this view of kenosis:

“A minor may have a great estate left to him, yet may have only such use of it as his guardian permits. In Homer’s Iliad, when Andromache brings her infant son to part with Hector, the boy is terrified by the warlike plumes of his father’s helmet, and Hector puts them off to embrace him. So God lays aside ‘That glorious form, that light unsufferable And that far-beaming blaze of majesty’” (703).

Verses 7b-8: “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Most English translations have the first clause as the first part of verse eight, however, in the Greek Bible it is the last part of verse seven (Holmes). In this commentary I will treat them as one, because they are intimately linked together. Hansen observes that the, “last two phrases of verse 7 emphasize the reality of Christ’s humanity in different ways: the first one speaks of his historical entrance into humanity; the second one points to the empirical evidence of his humanity” (154). In 2:7b-8 Paul tells us of a second way in which Jesus expressed his divinity. He humbled himself by taking on a human form and death by crucifixion. Christ has already stooped low, taking the form of a slave (v.7), but now he condescends even lower, “when his human condition and his obedience led him to the cross” (Thielman, 119). Crucifixion was the cruelest way of execution in the Roman Empire and was reserved primarily for lower classes, especially slaves (Thielman, 119). This demonstrates just how far Christ condescended, from the highest position imaginable, equality with God, to the lowest, death on a cross, “precisely because such selfless love was an expression of his deity” (Thielman, 119).

The word σχήματι means “form, outward appearance, or shape” (BDAG, 981). The phrase “and being found in human form,” stresses in a repetitious fashion the genuine humanness of Christ in the incarnation. He was εὑρεθείς “found” to be in every way human. The participle “found” expresses that Christ’s humanity was discovered, “intellectually through reflection, observation, examination or investigation” (BDAG, 412). It seems to me that what Paul is saying here is that one could literally look at Jesus when he walked the earth and not doubt, through physical and mental observation that he was in fact really human.

Although the phrases, “being born” (v.7) and “being found” (v.8) are allied in synthetic parallelism, the conjunction καὶ “and” at the beginning of the phrase “being found” serves as the intro to the new sentence, it indicates that this phrase modifies the following verb phrase, “he humbled himself” (Hansen, 154). This being said, it is a logical connective conjunction used to associate two items that, in the context, are together the mutual focus of the clause (Heiser and Setterholm). Even though the conjunction introduces a new sentence, it should also cause us to look back and see the connections made previously. Hansen is helpful here, “As the one existing in the form of God, he

emptied himself by being made in human likeness. And as one who was found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself” (154).

What does it mean that he humbled himself? Humbled himself how? As Hansen puts it, “The one who could have rightfully claimed the highest position in human history and justly received supreme honors, deliberately sought the lowest position and submitted himself to extreme humiliation” (154). This may be an echo of the Servant song in Isaiah 53. The truism from the Jewish wisdom literature, “humility comes before honor” (Prov. 15:33; 22:4), is embodied par excellence in the Christ hymn, as are Jesus’s teachings that, “whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14), and the teaching of the early church to “humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (Jas 4:10; similarly, 1 Pet 5:6) (Hansen, 155).

We mustn’t miss the connection between this verse and Paul’s earlier exhortation to the Philippian believers in 2:3 to, “in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Paul encourages humility by pointing to Christ’s example. Paul draws a parallel between, “the ethical behavior of the church and the life of Christ by first requiring the church to practice humility and then pointing to the precedent for their behavior in the self-humbling obedience of Christ” (Hansen, 155-156).

The phrase “by becoming obedient to the point of death” clarifies how Christ “humbled himself”. The aorist verb ἐταπείνωσεν “humbled” is singular, in the active voice, and the indicative mood. This is important because what that means is that Paul is asserting as fact that Christ is the one who humbled himself. He is the one doing the action to himself. The incarnation and humiliation of Christ was not something that happened to him against his will. Hansen adds, “The one existing in the form of God and equal with God could not be humbled or humiliated by any person or power unless he willingly submitted to that humiliation” (156). It was Jesus’ active obedience that subjected him to the humiliation. Astonishing as it is, by his obedience Christ both exhibited and cloaked the glory of God in the humiliation of a slave (Hansen, 156).

The magnitude of Christ’s obedience is accentuated by the phrase “to the point of death”. This denotes a measurement of obedience as to degree not time (BDAG, 644). The hymn does not specify an object of Christ’s obedience (Hansen, 156). That fact that Christ became obedient to God can be inferred from the subject of the next sentence, “God” and from the final stanza “to the glory of God the Father.” Additionally, the hymn does not explicitly say so, but Paul sets the context in such a way that shows Christ’s death is most certainly for the benefit of others as well. As Hawthorne states this is the, “ultimate act of obedience to God in his (Christ’s) self-giving service to people” (89). Paul uses 2:4 to call believers to look after the interest of others. It seems to that it is also justifiable to say here that Christ’s death was for the benefit of others or in the interest of others in 2:8 given the larger context of the passage and Scripture as a whole. (Isa. 53; Mk. 10:45; Jn. 15:13; Eph. 5:25; 1 Jn. 3:16). Hansen adds that Paul, “In his application of the hymn (2:12) encourages his readers to express the life of Christ in their community by their obedience to God in their service to each other (156-157). It is important to keep in mind though that the main reason for the cross given by the hymn, “is not the redemptive benefit for us, but the decisive action of Christ to empty himself and humble himself” (Hansen, 157).

The phrase “death, even death on a cross” as a literal translation reads θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ “death, death even (or in fact) on a cross.” It is like, “the crescendo of a drum roll, the

reverberation of the word *death* brings the first half of the hymn to a deafening silence before the *cross*” (Hansen, 157). δὲ “even” is a logical ascensive, emphatic conjunction, which is used to intensify the word, to add force to it (Lukaszewski). The second used of θανάτου “death” functions as an appositive and is used to clarify or add to the meaning or significance of another word or clause, in this case “death.” It’s not just any kind of death it’s death on a cross! And this was not an honorable death of a hero, “but a shameful death, a disgraceful death. The cross displayed the lowest depths of human depravity and cruelty” (Hansen, 157). The cross served as the instrument that most ultimately showed Christ’s emptying and humbling. Jesus willingly accepted the cross to accomplish his purpose for “taking the form of a servant and being born in human likeness.” Hansen Comments,

“Every decision and action of *the one existing in the form of God* led deliberately to the final climax of *death on a cross*. The hymn celebrates Christ’s choice to be *obedient to death—even death on a cross*. The extreme humiliation by death on the cross was the ultimate fulfillment of the divine intention of the one who was equal to God.” (157)

The first half of this hymn is not glorious or uplifting. It takes its reader continually down to the most evil act in human history, the torture and slaughter of the innocent, guiltless, eternal, Son of God, Jesus Christ. This hymn celebrates the death of a slave on a cross because, even though equal with God and in the form of God, he subjected himself to the cross by his own deliberate choice to “empty himself” and “humble himself”.

V. *The Christ Hymn: Exaltation (2:9–11)*

Verse 9: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,”

In 2:6–8 Jesus is the focus, and God stays in the background, however, in verses 9–11 God takes the stage in a profound way and Christ becomes the focus of God’s actions, though Christ remains the main theme of the passage. The double conjunctions διὸ (therefore) and καὶ (and or also) introduce God’s exaltation of his son, Jesus. “Therefore” is an inferential conjunction used to state the conclusion of a previously mentioned state of affairs (Lukaszewski). It could also be translated, “for this reason”. It points back to the attitude and obedience of Christ in first half of the hymn. The result of Jesus’ obedience even unto death is his exaltation by the Father. Does this mean that God’s actions were merely rewarding Christ’s obedience, gaining divine favor from a meritorious working?

John Calvin asserts that the conjunctions “therefore” and “also”, “denotes here a consequence rather than a reason” for the exaltation (250). What he is saying is that this affirms what Jesus taught, and what we have discussed earlier that humility comes before exaltation (Prov. 15:23). Hansen adds, “This is an inflexible law of God’s kingdom that operates without variance, equally applicable for Christians at Philippi as for Christ himself” (160). Something else to consider is the parallel passage “he gave” which denotes to “give freely as a favor” on the part of God (BDAG, 1078). If giving is a graceful act, not having to do with merit, then likewise it follows that God’s exaltation of Christ is also a gracious act. Did God reward Jesus for his obedience? Yes, but Christ’s motivation was not reward, as if to obey in order to get something, and the hymn speaks nothing of being able to earn salvation or the redemption of sin through merit by an individual, for “Jesus does not force God’s hand, nor is the exaltation and granting of the name a payment for deeds performed” (Thielman, 121). The reward gifted to Christ was,

“vindication by God: God vindicated Christ’s *death on a cross* by exalting him *to the highest place*”... God gave the name above every name not as compensation for Christ’s work, but as proof of divine approval of his work. ...the hymn views the reward as divine confirmation of Christ’s true identity, not as an acquisition of a new position. (Hansen, 161)

Verse nine states two ways in which God responded to Christ’s obedience. He “exalted” and “bestowed.” The verb ὑπερύψωσεν “has highly exalted” is an unusual compound word found only here in the NT (Hansen, 162). By adding the prefix “highly/above” to the verb “exalt”, the word designates the highest possible exaltation. It carries the meaning to, “raise someone to the loftiest height,” (BDAG, 1034). By adding the words to the highest place (TNIV), Hansen notes that. “*exalted* has a superlative, not a comparative sense: the thought is not that God exalted Christ to a higher position than he possessed before his incarnation, but that God exalted him to the highest position after his humiliation” (162). It is difficult to imagine a place loftier than “equality with God” (v. 6). The verb “exalted” is better understood then as Thielman asserts, “as a reference to God’s exaltation of Jesus to a position of recognizable superiority over all creation” (120). This same word, this hyper-exalting, is also found in Psalm 97:9 of the Septuagint, “For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.” God is not a notch above the other god’s, he is in a class all his own (Hansen, 162). God exalted Christ to a class all his own.

There is a textual variant in verse nine. Some manuscripts lack the definite article τό “the” before the word “name.” This would result in an interpretation that gives Jesus an unspecified name (Metzger, 545-546). However, the weight of the textual evidence found in other manuscripts favor the article, and it makes sense given the context of this doctrine-based hymn.

The “name” of a person can have the nuance of a title that “is rightfully borne and encodes what a person really is” (BDAG, 713). Hansen as well as the standard Greek lexicon note that the sense of title applies especially to the divine names that express “qualities and powers” (BDAG, 712; Hansen 162). What is the name that God gave Jesus that is above every other name? Most interpreters believe that this is the name “Lord” (v. 11). The name is withheld until the final verse which announces that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is “*Lord*”, a clear ricochet of Isaiah 45:23-24 and adds weight to the argument that Christ receives the divine name κύριος “Lord”, Yahweh. Hansen shows how the structure of the hymn can be traced by the names given to Christ throughout the hymn, “the one *existing in the form of God* goes down to the lowest place by taking the **form of slave** and back up to the highest place when God **gives Jesus** the name that is above every name so that every tongue will confess that **he is Lord**” (163).

Verse 10: “so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,”

The two verbs that describe God’s actions and are the driving force behind verse nine are followed by a purpose clause in verse ten. The purpose of God exalting Jesus and bestowing the name above all names is for creation to acknowledge (v.11) and bow (v.10) at the sound of his name. This passage states vividly that the purpose of God’s exaltation of Jesus is for the universal worship of him as Lord.

ἵνα “so that” or “in order that” is a conjunction that serves as a purposive subordinate clause, meaning that it expresses the purpose for which the main verbal action is done. ἐν “at” is a preposition of means used to expresses the means of an action, in the prepositional phrase, “at the name of Jesus.”

“Name” is the prepositional object and “Jesus” is in the possessive genitive, which in this case express his ownership of “the name.” This prepositional phrase functions in two ways here: it refers backward to the previous phrase, “God gave him the name that is above every name”, and points ahead to the acclamation and confession of every tongue that, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Hansen, 164). Jesus is the one who was in the form of God and equal with God, took on a fully human nature and the form of a slave, emptied himself, humbled himself, and was obedient unto death on a cross. God exalted Jesus the man who died the death of a slave and gave him the name “Lord” so that all of creation would worship him.

This phrase “at the name of Jesus” is also used to introduce the allusion to Isaiah 45:23 (Jones). The words of the prophet read, “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance’” (Isa. 45:22-23). In place of the words “to me,” the hymn inserts the phrase “at the name of Jesus” (Hansen, 164). The significance of this is huge. What this prediction means is that at the bowing of every knee to the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:10), is equivalent to the bowing of every knee to God the Father (Isa.45:23). This text boldly claims that Jesus bears God’s own name and is to be worshiped as Lord. Hansen add, “The hymn’s description of the worship of Jesus as Lord in the language of an OT text that portrays the worship of God clearly expresses the conviction that he is directly and uniquely associated with God” (164).

The bowing of the knee expresses respect, subjection, worship etc. toward those in positions of authority. The phrase “in heaven and on earth and under the earth,” is an expression used to include all realms in the universe from angels and demons, to humanity, and to all of creation. The whole universe will, “openly express total submission before the Lord Jesus Christ” (Hansen, 165). However, does this passage imply that all will confess Christ willingly? Or perhaps only that all will acknowledge him, whether willingly or unwillingly? Thielman is correct in asserting the key to answering these questions is understanding the Isaiah passage that is alluded to in this hymn (121). Isaiah 45:23b-24 reads, “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance. ‘Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him *shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him.*’” It seems to me that not all who bow before the Lord Jesus at the final day, will do so willingly and gladly. However, it would be unwise to over emphasize, in the context of this hymn, Christ’s triumph over his enemies. Thielman comments,

“Paul’s lack of specificity on this point shows that his concern lay not in Jesus’ victory over those who opposed him but in Jesus’ sovereignty over all creation. One day, Paul says, the universe will acknowledge what the small, persecuted community at Philippi confesses in its worship—‘Jesus Christ is Lord.’” (121-122).

Verse 11: “and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This continues the purpose statement made in verse ten. The purpose of the exaltation of Christ by the father is the universal worship of Jesus and at the sound of his name, “every knee should bow”, and “every tongue confess.” As noted earlier this does not mean that all creation will gladly offer praise and be glad that Jesus Christ is Lord. ἐξομολογήσεται “confess” means, “to declare openly in acknowledgment” (BDAG, 351). Although this verb is in the subjunctive mood which usually denotes possible action rather than probable action, it can also function as asserting that the action is intentional. The later use of the subjunctive mood seems appropriate here given the context of the

hymn and the Old Testament allusion that is present. This confession, does not mean that every person will make a confession of faith or the same confession that the church makes but rather, as Ralph Martin asserts, they will make, “the open and irrevocable admission that this is the rightful Lord of the universe because God has installed Him on the seat of uncontested authority” (264). Therefore this acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord is not just the church but all of creation, and this is the climax of the hymn. The suspense builds and builds up until this point, because until now, the “name” has been concealed. We’re left with major cliff-hangers until this final verse that reveals to us that the name given to Jesus is “Lord.” Worth noting, there is a textual variant in verse 11. Several witnesses, primarily Western, omit Χριστός, possibly in order to conform the expression to that in ver. 10, but that the overwhelming witness is that “Christ” is and should be included in translation (Metzger, 545-546).

Regarding the build up to the revelation of the divine name given to Jesus, Hansen illuminates an important aspect of the hymn, “The lines that so dramatically lead up to the revelation of the name *Lord* invest that name with three dimensions of meaning: sovereignty, identity, and destiny” (166). We see this sovereignty in verse 10-11 and the Isaiah passage that all three realms of the universe, all of creation is under his authority. The giving of the name “Lord” proclaims Jesus’s identity as God and worthy of honor and praise. How so? In the Jewish religion, “the name *Lord* (kyrios) is actually a substitute name for the Hebrew divine name YHWH (Yahweh)” because of the great fear and reverence for God’s name. (Hansen, 167). In the Septuagint, the translators used the Greek name κύριος “Lord” at least 6,156 times for the unique divine name YHWH (Hansen, 167). This is the name above all names (2:9) given to Christ. As far as destiny goes, what Hansen means is that the acknowledgement of all people that Jesus is Lord has not yet taken place. Jesus is exalted, given the name and is absolutely sovereign over all of creation, but he is awaiting this confession by all of creation on the last day. The Christ hymn points to the tension of the already-not-yet realm in which we live, and in which Christ does as well in his exaltation as he awaits the universal acknowledgement of creation.

This hymn should give hope to believers and strengthen their resolve, as this is just another way in which Christ identifies with humanity. Vindication will come, but until then the church proclaims that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the father as an expression of what all will do one day. Christ will come the second time, but not in humility. He will be riding the white horse of the Apocalypse (Rev. 19:11–21). He will put an end to suffering and injustice, welcoming into his kingdom, “those who have faithfully suffered for the gospel under the oppressing hand of tyrants” (Thielman, 126). Philippians 2:9–11, then should sound like a comforting word to those in eagerly awaiting the consummation of all things.

In following Christ’s example, we most certainly cannot experience the unique exaltation he had. However, if we are faithful as he was faithful, then we too,

“will be found ‘pure and blameless’ at that day, ‘filled with the fruit of righteousness’ (1:10–11), having reached ‘the goal,’ and having gained ‘the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus’ (3:14).” (Thielman, 122).

None of this will be earned as payment for our services to God to gain his favor, but God himself will work within us to ensure our faithfulness (Phil. 2:13), as we live out our identity as children of God. Through the empowerment of the Spirit, following Jesus’ example progressively

maturing into the likeness of Christ, we can rest assured that, “just as Christ’s faithfulness will lead to the universal acknowledgment of his position, so their faithfulness will lead to identity with Christ and resurrection from the dead on the final day (Phil. 3:10–11)” (Thielman, 122).

VI. Final Thoughts

The connections between 2:6–11 and the argument before and after it show that Paul is revealing Jesus’s incarnation and exaltation as an example of humility and obedience (2:3, 7–8, 12). Imitation of Christ’s attitude is what is meant in this passage, rather than the particulars of his life. As Thielman shows, “In Corinth it meant not exercising rights within the church when to do so would cause another’s stumbling and destruction (1 Cor. 11:1). In Philippi it meant being loving, united, humble, and willing to put the interests of others ahead of one’s own (Phil. 2:2–4)” (125). The incarnation of Christ Jesus represented in this passage is exceedingly different than human nature. Humanity seeks to dominate each other, get a leg up on the competition, lie, steal, cheat, and kill to take care of number one, and rise to the top. Jesus however, being infinite in power and knowledge and wisdom in being equal with God, entitled to whatever he wanted, could have exploited this privilege and power to dominate his creatures, just like the Greco-Roman gods and the gods of the OT. That’s not what he did though. Jesus considered his “goodness” an opportunity for service and obedience. His position, and identity as one in the form of God, and sharing equality with God, led him not to an attitude of dominance and cruelty but one of self-giving, servitude. We are to embody this attitude, working out our salvation (2:12-18) by living a life worthy of the gospel (1:27-30) following Christ’s example of obedience and humility (2:5-11).

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