

Songs of Isaiah (Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7; 52:13-53:12).

being made in the likeness of men – The Greek verb γίνομαι (*ginomai*) translated here by the NASB as “being made” is an aorist participle and as such, stands in direct contrast to the participle of v. 6, ὑπάρχων (*huarxōn*), “to be, exist,” which is in the present tense. Verse 6 describes the preexistent Messiah as always existing in the very nature of God, while here the aorist participle denotes that He came into existence “in the likeness of men.” The former has no beginning, the latter clearly does. Here then is the second aspect of the “pouring out”—the preexistent Son of God became a man and would forever exist in the likeness of humankind.

The verb *ginomai* commonly means “to be born” so the ESV is good: “being born in the likeness of men.” The plural “men” (ἀνθρώπων, *anthrōpōn*) may answer to the many times that the Lxx uses the Greek plural to translate אָדָם (*adam*) in the sense of “human kind,” especially in the phrase “sons of men” (e.g., Ps 9:20; 11:4; 12:1,8; 14:2; 21:10; 31:19-20; 33:13, etc.).

Much has been made of the term “likeness” (ὁμοίωμα, *homoioma*). It does not mean that Messiah only appeared to be human (but really was not), or that He just seemed to be human but was of a unique sort. Nor should the word be scrutinized to find some nuance of meaning as to the relationship of Yeshua’s human nature to that of fallen human nature.¹ As noted above, the hymn must be understood in its entirety and not dissected into its constituent parts. The simple and obvious meaning is that Yeshua assumed a genuine human nature like that of other men. The issue of His impeccability (sinlessness) is not the focus of the hymn and the issue should not be forced upon this phrase.

It should be noted that modern English translations differ as to whether “being made in the likeness of men,” is the final clause of v. 7 or if the next clause, “being found in appearance as a man” should also be included in v. 7. The KJV, NASB, ESV, and NIV (and others) put this phrase as the beginning of v. 8, while other English Bibles (e.g., NET, CSB, CJB, CEV, etc.) include “being found in appearance as a man” with

1 Debates in the early centuries of the Christian Church over whether Yeshua sinned were based upon a misunderstanding of Rom 8:3, “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh....” To be “in the likeness of sinful flesh” simply means that He took on the likeness of a normal human being. Nevertheless, He was entirely without sin Himself.

v. 7, and begin v. 8 with “He humbled Himself....” Since we are using the NASB as our basic English text, we move now to v. 8.

8 – Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Being found in appearance as a man – This is now the third participial phrase that defines the “pouring out” of v. 6. He poured Himself out by:

1. taking upon Himself the form (nature) of a bond slave
2. being born in the likeness of men, and
3. being recognized as a common man

The NASB “being found in appearance as a man could more literally be rendered “and in appearance being found as a man.” Hawthorne translates “and by being recognized as a human” which gives the general sense.¹

The hymn has utilized general, poetic synonyms in the terms “form,” “likeness,” and “appearance,” and their differences should not be overly stressed. Though the word “appearance” (σχήμα, *sxēma*) denotes that which is “outward” and not necessarily “essential or permanent,” its force here should be seen in connection with its near counterparts, especially the previous use of the Greek word μορφή (*morphe*) that is, “form” (in vs. 6 & 7) and “likeness” ὁμοίωμα, (*homoioma*), both of which emphasize the reality or actual substance of an object, a reality, and here in our text, the physical and real physical body of Yeshua. The obvious point is that Yeshua, in His incarnation, identified in every way with mankind because He became man Himself. It was not some “trick” by way of illusions but Yeshua, the eternal Son of God, participated fully in becoming human Himself. As MacLeod puts it:

There was nothing in his appearance to distinguish him from anyone else. There was no halo, no glow, probably not even anything that made him particularly handsome or striking. Not a head would have turned as he walked. He looked utterly ordinary.¹

Very early in the emerging Christian Church, Marcion, the first of the great heretics, devised a distinctive Christology in an attempt to solve the problem of evil in the world. Since the Bible clearly teaches that there is one and only one true God, the problem of evil begs the

¹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, p. 121.

question of why God allows it in His universe. Marcion attempted to “solve the problem of evil”

by adopting the idea that there were, in fact, two gods, the imperfect, wrathful war god of the Old Testament and the “unknown God,” the spiritual Father who revealed Himself in Jesus.¹

Thus Marcion and those who followed him, taught that Yeshua did not have a real, physical body but only an apparent or phantom body, a mirage of sorts. This came to be known as “docetism,” from the Greek word *δοκέω* (*dokēō*), “to think, suppose, consider;”² holding that the body of Yeshua was not a physical reality but simply a projection or phantom that made it look as though He had physicality and thus people “supposed” this to be the case. Of course, docetism was declared a heresy and absolutely contrary to the Scriptures, for it essentially denies the virgin birth, the suffering of the cross, the blood that was shed, the resurrection of Yeshua’s physical, human body, and the eye-witnesses and testimonies of the apostles. Interestingly, of all the Apostolic Scriptures, Marcion considered only the Gospel of Luke as authentic scripture, and yet it is in Luke’s Gospel that we read the history of Yeshua appearing in the upper room subsequent to His resurrection.

Following the Road to Emmaus encounter with Yeshua, the two disciples who walked with Yeshua returned to Jerusalem in order to find the eleven and tell them that Yeshua was alive, just as He had promised. There, in the upper room, while the two were telling their story, Yeshua suddenly appeared.

But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them. (Lk 24:37–43)

1 Brown, Harold O. J., *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Hendriksen Pub., 1988), p. 64.

2 BDAG, “*δοκέω*,” p. 254.

The very fact that Luke carefully records Yeshua showing them the wounds He received by being impaled upon the cross, and that He ask for food and ate it before them, makes it absolutely clear that, in the mystery of the incarnation, Yeshua, the Eternal One, took upon Himself true humanity: flesh and blood, and being fully Divine, had taken upon Himself true humanity and would therefore remain fully divine and human throughout all eternity. Such utter identification with those whom He would save through His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession was absolutely necessary. For the punishment of sin is death, and thus to pay the penalty of sin for all those whom the Father had given to Him,¹ it was necessary that He give His life in death for them and that He would be resurrected to show the power He has to overcome death. For death is ultimately separation from God, and to bring all those for whom He died to live eternally with Him in the very presence of the Father and the Ruach is inevitably brought to reality by His own resurrection.

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection... (Rom 6:5)

...*He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death* – The hymn goes on to say that “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.” The phrase “becoming obedient to death” may invoke several ideas. First, there is a subtle reminder of Yeshua’s divine nature here, for in the case of fallen man, he has no choice with regard to death. Death, for fallen mankind, is an inevitability. Yet in the case of Yeshua, He has the option to humble Himself and become obedient to death. In this sense, then, the hymn reminds us that death could have had no claim upon Him had He not been willing to submit Himself to it. This truly emphasizes the “giving of Himself” for those He would save.

Secondly, the idea of “obedience” to death surely invokes the picture of Yeshua’s obedience to the Father in terms of fulfilling the mission for which He had been sent. That mission was nothing less than securing the eternal salvation of His people through a vicarious death for their sins. In this regard, then, His obedience to death was His “yes” to the Father. But we should not diminish the anguish that such a response of obedience fostered within His human soul. In His prayer, “Father, if

1 cf. John 5:36; 6:3.

You are willing, remove this cup from me" (Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42), we hear the agony of the task to which He was called, and we see His obedience in the next words, "yet not My will, but Yours be done."

...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." (Jn 13:1)

...for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. (Matt 26:28)

His "pouring out" included His willingness to accept death as obedience to His Father as well as the infinite expression of His love for all whom He would save.

Yet thirdly, His obedience to death was not only as the Servant of Adonai, but also as a servant to those He came to save. Even as He washed the feet of the *talmidim* in His final Pesach, so He said that He had come "to serve, not to be served, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28; Mk 10:45). He had come "to seek and to save those who were lost" (Lk 19:10). And so His obedience to death was also a function of His serving sinners. As the author of Hebrews puts it:

fixing our eyes on Yeshua, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2)

Here, the "joy set before Him" must be the redemption of His people, the cleansing of His bride (cf. Eph 5:26). Thus, His willingness to endure the cross involved His assessment that the joy of redeeming His people outweighed the shame of such an ignoble death. In this way, His obedience to death had both the Father and the redeemed elect in view.

...*even death on a cross* – The final phrase in the downward descent of the hymn brings us to the lowest point possible. Not only was Yeshua obedient to death, but He gave Himself to a death of the most cruel sort. Crucifixion was an unusually cruel and painful method of execution "generally reserved for slaves, robbers, assassins, rebellious provincials, and the like."¹ It was particularly abhorrent to the Jews, since one who was executed by being left to hang on a tree was cursed of God (Deut 21:22-23).

Thus, Messiah's death by crucifixion was the ultimate in human

1 Hawthorne, *Philippians*, p. 123.

degradation. Such a death is a sign of God's curse.

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” (Gal 3:13, quoting Deut 21:23)

One can go no further in identifying with humanity than in experiencing death—but death on a cross is the most humiliating and painful death. This death was particularly revolting to Romans. Cicero said (*Rab. Perd.* 5:16; 4.13), “The very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears” and that to crucify someone was to “hang him to the tree of shame.”¹

From this low point in the “pouring out” part of the hymn, a change to exultation is introduced (v. 9) and the “way down” turns to “the way up” — the path of humility gives way to exaltation. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that He may exult you at the proper time” (1Pet 5:6).

9 – For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

The change from the downward spiral of degradation to the upward move to exaltation is signaled by a strong connective, *διὸ καὶ* (*dio kai*) represented in the NASB by “For this reason also,” which is a very literal translation of the Greek. The meaning of the connective is “as a consequence,” and the addition of *καὶ* (*kai*), (“and”) indicates that it is the expected consequence. The exaltation is not so much a “reward” for the self-abnegation of Yeshua as it is the inevitable outcome in the divine order of things. This is precisely what Yeshua Himself taught, that self-humbling leads inevitably to exaltation.

Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. (Matt 23:12)²

In the case of Yeshua, however, since His self-abasement was on the

1 Garland, David E., *Philippians in Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (Zondervan, 2006), p. 221.

2 Cf. also Matt 16:25–26; 18:4; Lk 14:11; 18:14.

level of the infinite, the corresponding exaltation is also of an infinite nature.

The former description of the humiliation-descent, “He emptied Himself” (v. 7), was given in stages but not so for the exaltation. The risen and ascended Messiah is found at once exalted at the right hand of the Most High. In the phrase “God highly exalted Him,” the words “highly exalted” translate one Greek word, ὑπερῦψώω (*hyperupsōō*), which is found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. This compound word (ὑπερ, *hyper* meaning “beyond, much, more” plus ὑψώω, *hupsōō*, “to exalt”) means “to super-exalt, to raise someone to the loftiest heights.” The NIV gives the proper sense: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place.” It is not as though Yeshua is given an exaltation higher than He had in His preexistent state, but that in His post-resurrection exaltation He now is seen for Who He truly is and always has been—the One Who reigns above all. The same verb (ὑπερῦψώω, *hyperupsōō*) is used by the Lxx in Ps 96:9 [MT 97:9]:

For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted (*hyperupsōō*) far above all gods. (Ps 96:9 / Hebrew 97:9)

בִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה עֲלִיּוֹן עַל־כָּל־הָאֲרָץ מְאֹד נְעֻלִיתָ עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים:

The language employed in this “Hymn of Messiah,” therefore clearly denotes the position of Yeshua in His exaltation as the reigning Sovereign of the Universe.

... and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name – This position of utter sovereignty is emphasized by the fact that Yeshua is “given a name above every name.” In the semitic sense, a “name” functions not only to differentiate one individual from another, but even more, to reveal the essential nature and character of that individual. The word translated “bestowed” is χαρίζομαι (*charizomai*) and was used in the giving of honorific documents lauding officials and civic-minded persons for their beneficence.¹ Its use here may therefore have covenant overtones in the sense that Yeshua as the Servant of Adonai has been granted universal recognition as the divine co-regent, meaning His sovereignty and eternal divinity is one with the Father and Ruach. Consider these words of the prophet Isaiah.

I am יהוה, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. (Is 42:8)

1 BDAG, “χαρίζομαι,” p. 1078.

Thus, the “name that is above every name” can only be the very name of the Eternal Himself, that is, יהוה (YHVH).

Obviously, Paul is using this language to emphasize that which the human mind cannot fully grasp, for the incarnation of Yeshua itself encompasses the infinite reality of such universal concepts. Thus, the “Name which is above all names” absolutely identifies Yeshua as the eternal, all-powerful, omnipotent God, one with the Father and the Ruach. His Name bespeaks this reality. As in the Tanach, where, for instance, Abram is named Abraham, the giving of a name reveals the significance of an event or a covenant relationship.

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. (Gen 17:5)

Abram did not change when given the name Abraham. Rather, the name is given as a declaration of what has occurred, in Abraham’s case, the ratification of covenant promises. So also with Yeshua. The giving of the “name which is above every name” is a declaration, not of what He has become, but of Who He is and Who He has always been. The fact that His divine sovereignty was masked in His being “poured out” makes the declaration of His Name all that much more magnificent.

The “name” is not specifically given in this stanza of the hymn, but in v. 11 *κύριος* (*kurios*), “Lord” is the name that all confess, and it is therefore warranted to see this as the Name that is bestowed upon Yeshua. Once again, this is not a new office or position, but a clear and unmitigated revelation of His true position as Sovereign over all. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18). The One Who existed from all eternity in the very nature of God, Who is Himself the Creator, is the One Who poured Himself out in the incarnation for the sake of becoming the Servant of Adonai. Yeshua’s pre-incarnate exaltation is stated by John at the beginning of his gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He 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. (Jn 1:1–3)

Yet having “emptied Himself” or “poured Himself out,” He was known upon this earth as a common servant among men, Who was executed as a criminal and even worse, as a blasphemer, and was there-

fore despised and rejected. But He is now and forever seen and known to be the Lord of all. And Adonai (YHVH) is the One Who has made this universal proclamation. The Son in Whom the Father was well-pleased is and always has been the exalted King, heralded by the heavenly host and proclaimed to have all of the majesty and glory that only such a position possesses.