

“The Name Above All Names” Philippians 2:9

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Dr Crispin Fletcher-Louis

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Phil 2:6–11: Christological Monotheism?

1. Isa 45:23 quotation in vv. 10b, 11a identifies Jesus as *Yhwh-Kyrios* of Isaiah (Isa 45:18–19, 21, 24–25).
2. V. 6a: “being in the form of God” ≈ “being (clothed)* *in the glory of God*” (cf. Isa 6:1–3; Ezek 1:26–28).
* Cf. Luke 7:25: “οἱ ἐν ἱματισμῷ ἐνδόξῳ καὶ τρυφῇ ὑπάρχοντες”).
3. V. 6b–c: the pre-existent Christ is already “equal with God”.



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Phil 2:6–11: *No* Christological Monotheism?

1. James D. G. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 251–254; *Did the first Christians worship Jesus?* 40–41, 106.
2. Adela Yarbro Collins in A. Y. Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 114–116, 208–9.
3. James McGrath, *Only True God*, 49–53.
4. John Reumann, *Philippians*, 359, 374,



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What is the “name above all names”?

1. “Lord,” i.e. ruler: A. Y. Collins, J. Reumann.
2. “*Yhwh*,” or “*Kyrios*”—a translation of the substitute for the tetragrammaton, *adonai*): O. Hofius, O’Brien, L. Hurtado, R. Bauckham, J. McGrath (now the majority view).
3. “Jesus”: some C19th commentaries and C. F. D. Moule, M. Silva.
4. “Jesus Christ”: some C19th comms., e.g. Meyer, Vincent.



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1. The name is the *title* “Lord”

- (a) *Proskynesis* + confession fitting for one who is “Lord”.
- (b) Accords with other evidence that the hymn expresses an “Imperial Christology” (P. Oakes).
 - “Lord” title for Caesar (e.g. Acts 25:26).
- (c) V. 11a–b: *πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός* = “every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”



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2. The name is *Yhwh-Kyrios*

- (a) *In the Jewish world, and the Bible, the supreme name is יהוה* (for which “κύριος” translated the vocalisation and textual substitute “*adonai*”).
 - E.g. Deut 28:58; Ps 99:3; Neh 9:5; Pr. Man. 3; *Jubilees* 36:7 the “glorious and honoured and splendid and amazing and mighty name”; Philo *Moses* 2:208.
- (b) Accords with Isa 45:23 language for Christ.
- (c) Accommodates the truth of option 1: *Yhwh-Kyrios* is also *kyrios*, the LORD is Lord.



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2. The name is *Yhwh-Kyrios*

- ➔ “every tongue confess that (in consequence of the gift of the divine name) Jesus Christ (is) *Yhwh-Kyrios*”.
- or, “and every tongue *give thanks* (cf. LXX ἐξομολογέω) that Jesus Christ (is) *Yhwh-Kyrios*”.



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3. The name is “Jesus”

- (a) V. 10a: ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ cannot be a possessive genitive construction:
 - See e.g. Acts 2:38 “Repent, and be baptised every one of you ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ so that your sins may be forgiven”.
 - Cf. Acts 4:18, 30; 5:40; 9:27, 28; 26:9: “τὸ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ”; 1 Cor 1:2, 10; 6:11; Eph 5:20; 2 Thess 1:12: (τὸ) ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου (ἡμῶν) Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).
- ➔ See esp. Charlie Moule (1976).



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3. The name is “Jesus”

- 9 ... God highly exalted him,
and gave him the name above all names
10 so that when the name “Jesus” is uttered
every knee will bow ...
- 11 and every tongue confess that
the Lord/LORD is Jesus (Christ),
to the glory of God the Father.



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2. The name cannot be *Yhwh-Kyrios*

- (a) V. 10a ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ ≠ “at the name *that belongs to Jesus.*”
- (b) Isaiah 45 (and its context) incompatible with gift of the new name “*Yhwh-Kyrios*” at Christ’s exaltation.
- (c) Gift of a divine name to rulers has parallels in pagan antiquity, *but not in Jewish or biblical texts.*
- (d) No early Christian precedent, or parallel, for gift of the name “*Yhwh-Kyrios*” to Christ after his death.



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3. The name cannot be “Jesus”

Verse 9 does not say:
“wherefore, God also highly exalted *his name* (that he already possessed), above all names.”



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Towards a Solution

- 2008: S. Vollenweider, “Der Name,” 181: vv. 9–11 set up a fusion of, or perichoresis between, the names “Jesus” and *Yhwh-Kyrios*.
- 2015: Michael Martin and Bryan Nash, “Subversive *Hymnos*,” (2015) 131–32: two names or titles are in view, Jesus and “Lord”.



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A Solution?

“The ‘name’ here may also be identified with the full title ‘Jesus Christ, the Lord’, which would meet all that is claimed on behalf of each separate constituent and would give a much fuller scope to the ‘name’ than either constituent taken by itself. It connotes the human Jesus, the Divine Messiah, the Lord and Ruler of the Messianic kingdom, and all combined in the Person of Christ.”

M. Jones, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, (1918) 33.



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A Three-Part Name-Title

The Thesis:

God gives a three-part honorific name-title, “Lord Jesus Christ”. The gift of that *onoma* above all others comes at the climax of a personal biography, after both a phase hidden and unnamed in heaven (v. 6) and a phase unrecognised and unnamed on earth (vv. 7–8). The gift of this full name-title has two functions. It overcomes the status differential between Christ’s true and his unrecognised (and rejected) identity, and it honours him as a distinct (eternally) divine, and human, person, with a complex multi-representational biography.



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1. A fresh reading of vv. 9–11

ὅτι can be recitative:

- “And then will I declare to them (τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς ὅτι), ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (Matt 7:23, cf. John 1:20)
- ➔ Phil 2:1 “and every tongue confess/praise, ‘Lord Jesus Christ,’ to the glory of God the Father.”



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1. A fresh reading of vv. 9–11

(a) For κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός is a name-title:

Phil 1:2 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Phil 3:20 ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτήρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν ...

Phil 4:23 Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν.

Cf. esp. Acts 15:26; 1 Cor 1:2, 10; 6:11; Eph 5:20; 2 Thess 3:6: (τὸ) ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου (ἡμῶν) Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.



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1. A fresh reading of vv. 9–11

(b) V. 11 echoes LXX texts describing the acknowledgement, in confession & thanksgiving—of God *and his name*. E.g.

Ps 98 [Eng. 99] 1. “The LORD He who sits on the cherubim—let the earth shake. 2. The LORD is great in Sion, He is high (ὕψηλός) over all the peoples. 3. Let them acknowledge your great name (ἐξομολογησάσθωσαν τῷ ὀνόματί σου τῷ μεγάλῳ) because it is awesome and holy.”

Ps 74:2 [Eng. 75:1]. “We will praise (Ἐξομολογησόμεθά) you, O God, we will confess and call on your name (ἐξομολογησόμεθα καὶ ἐπικαλεσόμεθα τὸ ὄνομά σου).”



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1. A fresh reading of vv. 9–11

➔ 11 “and every tongue confess that ‘the LORD (*Yhwh-Kyrios*) (is/is manifest as) Jesus Christ,’ to the glory of God the Father.”



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2. Ancient conventions and beliefs about names and titles

Three contexts for the name giving:

- (a) C1st notions of honour and shame. See esp. J. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*.
- (b) Imperial name and title giving. See e.g. P. Oakes, *Philippians*, 170.
- (c) Conventions for the presence of names, titles, and epithets of gods and divine rulers in Greek hymns. See esp. M. Martin and B. Nash, “Subversive *Hymnos*”.



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2. Names, titles, status and power

Homeric Hymns 8:1–5 the god “Ares, exceeding in strength, chariot-rider, golden-helmed, doughty in heart, shield-bearer, Saviour of cities, harnessed in bronze, strong of arm, unwearying, mighty with the spear, O defence of Olympus, father of warlike Victory, ally of Themis, stern governor of the rebellious, leader of righteous men, sceptered King of manliness”.

Testament of Moses 1:16: Moses is “sacred spirit, worthy of the Lord, manifold and incomprehensible, master of leaders, faithful in all things, the divine prophet for the whole earth, the perfect teacher in the world.”



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3. Ancient Name conventions and Phil 2:6–11

1. It is anachronistic to assume the “name” (v. 9) is a singular, simple, name (either “*Yhwh-Kyrios*” or “Jesus”).
2. The giving of the name in v. 9 creates expectation that he will have an exalted, several-part name or many names.
 - Is the καί at v. 9b epexegetical: “... God highly exalted him *by giving* him the name above all names”?
3. The name given is not *added to* an existing name:
 - Christ is nameless in phases 1 (v. 6) and 2 (vv. 6–8) of his biography.



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3. Ancient Name conventions and Phil 2:6–11

4. The way the name is given echoes the bestowal of names and titles to honour achievements, virtue and proximity to the gods.
 - χαρίζομαι (in v. 9) is “a common term in honorific documents lauding officials and civic-minded persons for their beneficence” (BDAG 1078).
5. The gift of the three-part name-title insinuates a super-exaltation from a state worse than that of a slave to that of, at the very least, Roman citizenship.



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3. Ancient Name conventions and Phil 2:6–11

6. The multi-part name is typical of Greek and Roman rulers who were identified with the divine, and with individual gods in particular, through their names.
 - E.g. C1st Asia Minor inscription reads: “Tiberius Claudius Caesar Sebastos Germanicus *god manifest, saviour* of our people too.”



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3. Ancient Name conventions and Phil 2:6–11

7. Vv. 10–11 describe an eschatological *acclamation* comparable to those in which short greetings and salutations expressed divine honours to rulers.
 - E.g. Nero’s clique hailed him “Glorious Caesar! Apollo, Augustus, another Pythian! By you (we swear), O Caesar, no one surpasses you.” (Cassius Dio *Roman History* 62, cf. Tacitus *Ann.* 14.15; Suetonius *Nero* 20.3).
 - In *Jubilees* 40:7 Joseph, ruler in Egypt, is acclaimed as “god, god, mighty one of God”.



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4. The name “Jesus” in v. 11b

(a) Octavian’s apotheosis:

“Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus”
→ “Divus Augustus”.

Jesus’ exaltation:

(Jesus)
→ “κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.”

(b) Jesus’ name-title is given by God, not by any human community.



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5. The honorific “Christos”

Messiah (or Christos) is a representative (king and/or high priest).

Jesus is “Christos” in Phil 2:6–11 as:

- a) the one who identifies himself with, and who takes on, in the incarnation and at the cross, a humanity stuck in Adam.
- b) the divine ruler who fulfils biblical and Greco-Roman (philosophical) ideals concerning kingship (on which see e.g. J. Jipp, *Christ is King*, 2015).
- c) the servant of Isa 53; the one who sums up in himself the identity of God’s people, Israel.



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Conclusion

The gift of the multi-part name-title says that this individual is the one God freshly revealed *as a person*. In the first century world, names and the giving of names denote personhood. As an encomiastic hymn, in praise of Christ as a divine ruler with his own three-part name-title, and as one who will be celebrated by the whole cosmos the way rulers were celebrated, Phil 2:6–11 says, emphatically, this one is *a distinct divine person*. Implicitly, he is not just Lord Jesus Christ. The closing doxology refers also to God the Father, Christ’s benefactor (in the bestowal of the name). The one God, *Yhwh-Kyrios*, is now two persons, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, and, God the Father.



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