

# The Christ Hymn

EXPLORING THE HYMN IN PHILIPPIANS



There are two passages in the Bible that are often referred to as “Christ Hymns:” Colossians 1:15-20 and Philippians 2:6-11. Although both passages are of importance and would be worthwhile to study, we will focus our attention in this article on the passage from Philippians:

*...who, being in the form of God,  
did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,  
but made Himself of no reputation,  
taking the form of a bondservant,  
and coming in the likeness of men.*

*And being found in appearance as a man,  
He humbled Himself and became obedient  
to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him  
and given Him the name which is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
of those in heaven, and of those on earth,  
and of those under the earth,  
and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ  
is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Scholars still argue over the authorship of this hymn. Many believe it was an early hymn that Paul

quoted, while others believe that it was written by Paul himself. Regardless of authorship, one thing is for sure: given the rich vocabulary, inclusion of poetic elements, and the fact that, with a couple small changes, it can stand alone as an independent composition, these six verses comprise a hymn.

This hymn is one of the most significant and informative depictions of the nature of Christ in the New Testament. Specifically, the poetic language expresses the dual nature of Christ, who was “in the form of God,” yet humbled Himself, “taking the form of a bondservant.” The overriding purpose of this passage is to present Christ as an example of the humility and self-sacrifice which all Christians should endeavor to possess. The hymn also enjoins the Philippian church to have a singular goal and passion, namely serving each other in the mind of Christ. Paul makes this clear with the verse that sets up the hymn, verse 5, when He says, “Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.”

At its midpoint, the hymn highlights God’s exaltation, giving Christ “the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus” all the realms of creation are called to bow in homage and every tongue proclaim, “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” And not only is He the Lord, but He is the Lord of all - those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth. This would’ve been important for the people of

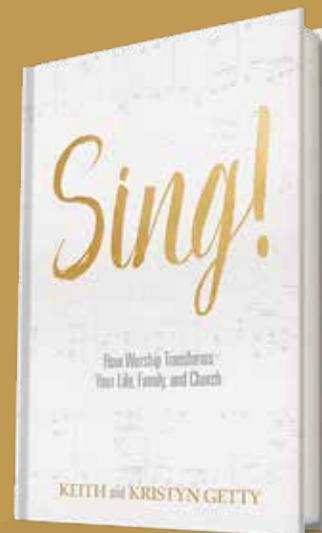


that time to hear, as many felt that they were ruled by powers, principalities, and rulers of the darkness (see Ephesians 6:12). Through Christ, they (and we) are liberated from these powers. This was a very enlightening and freeing text for the people at that time, just as it is for us today.

Christ's humility and obedience led to God's glorification and exaltation. We are reminded through this hymn that this kind of exaltation, as a reward for humility, is one that we hope to experience ourselves someday. Not only is this a hymn of humility for the past and present - it's also a hymn of hope for a future filled with the glory of God.

The beauty of hymns and choral music often lies in the lyrics. Here we have an example where no music is included, and yet, through the lyrics, we are drawn closer to the Father through knowledge of the Son. Even without music, the hymn is incredibly impactful. When we sing in worship, it's important that we are fully aware of what it is that we are singing about, and that we let the wonderful truths of God, revealed in the lyrics, dwell richly within our soul.

In light of the powerful truths found within this hymn, let us joyfully and patiently endure all suffering and hardship in the mind and name of Christ, our perfect example. - MNJ



## ***Sing!* Small Groups**

### **SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2019**

*Speaking of hymns...*

As a reminder, our small group discussions during the month of September and October will highlight the importance of singing and worship. Together in our groups, we will read the book ***Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church***. Written by modern day hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty, whose hymns include "In Christ Alone," "Holy Spirit," and "Speak, O Lord," ***Sing!*** not only highlights the importance of singing in our worship, but the necessity of it. Inspired by the depth and scriptural basis of this book, our District Apostle hopes this resource will bring new perspective and joy to our singing and worship.

**Please note that these discussions are not intended just for those who are gifted singers.** The main focus of this book and of our discussions will be on congregational singing. Together, we will learn how *all* of God's children have been created and called to sing His praises.