

The Exaltation of Christ, Part 2

Scripture: Philippians 2:10–11

Code: 50-18

INTRODUCTION

When you consider the humiliation of Christ--that He was despised, hated, rejected, ignored, cursed, spat on, had His beard plucked out, was slapped, beaten, punched, betrayed, denied, whipped, slandered, and finally crucified--if you love Christ, your heart should be pained. The cruel injustice, blatant hostility, and ingratitude that brought Him abuse will always be a source of grief to those who adore Him. Yet it was God's plan that He be humiliated. He who existed in the form of God "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8).

REVIEW

Verses 9-11 describe the Lord's return to the glory He now possesses with God: "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The gospel is not complete without the exaltation of Jesus Christ. In this marvelous hymn of the early church we see our Lord descending from His glory as God to take the form of a servant, and then ascending and returning to the glory He had with the Father before the world began. That is the complete Christian message. Too often we are content to leave Christ in His humiliation--hanging on a cross. But we hide the fullness of the gospel without a proper proclamation of His exaltation.

I. THE SOURCE OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION

The source of Christ's exaltation is indicated in verse 9: "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name." Only God rightfully exalts anyone. When Christ was exalted by God He was placed where He rightfully belongs.

A. The Basis of His Exaltation

B. The Elements of His Exaltation

In Philippians 2:6-8 we noted the steps of Christ's descent (see pp. xx-xx). In verses 9-11 we see the steps of His ascent.

1. Resurrection

God raised Christ from the dead. That was the first step from humiliation to exaltation. In Acts 13 Paul preached on the resurrection of Christ. He said, "[God] raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.' And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' Therefore he also says in another Psalm, 'Thou wilt not allow Thy holy one to undergo decay.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in His own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the law of Moses" (vv. 33-39). Christ's death and resurrection provided forgiveness and freedom from sin, the law, and death.

2. Ascension

Acts 1:9-11 records the second step in the exaltation of Christ. After Christ finished His final instructions to His disciples, "He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.'" Acts 2:33 says that the result of His ascension was exaltation to the right hand of God. From that position He poured forth the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

3. Coronation

Matthew 28:18 records Jesus' affirmation of His authority: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Mark 16:19 says, "When the Lord Jesus had spoken to [the apostles], He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."

In Scripture the right hand is a symbol of power and authority. At the right hand of God Christ acts with the authority and the power of almighty God. Acts 7:55 records that as Stephen was stoned, he was full of the Holy Spirit and "gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

What is the extent of Christ's authority?

a) Ephesians 1:20-22--"[God] seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church."

b) Hebrews 2:9--"We do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor." Christ is the sovereign of the universe. An understanding of Christ requires that we acknowledge Him not only as our humiliated Savior, but also as our exalted Lord.

c) 1 Peter 3:22--"Angels and authorities and powers [have] been subjected to Him."

4. Intercession

The fourth phase of Christ's exaltation is His intercession for believers. He is in open session before

the Father as the High Priest of His people. His first act was to send the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). Our sympathetic high priest "has been tempted in all things as we are" (Heb. 4:15). "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for [us]" (Heb. 7:25). Hebrews 4-9 is an extensive treatment of Christ's intercessory work. It is He who grants us faith, repentance, and forgiveness.

In Hebrews 1 we see the resurrected, ascended, coronated, and interceding Christ in His majestic glory. He is heir of all things (v. 2). That is why He is entitled to the title deed to the earth, spoken of in Revelation 5:1-7. The deed was sealed seven times to make sure no one broke it open but the rightful person. The unfolding of the book of Revelation shows Christ opening the title deed to the earth and taking possession of what is rightfully His as heir of all things.

Hebrews 1 further describes Christ as "the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of [God's] nature.... When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did [God] ever say, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee'? And again, 'I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to Me'? And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him'" (vv. 3-7). Because Christ is the unique Son of God the angels are called to worship Him.

The Father said of Christ, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His Kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy companions" (vv. 8-9). Christ is the eternal righteous God. Only of Him can it be said, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands" (v. 10). John said, "Apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:3). Paul said, "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). Hebrews 1:11-13 says, "'[The heavens and earth] will perish, but Thou remainest; and they all will become old as a garment, and as a mantle Thou wilt roll them up; as a garment they will also be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end.' But to which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet'?" Christ is superior to the angels. They are created beings who serve those who inherit salvation. So angels serve the redeemed, and both worship the exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

C.The Meaning of His Exaltation

D.The Privileges of His Exaltation

E.The Reason for His Exaltation

The central truth of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is Lord. The gospel can't be understood apart from the lordship of Christ. He is to be confessed as Lord by the mouth and in the heart. Because Christ is the exalted Lord we have assurance that redemption is complete, our hope of heaven is secure, and we participate in the ongoing forgiveness belonging to those for whom He intercedes with the Father. A gospel that stops with the humiliation of Christ is incomplete. He must be seen as the resurrected, ascended, coronated, and interceding Christ. God's grace confers not only the gift of forgiveness that comes by faith. It also produces the joy of willing submission by faith to the exalted Christ who has purchased forgiveness. Both are essential in salvation (James 2:17-20; 1 John 1:6-7; 2:4-6). The proclamation of the gospel requires that we present both the humble Savior and the exalted Lord who is one and the same person. Preaching half the gospel has produced people who believe that Jesus is only a humbled person who died to give them a free gift. They therefore have no sense of allegiance to His sovereign lordship.

II. THE TITLE OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION

The title of Christ's exaltation is Lord. Revelation 3:12 contains a beautiful promise given to the church at Philadelphia. Christ said He would write on those who overcome the name of God, the name of the city of God, and His own new name. That means if you're a believer, you're stamped with the name God, heaven, and Christ's new name--Lord. That means you belong to God, heaven, and Jesus Christ the Lord. Revelation 19:16 says He will be called, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

LESSON

III. THE RESPONSE TO CHRIST'S EXALTATION

There's only one proper response to Christ's exaltation: "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10). He deserves worship.

Verse 10 begins with the Greek word hina ("that"). Hina indicates purpose or result. We might translate the phrase, "He was given the name that is above every name in order that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." The reason Christ was given that name was to put Him in authority and cause everyone to bow to Him.

IS THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST IMPORTANT?

According to Paul, the name of Jesus is Lord (Gk., kurios). At His name every knee will bow and every tongue confess. Christ died to accomplish our salvation in His humiliation. He was then resurrected, ascended, coronated, and now intercedes on our behalf. We are to know Christ as He is--as Lord--as well as by what He did for us on the cross. Salvation is for those who confess Jesus as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). We see the same truth from a different perspective in Matthew 7:21-23. To those who falsely claim salvation by saying, "Lord, Lord," Christ will say, "I never knew you." Even those unsaved professors understand that acknowledging Jesus as Lord is the crux of salvation.

A. Why Christ Is to Be Acknowledged

1. Because it is God's will

It was God's expressed purpose that Christ's exaltation result in our worshiping Him. Philippians 2:10 says that at His name--Lord--we are to bow. The subjunctive mood here ("every knee should bow") implies that every knee will bow--either by choice or by force.

2. Because He is God

By God's grace some are enabled to acknowledge Christ's lordship by choice. Others will bow to Him by force. The phrases "every knee should bow" (v. 10) and "every tongue should confess" (v. 11) are taken from Isaiah 45:23, which strongly emphasizes the sole authority and sovereignty of God. In

context the Lord said, "There is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me, be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, 'Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength'" (vv. 21-24). Isaiah spoke of the sovereignty and majesty of the Lord.

Isaiah 46:5-10 continues the thought: God said, "To whom would you liken Me, and make Me equal and compare Me, that we should be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse and weigh silver on a scale hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; they bow down, indeed they worship it. They lift it upon the shoulder and carry it; they set it in its place and it stands there. It does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; it cannot deliver him from his distress. Remember this, and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'"

Isaiah 45-46 clearly establish that God is Lord and sovereign. He is in charge. In Philippians Paul says that the same that is true of God is true of the Lord Jesus Christ--every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord of all. We know Him as the Lord, and we know Him as Jesus--the names of His exaltation and humiliation. But He must be known as both to be known at all. One receives the gift of salvation by receiving both the humiliated Savior and bowing the knee to a coronated, majestic, sovereign God.

B. Who Is to Acknowledge Christ

Verse 10 affirms that the whole intelligent universe is called to worship Christ. Three categories are mentioned: "Those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth." The King James version says, "Of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth". The word things was added by the King James translators, and for that reason appears in italics. But things don't worship--people and angels do. They are specified as those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. The whole universe of intelligent beings will bow the knee and confess Jesus Christ is Lord.

1. Those in heaven

Those in heaven consists of two groups: the angels and the spirits of redeemed believers (who await the resurrection of their bodies). Those who are in heaven already acknowledge Jesus is Lord. The angelic group consists of God's holy, elect angels--the unfallen seraphim, cherubim, and myriads of other angels who worship God in heaven. The spirits of redeemed believers are the triumphant saints now in the presence of Christ--"the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven ... the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). Throughout all their time in heaven they've been worshiping the Lord of glory.

a) The angels

Revelation 4 describes the worship of angels. In verses 2-3 we see God on His throne. Around the throne are twenty-four elders, before the throne are seven lamps, and in the center and around the throne are four living creatures (vv. 4-7). The living creatures cry out unceasingly, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (v. 8). That pictures the unending angelic worship of God (v. 9).

b) The redeemed

We see the worship of the redeemed in verses 10-11, where the twenty-four elders (who represent redeemed men) fall down before God and worship Him, saying, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will

they existed, and were created."

2. Those on earth

a) The obedient

"Those ... on earth" (Phil. 2:10) refers to us. As believers we submit to Christ as Lord and Savior (by God's wonderful grace). We have followed the pattern of Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." The lordship of Christ and His resurrection are connected because the resurrection was the first step in the exaltation of Christ as Lord.

b) The disobedient

The disobedient on earth will also bow before Jesus Christ, but by compulsion. Second Thessalonians 1:7-9 says, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, [He will deal out retribution] to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

When Jesus returns to subdue the earth He will remove the wicked from the earth, cast them into hell, and establish His kingdom. His kingdom will consist of His own people--the sheep of Matthew 25:31-40. The goats of Matthew 25:31-46 will also bow to His lordship, but then be destroyed in "the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

3. Those under the earth

"Under the earth" refers to hell, the place of eternal punishment, which is occupied by damned demons and men. They also will acknowledge the lordship of Christ--not by enjoying His reign, but by bearing the unending expression of His wrath. First Peter 3:18-22 indicates that while His dead body hung on the cross and then laid in His tomb, Christ's spirit descended into the prison (hell--cf. 2 Pet. 2:4) where certain demons are bound. There He proclaimed His triumph over them.

As affirmed in Psalm 2, all the earth will be Christ's (v. 8). Some will acknowledge Him as Lord willingly. Others will be broken with a rod of iron (v. 9). As Lord, Jesus will rule one way or another: by choice or by force.

C. What Is to Be Acknowledged

Jesus Christ is Lord of the universe. Therefore "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:11). To confess (Gk., *exomolog[ma]etai*) means "to acknowledge," "affirm," or "agree." Everyone--damned demons, damned men, holy angels, glorified saints--will acknowledge He is Lord. By "every tongue" Paul did not mean every physical tongue in every mouth, but every language (Gk., *gl[ma]ossa*). Another way to express the idea is that all rational beings will acknowledge His lordship.

History is moving toward the day when Jesus is acknowledged by all as the supreme ruler of the universe. He already sits in that the seat of power, but has not yet brought the universe fully under His authority. We live in days of grace, during which He brings men and women to acknowledge Him as Lord willingly rather than by force. That Jesus is Lord is the most important confession of Christianity.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION

The purpose of Christ's exaltation was to glorify God. Philippians 2:11 says Jesus will be acknowledged as Lord, "to the glory of God the Father." In Isaiah 45:5 God says, "I am the Lord, and

there is no other; besides Me there is no God." None can be compared to God. He does not ask anyone for advice. He knows all and does exactly what He wants to do. All His purposes come to pass.

In light of who God says He is, one might assume that for everyone to bow to Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord might be blasphemous. To so honor Christ would seem to put Him in competition with the Father.

But the mystery of the Trinity is that when the Son is glorified the Father is glorified. Perfect glory given to the Son is perfect glory given to the Father. John 5:23 says the Father has given all judgment to the Son "that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." That's why the Father said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!" (Matt. 17:5). When you believe in Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord you not only exalt the Son, you exalt the Father. We are not called to worship God through Jesus; we are called worship Jesus as God. There is no competition within the Trinity. The Father is exalted by what He accomplishes in the Son. They are one.

A. Romans 9:5 --"Christ ... is over all, God blessed forever." When Christ became the sovereign of the universe, God blessed Him forever.

B. 1 Corinthians 15:28 --Christ will subdue everything in the universe. "And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who has subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all." God is glorified in anything that lifts up or exalts the Son.

C. John 13:31 --"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself." The glory of the Father and of the Son are inextricably tied together.

CONCLUSION

The truths of Philippians 2:5-11, though a marvelous description of the saving work of Christ, primarily illustrate the need for humility in Christian walk. A compelling reason for each believer to emulate the humility of Christ is knowing it will bring about exaltation by God the Father. He who exalted His Son will exalt you. The humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ are not only the greatest truths in history, but a constant reminder of the fact that if we humble ourselves by seeking unity in the church, God will lift us up.

FOCUSING ON THE FACTS

1. What is the only proper response to Christ's exaltation?
2. The reason Christ was given His new name was to put Him in _____.
3. Salvation is for those who confess Jesus as _____.

4. What was God's expressed purpose in His exaltation of Christ?
5. The phrases "every knee should bow" and "every tongue should confess" are taken from Isaiah 45:23. What does that text strongly emphasize?
6. How does one receive the gift of salvation?
7. According to Paul, who will bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord?
8. Who are "those ... in heaven" referred to in Philippians 2:10?
9. Why are the lordship of Christ and His resurrection connected (Rom. 10:9)?
10. Will even those who are disobedient acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord? Why or why not?
11. What does the phrase "under the earth" (Phil. 2:10) refer to (1 Pet. 3:18-22; 2 Pet 2:4;)?
12. When Paul said that every tongue would confess Christ, what did he mean?
13. It is a mystery of the Trinity that when the Son is glorified, what happens?
14. What is a necessary part of the gospel invitation?
15. What is one compelling reason for each believer to emulate the humility of Christ?

PONDERING THE PRINCIPLES

1. Over 100 years ago in the book *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*, the Anglican bishop J.C. Ryle wrote, "Doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life. It is worse than useless: it does positive harm" ([Welwyn, Hertfordshire: Evangelical Press, 1979], p. xvii). Ryle was convinced that a prevalent problem in the church of his time was an unbiblical view of sin. His prescription: "We must sit down humbly in the presence of God, look the whole subject [of sin] in the face, examine clearly what the Lord Jesus calls sin, and what the Lord Jesus calls doing His will" (p. 13). Many in our day who profess to be Christians are unwilling to examine themselves for sin (2 Cor. 13:5) and conform to the will of Jesus as Lord. Do you understand the hideous nature of sin in the sight of God and therefore the need to avoid it?
2. A major theological issue of our time concerns whether faith in Christ necessarily requires evident repentance from sin. Some have said that to require repentance from sin as a part of the gospel message--and as a ground of assurance of saving faith--is a form of legalism. Yet the first sermon of Christ was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Among His final words were, "Repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). The apostles also emphasized repentance: when Peter was asked what

his hearers needed to do to be saved, he said, "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Does repentance characterize your life? Do you realize its necessity for a daily walk with Christ?

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