

Is Philippians 2:6-11 an Early Hymn?
Analyzing the Historical & Christological Nature of Philippians 2:6-11

I. Early Christian Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:6-11

A. Importance of Philippians 2:6-11

- Larry Hurtado. “Philippians 2:6-11 . . . is widely acknowledged among scholars in Christian origins as one of the most important early expressions of devotion to Jesus.”¹

B. Early Christian Devotion

- Richard Bauckham. “Philippians 2:6-11 is one of the central Christological passages of the Pauline literature, and therefore one of the **earliest passages of Christological reflection that we have in the New Testament**.”²
- Larry Hurtado. “Indeed, virtually all of the earliest, sizeable, and significant Christological passages in the New Testament appear to be remnants of early Christian hymns”³
- Gary Habermas. These creedal traditions, including Philippians 2:6-11 “are still exceptionally early and remain vital witnesses to the **earliest Christian beliefs**.”⁴

C. Hymn or Ode

- Consensus. “[I]t is now the **dominant view** of New Testament scholars that Philippians 2:6-11 preserves (or derives from) an **early Christian ‘hymn’ or ‘Christological ode’** whose original provenances was in the setting of corporate worship.”⁵
- Hymn-like Qualities. “Prominent among the features widely though to indicate the poetic nature of Philippians 2:6-11 are its **highly compressed phrasing and its syntactical structure**.”⁶

¹ Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* p. 7 (2005).

² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, p. 37 (2009) (bold added).

³ Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* p. 86 (2005).

⁴ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 286 (2024) (bold added); *id.*, p. 515 n.120.

⁵ Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* p. 84 (2005); *see also* Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 491-2 (2024) (“With many scholars, [Victor Paul] Furnish thinks that Phil 2:6-11 is a hymn”) (“Worship, liturgy, and preaching involved hymns such as Phil 2:6-11”).

⁶ Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* p. 84 (2005).

II. Textual Analysis of Philippians 2:6-11

Philippians 2:6-11 Text	Analysis ⁷
[Christ Jesus] who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Pre-Existent</u>. “existed in the form of God” • <u>Equal</u>. “equality with God” • <u>Not Exploit</u>. Jesus not exploit equality for His own benefit
But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Emptied Himself</u>. “laid aside his privileges” • <u>Bond-servant</u>. Servant or slave
Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Humbled Self</u>. From equality to servant • <u>Obedient to Death</u>. Total obedience
For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Exalted</u>. By Father God • <u>Highest Name</u>. “above every name”
So that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Lord of All</u>. Heaven, earth & below
And that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Highest Titles</u>. “Jesus Christ is Lord” • <u>Glory of God</u>. Jesus Christ’s obedience = Father God’s glorification

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⁷ See, e.g., Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* p. 89-107 (2005); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, p. 41-45 (2009); Dennis E. Johnson (Westminster Theological Seminary) commentary notes, *The Grace & Truth Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, pp. 1680-1681 (1995).