

In the Name of Jesus Every Knee Shall Bow

1. In the name of Jesus
Every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess Him
King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure
We should call Him Lord,
Who from the beginning
Was the Mighty Word.
- 2 At His voice creation
Sprang at once to sight:
All the angel faces,
All the hosts of light,
Thrones and dominations,
Stars upon their way,
All the heav'nly orders,
In their great array.
- 3 Humbled for a season,
To receive a name
From the lips of sinners
Unto whom He came,
Faithfully He bore it
Spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious,
When from death He passed;
- 4 Bore it up triumphant,
With its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures,
To the central height;
To the throne of Godhead,
To the Father's breast,
Filled it with the glory
Of that perfect rest.
- 5 Name Him, brothers, name Him,
With love strong as death,
But with awe and wonder,
And with bated breath;
He is God the Savior,
He is Christ the Lord,
Ever to be worshipped,
Trusted, and adored.
- 6 In your hearts enthrone Him;
There let Him subdue
All that is not holy,
All that is not true;

Crown Him as your Captain
In temptation's hour;
Let His will enfold you
In its light and power.

- 7 Brothers, this Lord Jesus
Shall return again,
With His Father's glory,
With His angel train;
For all wreaths of empire
Meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him
King of glory now. (*Hymns*, #76)

A name designates and defines the person of that name. After God promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, Adam called his wife's name Eve (meaning "living") because "she was the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20). When Moses asked for the name of the One who contacted him out of the midst of the burning thornbush, the response was, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exo. 3:14). After Isaiah prophesied of a virgin bringing forth a son, he added, "She will call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14; cf. Matt. 1:23)—*Immanuel* meaning "God with us." Later, Isaiah prophesied,

A child is born to us, / A son is given to us; / And the government / Is upon His shoulder; / And His name will be called / Wonderful Counselor, / Mighty God, / Eternal Father, / Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)

This hymn, written by Caroline Maria Noel, is unmistakably based upon the words of Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians (2:10-11): "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Noel first published part of the hymn together with some of her other poetic musings in an 1861 collection entitled *The Name of Jesus and other Verses for the Sick and Lonely*. Later editions dropped *for the Sick and Lonely* from the title, and around 1870 the expanded version of the hymn was published.

We might expect the hymn to bear a sense of personal suffering and loneliness corresponding to the title borne by her earlier published document. Many hymns about Jesus

are written to testify to the tender care of the Savior in times of great personal suffering. But this hymn turns away from a focus on personal needs and trials to explore the scriptural revelation of the exalted and uplifted Lord Jesus in the divine economy. The Lord Jesus is seen as the eternal Word of God, the Agent of creation, and the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Savior. Furthermore, He is declared to be the Lord in ascension and enthronement. Following the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, there is a fervent admonition to the believers: "Name Him, brothers, name Him, / With love strong as death." And again: "In your hearts enthrone Him; / There let Him subdue / All that is not holy, / All that is not true." Thus, the author of the hymn first sings the praises of an all-conquering, all-glorious Christ, ascribing to Him the central and universal place in the plan and purpose of God, and then she urges the believers to give a resounding response to His unique position by declaring His preeminence outwardly and yielding to His sovereignty inwardly. Ultimately, the hymn looks toward His future coming as Lord of all.

The central theme of this hymn does not simply deal with the name of Jesus; rather, its focus is on the person of that name. What makes His name above all other names is His excellence and accomplishments. His name is "far above all rule and authority and power and lordship" (Eph. 1:21). Every knee shall bow to that name. The name of Jesus is the all-subduing name, the one to which all authorities of all times and places must submit.

Because the name of Jesus is the name above every name and because every knee shall bow to that exalted name, there is intense resistance and strong opposition to the name of Jesus from those who seek to establish their own authority and carry out their own purposes. This opposition was anticipated by the psalmist in Psalm 2:

Why are the nations in an uproar, / And why do the peoples contemplate a vain thing? / The kings of the earth take their stand, / And the rulers sit in counsel together, / Against Jehovah and against His Anointed: / Let us break apart Their bonds / And cast Their ropes away from us. (vv. 1-3)

In the history of mankind, there is an element of fierce revolt against God and against His Christ. We who follow Christ must learn to meet this opposition at its source. The opposing forces are not primarily of blood and flesh but are the rulers, the authorities, the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12). We cannot shrink back in the face of this antagonism, but neither can we enter into mere human conflict by using politics, philosophy, culture, or religion as weapons. We are engaged in spiritual warfare. We must put on the whole armor of God by prayer and by girding

ourselves with truths such as is found in hymns like the one we are considering. Colossians 3:16 urges us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to God. This mutual encouragement by musing upon and speaking hymns to one another and singing to the Lord is of inestimable profit in the personal, family, and church life of the believers. By engaging in such worship, we will be expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God.

'Tis the Father's Pleasure We Should Call Him Lord, the Mighty Word

Stanza 1 says,

In the name of Jesus / Every knee shall bow, / Every tongue confess Him / King of glory now; / 'Tis the Father's pleasure / We should call Him Lord, / Who from the beginning / Was the Mighty Word.

It is the Father's pleasure and intention that Jesus Christ have the unique preeminence among all creatures in the entire universe. Before creation He existed eternally with God and as God. He is preeminent in the Godhead. As a man, He passed through the experiences of human living in absolute oneness with the Father, and all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him bodily (Col. 2:9). In resurrection He became the Firstborn from the dead (1:18). He is the mingling of God with man to initiate the new creation in which He has the preeminence. He was exalted by the Father to His right hand and given to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body. The divine Spirit testifies of Him that He is our life and everything.

Before creation Jesus was the "Mighty Word" (cf. John 1:1-2). By declaring that in the beginning, He was the Mighty Word, the hymn implies His place in the eternal Godhead as the second of the Divine Trinity. The purpose of the writer is certainly not to advocate a doctrinal position concerning the Triune God. The reference to Him as the Mighty Word, however, is not casual; it is a considered requisite for a proper understanding of the name of Jesus as the central theme of this hymn. It is the foundation for John's testimony concerning the history-changing event of the Word becoming flesh and tabernacling among us (v. 14). The eternal Word of God became flesh. If we fail to recognize His eternal place in the Godhead, we can never fully grasp how He can be realized and experienced as the unique Savior of all who believe into Him, or how He can be approved as One who is now seated with God in the heavenlies as the universal Administrator of God's eternal purpose. We must acknowledge that from the beginning He has been and is the Mighty Word but that He also became a man. Apart from this fact, the name of

Jesus loses its power and majesty and its capacity to impart life and light.

The man Jesus, therefore, was not just a gifted person of amazing power, personal attraction, and astute discernment to resolve and deal with the conditions, perils, spiritual poverty, and destitution of man. He was and is much more. He is the Mighty Word who became the Savior, Jesus. To see and realize the unalterable and unchangeable nature of this God-man require divinely operating revelation.

At His Voice Creation Sprang at Once to Sight

Another powerful revelation of the awesome person of that name is revealed in stanza 2: “At His voice creation / Sprang at once to sight.” Hebrews 11:3 states, “By faith we understand that the universe has been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not come into being out of things which appear.” God brought forth the universe out of nothing. He spoke it into being. Jesus Christ was the initiating source in the Triune God’s work of creation, the totality of creation, and the direction and flow of “thrones and dominations,” all the angelic “hosts of light,” and “all the heav’nly orders,” which are according to His work and sovereign administration (cf. John 1:3). Noel’s words are essentially a paraphrase of Colossians 1:16-17: “In Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and unto Him. And He is before all things, and all things cohere in Him.”

Humbled for a Season, to Receive a Name

Stanza 3 testifies that Christ was “humbled for a season, / To receive a name / From the lips of sinners / Unto whom He came.” Paul wrote to the church in Philippi that the Lord Jesus laid aside His position in the Godhead, emptied Himself, and took the form of a slave, becoming a man (Phil. 2:6-7). As a man, He humbled Himself further to become obedient even to the point of the death of a cross (v. 8). As a result of this humbling, “God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name” (v. 9). In His incarnation Jesus laid aside His inherent equality with God and became a man. This man was lowly in origin, born in a manger in Bethlehem, and was raised up in the scorned town of Nazareth in the despised region of Galilee. He lived out His life in humility and unassuming meekness—as a carpenter in this lowly town—until God called Him forth to three and a half years of ministry, through which He fulfilled His function as God’s Christ. His life ended by His dying the death of a common criminal on a cross. Through all this, as the hymn declares, He faithfully bore

that name Jesus “spotless to the last.” He humbled Himself for a season to “receive a name / From the lips of sinners,” uplifting the name of Jesus through His actions in incarnation, human living, and crucifixion. The Bible decisively proclaims, “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). Sinners breathe His name in prayer full of joyful hope and often rapturous liberation from the life of sin and death to which they were once enslaved. Glory to His name!

The third stanza concludes with a resounding acclamation that in resurrection Christ “brought it [the name above all names] back victorious, / When from death He passed.” The incarnation of Christ was the beginning of His humiliation; His resurrection was the beginning of His glorification. Resurrection is the proof of His accomplishments, such as incarnation to become a man, human living in oneness with God, death to terminate the old creation, and resurrection to actualize the redemption of fallen humanity. Furthermore, resurrection assures that those who believe into Him can receive Him in His sacrificial death as their Substitute to pay the penalty for sin, and resurrection also guarantees their right to obtain His resurrection life as their justification in order to rescue them from the condemnation of sin. In resurrection He bears the uplifted name of Jesus—the name of the over-coming, victorious Lord of glory!

The resurrection of Christ produced a dramatic change in the essence of the nature of Jesus. In Colossians 1:15 He is identified as “the Firstborn of all creation.” He is the pattern and prototype of all creation. Creation issued out from Him and is held together in Him. In verse 18 there is a significant progression in His person and position: “He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things.” The incarnation of Jesus was His first birth, His becoming a part of the old creation as the Son of Man to achieve His earthly ministry of expressing God and carrying out God’s plan of redemption and reconciliation. The resurrection of Christ was His second birth, His becoming the Son of God in His humanity to create and usher in the new creation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16-17; Eph. 2:15). Jesus Christ in resurrection not only brought that name back victorious, but He also ushered in the new creation in which He as the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16) has become “the Firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29).

Bore It Up Triumphant

In stanza 4 the majestic ascension and enthronement of Christ are contemplated. As the Christ of glory, He

bore it [the conquering name of Jesus] up triumphant, /
With its human light, / Through all ranks of creatures, /

To the central height; / To the throne of Godhead, / To
the Father's breast.

The Lord Jesus in ascension was elevated above the ranks of all creatures, ascending to the central height of the universe, even to the very throne of God, where He has been seated with the Father (cf. Rev. 22:1). As the glorified Son in His humanity, He returned to the bosom of the Father which is His eternal dwelling place (cf. John 1:18). There is a great difference between the state of His glory before His incarnation and in His ascension. Before His incarnation, His glory was a glory purely divine; His ascending back into glory was “with its human light.” *With its human light* indicates that there is now a man in the glory—the God-man Jesus, who is seated on the throne of God to labor in His heavenly ministry until “the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to His God and Father, once He has abolished all rule and all authority and power”—“for He must reign until God puts all His enemies under His feet” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-25).

In her hymn, Noel poetically explores the various aspects of Christ's position and work, His accomplishments and attainments, and His exaltation and glory. Poetry is the highest form of man's written communication. Through poetry we see not only something that exists in the heart, mind, thought, understanding, and aspiration of an author, but we are also led into realms, times, events, and subjects that are often beyond those fully comprehended by the author himself. Poetry is often the connecting link between the seen and the unseen. Furthermore, poetry is frequently based upon a vision in which, albeit imprecisely, one sees mysteries. In this hymn the ascension of Jesus is shown to be His elevation far above all the ranks of creation to the highest point in the universe, even to the very throne of God, where He is nestled in the bosom of the Father. In His ascension Christ as the Son of Man is before the throne of God to receive dominion and a kingdom. After He receives the kingdom from God, He will come back to rule over the entire world (Luke 19:12, 15). Christ's second coming will terminate the entire human government on earth from its beginning to its end and will bring in the eternal kingdom of God (Dan. 2:34-35, 44).

Name Him with Love Strong as Death

Stanzas 5 and 6 forcefully demonstrate that Noel was not only crystal clear concerning the objective elevation of Jesus' person together with the extensive position, function, and accomplishment of Jesus, who is both Son of Man and Son of God; she was also subjectively full of rich experiences of the One who is the divine and human mingling of God and man. With passionate zeal, she urges the “brothers”—all the genuinely redeemed and regenerated saints of God—to “name Him,” that is, proclaim His unsurpassed and unlimited name full of glory and power

with a heart of love that is as strong as death (cf. S. S. 8:6). In our experience of following the glorified Jesus, the proving of our faith may be filled with heaviness and sorrow, but we seek that it “may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, [we] love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, [we] exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:7-8). We do not see Him with our physical eyes, and we do not sense Him with our natural emotions, but we love Him with unflinching love that is as strong as death. We will not be shaken. We name Him “Lord of all”!

Though our love for the Lord Jesus is very personal, intimate, and cherishing, it is filled with “awe and wonder” and “bated breath.” We do not presume to assign to the Lord Jesus a conventional place like that of a loving, ordinary, and commonplace relative; instead, we honor, bow our knees before, and confess to His awesome person and position. “He is God the Savior, / He is Christ the Lord, / Ever to be worshipped, / Trusted, and adored.” Stanza 5 is our outward response to the awesome, unlimited, and exalted Christ in resurrection and ascension.

Stanza 6 admonishes us to take heed that our inward reaction to the exalted Christ must be to enthrone Him in our hearts and there “let Him subdue / All that is not holy, / All that is not true.” We need to crown Him our Captain—take Him as the One who leads us into glory, who sustains us in the hour of temptation, and who enfolds us into His will “in its light and power.” According to Ephesians 1:9-10, God's will is to head up all things in this Lord Jesus, who expresses the glory of God in His very person. We are following the Christ of glory, not some religious symbol. We follow a living Savior full of glory and power. God is light. When we live, walk, and have our being in this light, allowing Him to deal with everything in us that is not holy or not true, we become the expression of God as light.

This Lord Jesus Shall Return Again

Stanza 7 hails Him as the Coming One, the One who will return “with His Father's glory / With His angel train” to receive all power, lordship, and kingship for eternity. We are expecting His coming, when He, as our King of glory, in endless immortality and ceaseless authority and power, will be established in His kingdom visibly on the earth to the glory of God the Father. But in the meantime, we do not merely wait for His future coming; rather, “our hearts confess Him / King of glory now.”

by Gary Kaiser

Works Cited

Hymns. Living Stream Ministry, 1980.