

Is this the attitude that you have in your Messianic congregation or fellowship? How do you uplift others and demonstrate God's lovingkindness toward them?

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Messiah Yeshua, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

2:5 Having just implored his Philippian audience to be humble (v. 3), the Apostle Paul portrays Yeshua the Messiah as the ultimate example of what it means to be humble and to serve. Truly, as anyone examines Philippians 2:5-11, you see that Yeshua the Messiah's humility toward humankind is absolutely unmatched in history. Paul tells the Philippians, "Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus" (NEB), employing the verb *phroneō* (φρονέω), "to think, to have understanding, to be sage, wise, prudent" (LS).¹² Understanding Yeshua's humility in His actions toward the human race is the true "mindset" that Believers are to have.

Paul uses very interesting language in describing the total humility and servanthood of the Messiah, which Believers in turn are to try to emulate—obviously to some small degree—in their own walks of faith. Vs. 6-11 are commonly referred to as the *Carmen Christi* or Hymn of Christ in many theological works, as many believe that Paul has imported and/or appropriated an early Messianic song into his letter to the Philippians. In its original context, as Hawthorne points out, "The hymn...presents Christ as the ultimate model for moral action."¹³ **It presents a matchless example that no human being can ever hope to fully reach.**

However, in spite of the *Carmen Christi* originally being given in the context of humility and how people are to understand that their human humility cannot be compared to that of the Son of God, Philippians 2:5-11 has quickly become one of the most significant texts in the Bible dealing with the Divinity and humanity of Yeshua—and is undeniably the most important part of the Epistle to the Philippians in the wider Biblical narrative. Fee summarizes that this "narrative about Christ...[is] one of the most exalted, most beloved, and most discussed and debated passages in the Pauline corpus."¹⁴

If indeed Philippians 2:6-11 originally made up a hymn adopted for the letter to the Philippians, then it should be noted that there is a wide variance of speculation as to where it originated. O'Brien points out, "Little scholarly consensus has emerged in relation to the origin and authorship of the passage...the conceptual background of the passage...or key exegetical and theological issues."¹⁵ Across both the conservative and liberal theological

¹² LS, 872.

¹³ Hawthorne, 79.

¹⁴ Fee, 192.

¹⁵ O'Brien, 188.

spectrums are those who advocate that the hymn was originally a product of Jewish mysticism, Gnosticism, Jewish-Maccabean martyrology, and finally something that was used in worship by the Jerusalem Messianic Believers.¹⁶

The default position for many readers is to consider the widespread conservative perspective: that this was a common hymn that Paul imported into his letter to make a key point. There are many who think that the *Carmen Christi* was pre-Pauline, and that it originated in Jerusalem. Still, there are others who think that Paul was its author, and that it was possibly sung or recited in the congregations established by him. This hymn certainly represents the emerging high Christology of the First Century *ekklēsia*. Fee makes the interesting point, “if originally a hymn, it has no correspondence of any kind with Greek hymnody or poetry; therefore, it would have to be Semitic in origin,”¹⁷ even though others do suggest that the hymn is consistent with some forms of Greek writing.¹⁸ Perhaps most significant are the parallels that can be seen between Philippians 2:6-11 and the actions of Yeshua described in John 13:3-17:¹⁹

JOHN 13:3-17	PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11
<p>Yeshua arises from the table and lays aside His outer garments: “<i>Yeshua</i>, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself” (13:3-4).</p>	<p>Yeshua empties Himself of His exalted glory in Heaven: “but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (2:7, RSV).</p>
<p>Yeshua takes a towel and wraps it around Himself, puts water in a basin, and begins to wash His Disciples’ feet:²⁰ “Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (13:5).</p>	<p>Yeshua humbled Himself as a slave (2:7).</p>

¹⁶ Ibid., pp 193-197.

¹⁷ Fee, 41.

¹⁸ Cf. Keener, 560.

¹⁹ This chart has been adapted from Hawthorne, 78.

²⁰ This was a menial task often assigned to slaves: 1 Samuel 25:41; cf. Mark 1:7; Acts 13:25.

<p>When Yeshua finishes, He once again takes His outer garments and puts them on, and again sits down at the table from which He got up: “So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined <i>at the table</i> again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’” (13:12).</p>	<p>God, His Father, exalted Yeshua to the highest place possible, giving Him the supreme name or authority which all must acknowledge: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name” (2:9, NIV).</p>
<p>Finally, Yeshua says, “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am” (13:13)</p>	<p>Every one must acknowledge Yeshua the Messiah as Lord: “every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (2:11).</p>

This is probably the best way for us to understand what Philippians 2:6-11 represents. Regardless of whether or not it was a hymn, or first appears in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, it is best for us to treat vs. 6-11 for what they are as a literary unit, and examine this piece for its literary claims.

2:6 Paul begins by reminding his audience that Yeshua the Messiah, “existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage” (HCSB). Here, the text plainly testifies to the pre-existence and Divinity of the Son. “God,” per Paul’s previous reference in 1:2 to “God our Father” (and v. 11), forces readers to perceive Yeshua as being intimately connected and intertwined with Him. Robert P. Lightner adequately explains, “His complete and absolute deity is here carefully stressed by the apostle. The Savior’s actions demonstrating His equality infuriated the Jewish leaders (John 5:18) and caused them to accuse Him of blasphemy (John 10:33).”²¹ Not surprisingly, Yeshua’s Divinity is one of the most fiercely debated and divisive topics in today’s Messianic movement. Many affirm the truth that Yeshua is God made manifest in the flesh, but others only consider Yeshua to be a so-called “super-human” empowered by God, or some kind of created supernatural agent.

Paul’s first phrase, “He existed in the form of God” (NASU), *en morphē Theou huparchōn* (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων), affirms Yeshua’s participation in the Godhead. Yeshua has no beginning, as seen in the present participle *huparchōn* (ὑπάρχων), “existing,” which the NASU and some other versions (RSV, NRSV, ESV, CJB) have poorly rendered by the past tense “was.” Similar affirmations appear in how the Apostle John describes Yeshua as the pre-existent Word of God, who “was God” and “was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John

²¹ Lightner, in *BKCNT*, 654.

1:1b-3). The Apostle Paul later describes Yeshua to the Colossians as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation [over all creation, NIV]. For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15-17). Being “firstborn” is a designation of the **first status or first rank** as seen in the Tanach Scriptures (Exodus 4:22; Psalm 89:27; Jeremiah 31:9).

The Greek term *morphē* (μορφή) or “form,” in vs. 6 and 7, has certainly stirred some discussion among commentators. F. Foulkes writes, “The Greek *morphē* speaks of permanent *form*, a word very close in meaning to our more philosophical word ‘nature.’”²² Indeed, the NIV renders *morphē* as “nature,” and the NEB goes further using “divine nature.” O’Brien further describes *morphē*, pointing out that “the term did not refer to external appearance alone; it regularly pointed to something more substantial.”²³ Homer A. Kent, Jr. comments, “The term *morphē* denotes the outward manifestation that corresponds to the essence, in contrast to the noun *schēma* (2:7), which refers to the outward appearance, which may be temporary.”²⁴ The key for understanding *morphē*, and how it applies to Yeshua, is that Paul uses the present participle *huparchōn*. This was an ongoing action that takes us all the way back to the beginning of time and long before: “existing in the form of God” (American Standard Version). AMG communicates, “*Morphē* in Phil. 2:6-8 assumes an objective reality. No one could be in the form (*morphē*) of God who was not God.”²⁵

The second statement Paul makes in v. 6, linking Yeshua’s Divinity to His humanity, is that He “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped” (NASU). The term *harpagmos* (ἄρπαγμός), which has been frequently (and problematically) rendered as “grasped,” can notably mean “**someth. to which one can claim or assert title by gripping or grasping**” (BDAG),²⁶ often with some degree of violence or abuse. This is why the NRSV has, “though he was in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,” followed by the TNIV with, “being in very nature God, [he] did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.” The Father and the Son are equal as members of the Godhead, but what we see in v. 7 following is that rather than assert or claim His Divine privileges, Yeshua instead emptied Himself. This runs absolutely contrary to any of the Greco-Roman myths, which would have described the gods or goddesses coming down to Earth and abusing their powers, dictating their will to mortals. Even Earthly kings, who had various privileges and powers at their disposal, would be more likely to abuse such things to be sure, rather than humbly serve their people. As O’Brien astutely explains,

“Jesus did not regard his equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage. ἄρπαγμός is here an active, abstract word, with the idiom clearly assuming that equality with God (τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῶ [to einai isa Theō]) is already possessed...The expression

²² Foulkes, in *NBCR*, 1132.

²³ O’Brien, 207.

²⁴ Kent, in *EXP*, 11:123.

²⁵ Zodhiates, 997.

²⁶ *BDAG*, 133.

οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο [*ouk harpagmon hēgēsato*] emphasizes that Jesus refused to use for his own gain the glory that he had from the beginning. Unlike many oriental despots who regarded their position for their own advantage Jesus understood that equality with God did not mean ‘getting’ but ‘giving’...”²⁷

N.T. Wright also details the following on the term *harpagmos* (ἀρπαγμός), from his book *The Climax of the Covenant*:

“The sense of οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο [*ouk harpagmon hēgēsato*] will then be that Christ, in contrast to what one might have expected...refused to take advantage of his position....The emphasis of v.7 shows that the refusal described by the phrase was a refusal to use for his own advantage the glory that he had from the beginning...Over against the standard picture of oriental despots, who understood their position as something to be used for their own advantage, Jesus understood his position to *mean* self-negation, the vocation described in vv.7-8....The pre-existent son regarded equality with God not as excusing him from the task of (redemptive) suffering and death, but actually qualifying him for that vocation...The real humiliation of the incarnation and the cross is that one who was himself God, and who never during the whole process stopped being God, could embrace such a vocation.”²⁸

What is mainly communicated by v. 6 is that Yeshua the Messiah, existing as God the Son, did not consider the equality He had with the Father as something to be used to His own advantage or exploitation in the redemptive work that was required—in being incarnated as a human being, suffering humiliation, and executed via crucifixion.

As to my knowledge (2012), there has been no concentrated Messianic discussion surrounding the Greek term *harpagmos*, concurrent with proposals present in Christian scholarship from the past two to three decades. There has unfortunately been no Messianic Bible version that has rendered *harpagmos* along the lines of “something to be exploited” (NRSV) or “something to be used to his own advantage” (TNIV). Factoring in some of the contemporary discussions and proposals regarding *harpagmos* in v. 6, will be doubtlessly important in future Messianic considerations of the Philippians 2:5-11 hymn—as well as debates which are surely coming (with some already present) over the nature of Yeshua.

2:7 Yeshua the Messiah “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (NRSV). Yeshua the Messiah may be regarded as having emptied Himself to the point of becoming a lowly slave.²⁹ What Yeshua “emptied” Himself of, is something that can be debated—and often remains at the forefront of the tension for people trying to understand the Messiah’s Divinity and humanity. The verb *kenoō* (κενόω) simply means “to empty out, drain” (*LS*).³⁰ What is often termed the “kenosis theory” among various theologians is the view that Yeshua emptied Himself of the metaphysical attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. However, it must be stated that this view is only adhered to

²⁷ O’Brien, pp 215-216.

²⁸ N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp 83-84.

Wright’s 2011 Kingdom New Testament renders v. 6 with, “Who, though in God’s form, did not regard his equality with God as something he ought to exploit.

²⁹ Cf. Romans 5:19; Hebrews 5:8; 10:5-14.

³⁰ *LS*, 427.

by a handful of people. There is a serious challenge to the “kenosis theory” when we understand that Yeshua often displayed these characteristics during His Earthly ministry.

Some think that Paul’s reference to Yeshua emptying Himself is rooted in Isaiah 53:12, of the Suffering Servant emptying Himself to death: “Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.”

What we know for certain when reading the *Carmen Christi* is that Yeshua certainly emptied Himself of something. But, if what He emptied Himself of was neither His metaphysical abilities nor His life—than what was it? **The default position seems to be that in coming to Earth Yeshua emptied Himself of His exaltedness and glory in Heaven, but still maintained His Divine qualities while on Earth.** While no longer being exalted with the Father, Yeshua was still able to perform miracles and demons recognized who He was. While Yeshua gave up this glory (cf. John 17:5), it remains significant that He came to Earth to serve humanity as a slave. This would have been most true in the washing of the Disciples’ feet:

“*Yeshua*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (John 13:3-5).

This was a dirty chore that only a household servant would have performed—yet Yeshua did it at the Passover *seder* to make an important point to His followers. Yeshua identified Himself with humanity (Matthew 20:28), and as a servant epitomized the example that others should have when relating to the Father (Mark 10:43-44; Luke 22:42; Luke 19:10; John 4:34; Hebrews 10:8). The significant difference that we see between Yeshua as a human and other humans is that He lacked the fallen sin nature that *all of us have inherited from Adam*. Kent explains, “Paul implies that even though Christ became a genuine man, there were certain respects in which he was not absolutely like other men.”³¹ Yeshua took on the characteristics of a human being, as the Apostle John says, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Paul writes that God “condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin’s domain, and as a sin offering” (Romans 8:3, HCSB). The author of Hebrews says, “He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

Yeshua first possessed *morphē Theou* (μορφῆ θεοῦ; v. 6), and upon emptying Himself of glory, took on *morphēn doulou* (μορφῆν δούλου). These are two contrasting conditions. If Yeshua may be regarded as authentically God by existing in “the form of God”—something which He notably did not give up—He may also be regarded as authentically human by existing in “the form of a slave.” Paul writes in v. 7, *en homoiōmati anthrōpōn genomenos* (ἐν ὁμοιωμάτι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος), “being born in human likeness” (NRSV). Fee describes, “he

³¹ Kent, in *EXP*, 11:124.

came in the 'likeness' of human beings, because on the one hand he has fully identified with us, and because on the other hand in becoming human he was not 'human' only. He was God living out a truly human life, all of which is safeguarded by this expression."³²

2:8 Detailing the supreme servanthood of Yeshua, Paul writes, "being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (TNIV). While on Earth, Yeshua died as someone who was utterly cursed. Paul tells the Galatians, "Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'" (Galatians 3:13), a reaffirmation of Deuteronomy 21:23: "his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance." Crucifixion was the First Century's most humiliating form of execution, and for His time, Yeshua died in the most violent, accursed way. The Roman Senator Cicero would write, "To bind a Roman citizen is a crime; to flog him is an abomination; to slay him is almost an act of murder; to crucify him is—what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed."³³ *IDB* describes some of the shame of First Century crucifixion:

"Partly as a warning to other potential offenders, the condemned man was made to carry his cross, or the transverse part, along the public roads and to the execution ground, which itself was nearly always in a public place. There he was stripped of all his clothing. Affixed to the cross, he could not care for his bodily needs, and was the object of taunts and indignities from passers-by."³⁴

How many of us in our faith experience and reflection on the Scriptures consistently fail to consider the humiliation and agony that Yeshua endured for us? Yeshua emptied Himself of His exaltedness in Heaven, came to Earth in human form, took our sin upon Himself, and died in a most horrific manner. **His humility and what He put aside to endure are almost unbelievable.** When we strive to be humble servants in the community of faith, we must consider that none of us must empty ourselves of the glory that Yeshua had in Heaven to enter into the world of mortals. While we have to give things up to enter into the community of faith—these things are never that severe.

In His teachings, Yeshua the Messiah calls His followers to be ultimate servants to one another. In applying this to our lives today, we surely see that the economy of the Bible is completely reversed from that of the world (Matthew 5:3-11). While none of us may be God in the flesh, as Believers we certainly have the responsibility to uphold the ethic that Yeshua demonstrated while on Earth of service toward one another. Compared to what Yeshua had to put aside to be among us, we have very little to give up as human beings who have been called to follow Him. By Him emptying Himself of glory for a season, we have the opportunity to be reconciled to the Father and inherit eternal life (2 Corinthians 8:9).

It is ultimately impossible for any of us to adequately explain the mystery of Yeshua's Divinity and humanity co-existing together, and **Philippians 2:5-8 does not attempt to**

³² Fee, 213.

³³ *Ibid.*, 217 fn#13.

³⁴ Pierson Parker, "Crucifixion," in *IDB*, 1:747.

explain it as much as affirm it. However, as Hawthorne comments, “the Philippian text does not say that Christ gave up anything. Rather it says that he added to himself that which he did not have before—‘the form of a servant,’ ‘the likeness of a man.’ Thus the implication is that at the incarnation Christ became more than God, if this is conceivable, not less than God.”³⁵ We might be able to describe Yeshua’s coming into the world as a child and growing to be an adult, as God “shrinking Himself” and participating in humanity as one of us, whereas before He looked at Planet Earth from afar as Creator. What Yeshua gained as God was the experience of having participated as a member of the human race.

The mystery of how Yeshua participated in our same human experiences is something that will boggle each of us until we enter into eternity. Unfortunately, there are some in today’s Messianic community, who have opted solely to consider Yeshua a human, and not God in the flesh. And then, in response to this, there are a few Messianics who unknowingly advocate some kind of docetism, denying His essential humanity. The Scriptures do affirm that while on Earth Yeshua the Messiah was fully man (Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4), and we have the responsibility as able interpreters of the Word to affirm *both* His Divinity and humanity—even though we have no way as mortals to fully understand their intricacies.

Paul’s reference to Yeshua the Messiah emptying Himself of His exaltedness, only to enter into the realm of mortals to die a humiliating death on a cross, would have been contrary to the Philippian ethos of a Roman soldier. Many in Paul’s Philippian audience would have striven for glory and fame in their lives, and would not have voluntarily set them aside in order to serve others. Yeshua, in stark contrast, surrendered His ability to be manifested as God Himself while on Earth, save His Transfiguration before Peter, John, and James (Luke 9:32). The great mystery of the Godhead is how Yeshua can be both human and Divine—and all at the same time. How do you understand it? More to apply it for yourself as a mortal: what would you empty yourself of in order to serve others? Keep in mind that whatever you have to give up is a far cry from the Divine glory that Yeshua put aside to die for you and me.

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW [Isaiah 45:23], of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2:9 Because of Yeshua’s emptying of Himself, and the fact that He did not at all abuse His equality with the Father while on Earth (v. 6), Paul is able to tell the Philippians, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name” (NIV). Yeshua the Messiah is given the ultimate authority by His Father over Heaven and Earth, and all will acknowledge Him by either choice—or by force. As Paul later writes, “He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but

³⁵ Hawthorne, 88.

also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:20-22). The Apostle John sees the ultimate manifestation of this in the Book of Revelation:

“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever” (Revelation 5:13).

The Greek verb employed by Paul to describe Yeshua’s exaltation is *huperupsoō* (ὑπερὑψώω), meaning “*to exalt exceedingly*” (LS).³⁶ It is used in the Septuagint to describe the grand exaltation of the Lord: “For thou art Lord most high over all the earth; thou art greatly exalted [*huperupsoō*] above all gods” (Psalm 97:9, LXE). It also appears in the Prayer of Azariah in the LXX in a similar way: “Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, and to be praised and highly exalted [*huperupsoō*] for ever; and blessed is thy glorious, holy name and to be highly praised and highly exalted [*huperupsoō*] for ever” (Prayer of Azariah 1:29).

Yeshua’s exaltation—as “LORD”—to His previous position of glory in Heaven, is confirmation of His supreme act of sacrifice for humanity. The theme that true exaltation only comes by humility is seen in the Apostolic Scriptures (Matthew 23:12; James 4:10). As Fee remarks, Yeshua’s exaltation “asserts the divine vindication of Christ’s emptying himself and humbling himself in obedience by dying on a cross.”³⁷ Yeshua’s exaltation does not come as a “reward” of Him entering into the world of mortals and suffering, but as the ultimate stamp of approval on this completed work, and a certain acknowledgement of what is to transpire subsequent to the Eternal State.

2:10 The exaltation that the Messiah is stated in that “at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” The Apostle Paul actually lists the various categories of powers that to some degree were worshipped in Greco-Roman pantheon: the sky, the Earth/ground, and the underworld. This is important for us to consider because to some degree the Greco-Roman gods were “real”; they represented demonic forces that were allowed to tempt mortals and carry them away by deception. As Kent summarizes, “Paul’s statement was intended to include all of creation, animate and inanimate.”³⁸ The entire universe will acknowledge the supremacy of Yeshua the Messiah.

In claiming that “EVERY KNEE WILL BOW” the Apostle Paul is not just making an idle statement about Yeshua. He is appropriating a very real concept from **Isaiah 45:21-25**,³⁹ where the whole of Creation is seen worshipping the Holy One of Israel:

“Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*. They will say of Me, ‘Only in the LORD are

³⁶ LS, 838.

³⁷ Fee, 220.

³⁸ Kent, in *EXP*, 11:125.

³⁹ Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition* (New York: American Bible Society, 1993), 518; Aland, *GNT*, 675.

righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory.”

Implicit in these words is the fact that the LORD God is Israel’s Savior: “there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.⁴⁰ Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other” (NIV). The Apostle Paul now applies this to Yeshua the Messiah, **indicating that he truly believed Yeshua to be the physical manifestation of God Himself on Earth**—now exalted and glorified in Heaven, to which all of Creation must answer.

There can be some debate in today’s Messianic community over a proper application of the phrase “at the name of...” appearing in v. 10. Much of this has been caused because of an immaturity present over the English name Jesus, which certainly has been used by God to save people from their sins, deliver them from demons, and answer prayers. This was likewise true in the First Century for the Greek name *Iēsous* (Ἰησοῦς), employed in the Septuagint to transliterate the name *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ).⁴¹

The Biblical meaning of the term “name,” appearing in either the Tanach or Apostolic Scriptures, carries with it implications that go well beyond in what language a name originates. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the term *shem* (שֵׁם) designates “name,” and “often included existence, character, and reputation....‘To call one’s name’ over something signifies ownership, possession, and protection” (TWOT).⁴² The Greek term *onoma* (ὄνομα) is frequently used to render *shem* in the LXX and is employed throughout the Greek New Testament, notably in Philippians 2:10: *en tō onomati Iēsou* (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ). “This usage shows strong Semitic influence. Along with *epí, diá, perí, kat’,* and *prós,* *en* is very common. It is used with various verbs and in such senses as ‘with invocation of,’ ‘with proclamation of,’ ‘on the commission,’ ‘in fulfilment of the will,’ ‘in obedience to,’ ‘in the power of,’ or ‘in the presence of’” (TDNT).⁴³ Do not be fooled: Paul wrote the Philippians that the name they were to call upon was the Greek *Iēsous*, because what is ultimately most important is that one recognizes the power, authority, and majesty represented by the Messiah of Israel—not whether one calls upon God using *Yeshua*, *Iēsous*, *Jesus*, or some other derivation.

Sacred Name Only advocates present within various sectors of the Messianic world, claim that our Heavenly Father will only hear your prayers if you pray in the “one” name above every name, usually the “Hebrew” form of Messiah’s name determined *by them* (often the erroneous form “Yahshua”). While we should fully affirm that the Messiah’s given name is *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ), meaning “He is Salvation,” and believe that we should use this name as Messianic Believers, many of us came to faith and were saved by using the English name *Jesus*, derived from *Iēsous*, the Greek transliteration of *Yeshua*. Was this salvation experience meaningless? Some would say so. What do you think? Was there a day in your life that you

⁴⁰ Heb. *Elohim m’bal’aday El-tzadiq u’moshi’ya ayin zulati* (אֱלֹהִים מְבַלְעָדָי אֱלֹהֵי צְדִיק וּמוֹשִׁיעַ אֵין זוּלָתִי), “And there is no other god besides Me, A God righteous and saving” (YLT).

⁴¹ Consult the author’s comments on Acts 16:16-18 in the Appendix for a further discussion of this.

⁴² Walter C. Kaiser, “שֵׁם,” in TWOT, 2:934.

⁴³ H. Bietenhard, “*ónoma*,” in TDNT, 698.

came before God and cried out to Him for mercy “in the name of Jesus”? Was this a genuine experience?

We all must remember that our Creator looks at our heart intentions, and whether or not we were sincere when we received the Messiah into our lives. We cannot reduce the Messiah’s “name” to one’s specific pronunciation of it, but must recognize that His name also reflects on His character and authority. As Hawthorne points out, “In ancient thought o;noma (‘name’) was not only a way of distinguishing one individual from another, but also a means of revealing the inner being, the true nature of that individual.”⁴⁴

When you cried out for salvation, were you crying out in the name of One who was the ultimate embodiment of humility, love, and compassion? When you pray today, do you pray in the authority of One who shows mercy and kindness to the world—or resentment and hatred? I have certainly encountered Christians who serve a lawless “Jesus,” with no regard for God’s Law or His standards. But likewise, I know Messianics who serve a vengeful “Yeshua,” who demonstrates no love or grace to others, and is only concerned about “forcing Torah” onto them. I know Christians who understand that Jesus upheld God’s Law, and Messianics who know Yeshua as the One who loves others unconditionally. **The “name” of the Messiah ultimately concerns the character of the One who saves us.** Who saved you from your sins?

2:11 Yeshua’s ultimate supremacy is embodied by the fact that “every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” A person declaring “Yeshua is Lord” is absolutely essential to one truly believing in Him and being redeemed by Him (Romans 10:9). As Paul puts it to the Corinthians, “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Yeshua is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘Yeshua is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Paul’s assertion that all of Creation will declare Yeshua to be “Lord” is a strong affirmation of His Divinity. The Greek title *Kurios* (κύριος) was used in the LXX to render the Divine Name YHWH (יהוה), which by Second Temple times was only spoken aloud by the high priest on *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement (m.*Yoma* 6:2). *Kurios* or “Lord” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי), which would be spoken when the Scriptures were read or in liturgical worship in place of the name YHWH. Frequently throughout the Greek Scriptures, the title *Kurios* is used as a direct reference to “the LORD,” meaning YHWH. “In Phil. 2:6ff. the name *kýrios* is given to Jesus as the response of God to his obedient suffering. It implies a position equal to that of God” (*TDNT*).⁴⁵ This is why David H. Stern renders Philippians 2:11 in his Complete Jewish Bible with “every tongue will acknowledge that Yeshua the Messiah is *ADONAI*.” Fee concludes how for v. 11,

“The significance of Paul’s using the language of Isaiah in this way lies with his substituting ‘at the name of Jesus’ for the ‘to me’ of Isa 45:23, which refers to Yahweh, the God of Israel. In this stirring oracle (Isa 45:18-24a) Yahweh is declared to be God alone, over all that he has created and thus over all other gods and nations. And he is Israel’s savior, whom they can thus fully trust. In vv. 22-24a Yahweh, while offering salvation to all but receiving

⁴⁴ Hawthorne, 91.

⁴⁵ W. Foerster, “*kýrios*,” in *TDNT*, 492.

obeisance in any case, declares that ‘to me every knee shall bow.’ Paul now asserts that through Christ’s resurrection and at his ascension God has transferred this right to obeisance to the Son; he is the Lord to whom every knee shall eventually bow.”⁴⁶

Yeshua the Messiah was already Divine prior to, during, and after His Incarnation. Yeshua’s exaltation as “Lord” is not merely a declaration of His Divinity; it is a declaration of His supreme authority over worldly powers, rooted within the application of Isaiah 45:21-25 to Him. *Only someone “existing in the form of God” (v. 6) could be recognized as legitimately having such an exalted status.* Furthermore, the significance of recognizing Yeshua as “Lord,” for the Roman Philippians, is most key. We must remember that Philippi was a place where the cult of Caesar was avidly practiced, and the emperor was acknowledged as “Lord,” a god, by many.⁴⁷ How difficult was it for Philippians, who had perhaps been Roman soldiers and fought under the banner of the divine emperor, to give this up and acknowledge a Jew from the “backward provinces” who had been crucified, as Lord? Only God Himself can reveal such an important truth to such people!

It is notable that the glory that Yeshua receives in v. 11 is not a detriment to that of His Father, nor is it independent of His Father. Paul plainly states that Yeshua being acknowledged as Lord is “to the glory of God the Father,” taking place with His total approval. Both are integral members of the Godhead, and while such a Godhead is plural, the claims of Philippians 2:6-11 are made along the lines of Jewish monotheism.

Philippians 2:6-11 may very well be one of the most explicit examples in Scripture of trying to describe eternally Divine concepts in largely human language. The *Carmen Christi* calls each of us to have an extreme regard for the service of the Messiah while on Earth. It also calls us to have had a profound supernatural experience through Him, and for us to place our faith in God every day for those things we cannot fully understand. Ultimately, it calls each and every Believer—whether a First Century Philippian or a modern-day American or whomever—to diligently serve the Lord and serve others. Service unto death is the example that Yeshua demonstrated for us, and for this we must be eternally grateful.⁴⁸

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

2:12 Having just addressed the ultimate humility of Yeshua and how the Philippians are to strive to remember Him, Paul now shifts back to his audience and his direct relationship to them. This is realized by his reference to them as “my dear friends” (NIV), with Paul describing how the Philippians have been faithful to the Lord, encouraging them on the path that they were walking.

⁴⁶ Fee, 224.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 197.

⁴⁸ A more detailed examination of the *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 will be included, along with many other passages, in the author’s forthcoming *Salvation on the Line*.