

"Christ's Triumphal Procession"
(Ephesians 4:7-10)

Introduction: Whenever one wins a victory, there is always a victory parade (ex: Olympics, war heroes, awards in science, literature, etc.). When Christ completed His work, He also entered into a victory celebration. And what I want you to see in this morning's message is,

Christ, in humbling Himself to accomplish the work of redemption entered heaven in great procession and poured out the gift of His Holy Spirit upon all His people.

I. Christ Descended From Heaven to Accomplish Our Redemption (v. 9).

A. Christ Is the Eternal Son of God.

1. He is God from all eternity.
 - a. He is the second person of the Trinity.
 - b. God has always existed as a Trinity in unity.
 - c. He has eternally existed in three persons in perfect harmony and blessedness.
2. Christ is equal with the Father.
 - a. There is no subordination in the Godhead.
 - b. All the persons are all the same in substance, and equal in power and glory.
3. It is important that we believe the truth about God.
 - a. To believe what is false is not virtue.
 - b. At the very least it will cause us to veer from a correct understanding and therefore, practice.
 - c. At worst, if it is in the foundation, it is a soul damning heresy.
 - d. Can a person believe in a God which the Bible does not reveal and be saved? No!

B. He Submitted Himself to the Father's Will.

1. Christ, the eternal Son of God, descended.
2. He willingly submitted to the plan of redemption.
 - a. God had ordained the fall from eternity.
 - b. He also ordained the means by which He would redeem man.
 - (i) He was not bound to save any.
 - (ii) And that He does is purely of grace.
 - (iii) We have no claim on God.
 - (iv) We don't even have a right to hear His gospel.
 - (v) Much less do we have any right to become partakers of it.
 - (vi) Salvation is purely of grace.
3. In order to fulfill it He descended to this lowly realm.
 - a. What does this text mean?
 - b. It does not refer to a descent to hell.
 - (i) That is an ancient tradition held by Romanists,

- Anglicans, Lutherans, and many fundamentalists.
- (a) Christ died on the cross.
 - (b) He descended into hell.
 - (c) He preached to the spirits in prison.
 - (d) But this is a false conception.
- (ii) Christ suffered hell on the cross.
 - (iii) This was separation from the Father, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
 - (iv) The work of Christ's atonement was completed on the cross, "It is finished."
 - (v) He committed His spirit into the Father's hand.
 - (a) He continued under the power of death.
 - (b) His soul went to be with the others in heaven.
 - (c) Although in His body, He had yet to ascend.
- c. Rather, it refers to His incarnation.
- (i) He descended into the depths from a heavenward perspective.
 - (ii) He descended into the lower parts, that is the earth.
 - (iii) The opposite of His ascension is His incarnation.
 - (a) Christ came from above <Jn. 3:13; 6:38>.
 - (b) Christ became a man for us and for our salvation [Phil. 2:7].
 - (iv) Christ's descent, therefore, is the incarnation.

II. *Having Accomplished Redemption, He Ascended Back to Heaven* (vv. 7-8, 10).

A. *He Was Exalted Above All Creation (v. 10).*

1. With His work completed, He ascended.
 - a. ***The One who ascended is the One who descended.***
 - b. Christ, rose again the third day, and appeared for forty days to His disciples.
 - c. After this He ascended "above all the heavens", that is, above all creation.
 - (i) To the third heaven.
 - (ii) Above all created powers.
2. He was exalted over all creation as the Mediator.
 - a. His ascension was His coronation day.
 - b. He had glory and authority from all eternity as the second person of the Trinity.
 - c. But He was exalted in His office as the Mediator, the God-man.
 - d. Now all power and authority is His as Mediator and from heaven He rules all things.
3. That He might fill all things.
 - a. That He might begin to exercise universal dominion.
 - b. Not that His human nature would be ubiquitous.
 - c. But that He might fill all things with His sovereign presence as the exalted Mediator.

B. He Entered Heaven in Triumphal Procession (v. 8).

1. As a victorious warrior, He entered heaven.
 - a. He entered heaven as a conquering king.
 - b. The king would ascend the mountain of the Lord in triumphal procession, with His long train of captives, bestowing gifts upon the crowds which line the route (Bruce 82).

2. He entered leading captive a host of captives.
 - a. This is part of the imagery and is not stressed.
 - b. As we've seen it does not mean bringing up from hell a large group previously bound there.

 - c. Rather, the captives are those vanquished by Christ.
 - (i) Satan, sin, and death.
 - (ii) Heavenly rulers and authorities <Col. 2:15>.
 - (iii) And rebellious sinners whom He subdued.

 - d. You love Christ because you have been conquered by His mighty arm (Ps. 110:3).

3. As a token of His victory, He poured out gifts to men.
 - a. The textual problem.
 - (i) This is a quotation from Psalm 68:18.
 - (ii) The Psalm is about ħvĥ«.
 - (iii) It says He ascended on high and received gifts from men.
 - (iv) But Jesus is God, and this is His greatest victory.
 - (v) The conqueror received gifts in order to give them.
 - (vi) Paul could be using a variant reading.
 - (a) It was in the Syriac version of the OT (Peshitta).
 - (b) And in the Aramaic paraphrase of the Psalms (Targum).
 - (vii) The Hebrew can be construed in this way so that Paul is using a variant meaning.
 - (viii) Or he may simply be adding inspired application to the quote.

 - b. The conqueror would celebrate his victory by giving out gifts.
 - c. Christ also is said to distribute gifts to men on account of His victory.
 - d. His victory over death, hell and the grave is the basis for all the grace of God which has ever been poured out.
 - (i) For those before Christ's coming (Rom. 3:25f).
 - (ii) And after.

C. To Each of His Children, He Gives Gifts (v. 7).

1. Christ merited grace for His children by His work.
 - a. Each of His children receive the grace of

- regeneration.
- b. This is given through the gift of the Holy Spirit <Acts 2:33>.
 - c. Also, all are given certain gifts for the building up of the body.
 - d. And some are given the offices in the Church which are a gift to the whole church.
2. This shows us the diversity that exists within unity.
 - a. Paul had stressed the unity of the body.
 - b. But now he stresses the diversity by virtue of their giftedness.
 - c. There are several parts to a body and not all the members have the same part.
 - d. But all are equally important and are needed for the growth of body.
 - (i) No one is the sum of perfection.
 - (ii) No one can get by without the others.
 - (iii) We are dependent upon one another.
 3. And these gifts are given **according to the measure of Christ's gift.**
 - a. We do not determine which part of the body we will occupy.
 - b. Christ is the sovereign determiner.
 - c. He gives the gifts according to His will.
 - (i) We may not merit the gifts.
 - (ii) We may not be fit for the gifts based upon our past performance.
 - (iii) We may not ask for the gift.
 - (iv) Christ sovereignly determines.
 - (v) He is the exalted Ruler over all.
 - (vi) And we should be content with where He places us in His body.

Conclusion:

1. So we have seen the great humiliation which Christ underwent for us and for our salvation.
2. We have also seen His triumphal ascension and entry into heaven and the pouring out of His gifts to us all.
3. God is showing us that His body is not only a unity, but a diversity in unity.
4. The gifts which He has given us are to complement each other for the building up of one another in Christ.
5. We do not live to ourselves, but are a part of a larger organism, the body of Christ.
6. If that body is to work properly, each member *must* exercise his or her gift for God's glory.
7. We will see this more fully in the coming weeks.
8. But suffice it to say now, examine yourselves to see what gifts the Lord has endowed you with by his tremendous grace, and strive to exercise them for God's glory.