

Text: Philippians 2:9-11

Title: The Exaltation of Christ

Truth: Christ will be honored by all of creation.

Date/Location: Sunday 12/26/2021 at FBC

(rev. from 10/13/2010)

Introduction

Last week we pondered the doctrine of the incarnation—the in-flesh-ment of Jesus Christ in which He took to His divine person and nature a human nature as well. In so doing, He left the glorious place of open magnificence of His deity beside the Father. However, he did not merely come to join humanity as an exalted person. He came not as great king or priest, but rather as slave subjected to the most tortuous form of death then in use. If *He* did that, how much more should we be willing to lower ourselves in service to the Divine King?

By saying this, the apostle Paul has exhorted the believers in Philippi to remove selfish ambition and conceit from their motives. Instead, they were to humbly treat others as better than themselves and to watch out for the interests of others and not just themselves. (2:3-4). This would propel them along toward the goal of being of one accord and one mind (2:2). We too need to work very diligently, by God's grace and through trust in Him, at putting aside selfish ambitions and pride and exercising true humility and concern for others.

We turn to the next three verses. Unlike last week when the passage modeled a trait (humility) for us to cultivate in our character, we cannot be like Christ in this way:

Philippians 2:9-11 ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Instead, we are called to worship Jesus Christ so as to honor the Father. If you do not honor the Son, you do not honor the Father.

I. The Relationship of Humiliation and Exaltation

A. Verse 9 begins with "therefore" and then describes how God exalted Jesus above everything and everyone. The idea is that because Christ had a humble mindset, God in turn exalted Him. There is a direct connection—a reward from God for what Christ did. "He who humbles himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humbled" (Matt 23:12, Luke 14:11, 18:9-14, 1 Peter 5:6). In other words, God had good reason to exalt Jesus, and that reason was that Jesus humbled himself from a great height to a great depth. Jesus' mindset was one of great humility; this led him to act on that mindset as we read in 2:6-8; this in turn resulted in God exalting him.

B. The kind of humble mindset that Paul is encouraging is best exemplified in our Lord's humility of lowering himself to the point of death (2:5-8). He shared in the very glory of divine splendor before time began, but did not count that as something to be held onto. Rather, he took the form of a servant, took upon himself humanity, and even

died a horrible death. He exemplifies what it means to look out for the interests of others.

- C. We see that the path to glory is through suffering (Luke 24:26, Hebrews 2:9-10, Romans 8:18, 1 Peter 4:13, 5:1, 5:10). As unpleasant of a thought as that might be, it is God's way. Selfish ambition is sin and leads to punishment; a believer's selfless ambition motivated for the glory of God is holy and leads to reward and exaltation.

II. How Did God Glorify Jesus?

The way God exalted Jesus is described by these facts in v. 9:

- A. The simple statement of truth: God exalted Jesus. That is, He reversed the humiliation, the lowering that Jesus put Himself through to save us. God "undid" the humiliation by giving glory to Jesus. God did not undo the incarnation but he did undo the humbling of it. Jesus is still enfleshed, yet totally glorified.

Look at how Jesus appears on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2) or how He appeared after the resurrection, or how He appears in John's heavenly vision (Revelation 1:10, 13-16), and how He will be seated upon His throne (Matt. 19:28, 25:31).

- B. God gave Jesus a name above all names. As God, this is His prerogative. He can assign and glorify names as He wishes. This passage, though, does not speak of a new name as such, but to the assigning of honor and power to Him (Romans 1:3-4). Jesus has obtained a more excellent name than the angels due to the inheritance given to Him by God (Heb. 1:4).

The "name" (*ha shem* in Hebrew) is an important concept in Scripture. The name of God represents everything God is. It represents God Himself. Because Jesus was given a name which is above every name, it implies that He is worthy of worship.

III. Why Did God Exalt Jesus?

Verses 10 and 11 tell us of God's dual purpose in exalting his Son.

- A. The first purpose of God in giving His Son an exalted place is that He wants every knee to bow to Jesus (that is what "at the name of Jesus" means—Jesus). This means that everyone will acknowledge that Jesus is their sovereign God, that He is in charge, that He is God the Son. The participants of this homage will be everyone: whether in heaven, earth, or under the earth. This refers to all the saved in heaven; all good and bad angels; all the living on earth; and all the unsaved dead. All will bow to the name of Jesus Christ.
- B. The second and related purpose of God in lifting up Jesus is that every tongue should confess the Lordship of Christ. This is universal just the same as in the previous verse.

It is a plain fact that Christ is Lord. However, it is not an easily accepted fact for a non-Christian. For the true Christian, this truth is of the essence of Christianity. It is what the Christian confesses by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3, Romans 10:9-10, 13). The Christian has become convinced that Jesus is Lord and that everything is under him (1 Cor. 15:27-28). So not only do people bow, literally, to Jesus, but they must engage their brain

further to speak and say something about His lordship. This is going to really gravel atheists and other blasphemers of God, but they will finally acknowledge it. As we often say, it is better to recognize that Christ is Lord now and bow to Him rather than come to that conclusion too late.

C. We can hardly avoid noting here the whole controversy over the so-called "lordship salvation." How there could be a controversy over this boggles my mind, because I we said, Christ *is* Lord and there is no debating about it. Brought to a fore in the 1980s by John MacArthur's book *The Gospel According to Jesus* in which he insists on a right apprehension of the lordship of Jesus Christ, a division erupted in evangelical and fundamental circles as to what the gospel entails. At the risk of simplifying too much, I will summarize it this way: Lordship salvation says that Jesus must be received as Savior *and* Lord. Non-lordship salvation says that Jesus must be received as Savior, and then potentially (optionally) at a later point as Lord as well.

The non-lordship teachers accuse lordship folks of adding works to faith as a condition of salvation because "Lordship faith" has a submission aspect to it. Non-lordship teachers believe that submission is a work that cannot be accomplished unless you have matured from the baby Christian state.

The lordship view accuses the non-lordship view of easy believism and cheap grace. In the Lordship view, faith is the only condition of salvation, but true faith is repentant and submissive in principle, though not perfectly in practice until Christian growth occurs.

For me, the bottom line is found in texts of Scripture like Romans 10:9-10 and 1 Cor. 12:3 that speak about Christ as Lord. A real believer will acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, even if he is not perfectly aligned with that truth in every practical department of his life. In reality, there is nothing BUT Lordship salvation. Any other kind is not true salvation.

- D. The ultimate outcome, v. 11b. The exaltation and confession of the Lordship of Christ has one primary outcome: God will be glorified. God will be honored and His status will be enhanced in its recognition by all people. Honoring Jesus by openly acknowledging Him as sovereign Lord will bring honor to God. Remember, this was what Jesus meant when he said in John 5:23, “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”

Conclusion: Three Applications from this Text

- A. If we are to do all things to the glory of God, this is one way in which we can do so—to humbly receive Christ as sovereign Lord, and confess Him as such.
- B. Christians echo that honor of God every time they speak and sing of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and every time they live accordingly.
- C. Finally, in following Jesus’s example of humility, we can expect that we will please God and receive an appropriate reward from Him. Remembering that those who humble themselves will be exalted will help us even when the humbling is beyond what we feel is fair or right.

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