

“Christ’s Exaltation”
(Ephesians 1:20-23)

I. Introduction.

A. Review.

1. Last week, we saw something of the great sacrifice Jesus made to bring us salvation: He humbled Himself.
2. Remember, Jesus is God in every sense of the word. He was equal with the Father in every way.
 - a. But being God, He humbled Himself to become a man.
 - b. He didn’t stop being God, but He became one with us, so that He might obey, so that He might die, so that He might be under the power of death for a time, so that He might save us from death.

B. But He didn’t do this for nothing: there was a reward: His exaltation.

1. Jesus said that the greatest in the kingdom must become the least of all.
2. Jesus became the least: He became a curse, so that He might be exalted above all.
3. Tonight, we will want to look at His exaltation, which includes four things: His resurrection, His ascension, His session at the right hand of God, and His coming in final judgment at the last day.

II. Sermon.

A. Paul tells us that Christ was raised from the dead (v. 20).

1. Christ died on the cross and was dead for three days.
2. But He was raised on the third day.
 - a. It was impossible for death to hold the Prince of Life, the One who had in Himself the power of life.
 - b. On the third day, He rose again.
 - (i) Why was He in tomb for three days?
 - (ii) Certainly, because He prophesied that He would be. Jesus said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day” (Luke 9:22).
 - (iii) It might have been three days because the Father wanted everyone to know He was dead.
 - (iv) Or perhaps He wanted to test the faith of His disciples, to see if they would believe He was going to live again even after three days.
 - c. But for whatever reason, He was freed from death on that third day.
 - d. And when He was set free, so were those who would believe in Him.
 - e. When Jesus was raised from the dead, not only was His Word vindicated, not only did He show the world that His Father accepted Him, but He brought resurrection life to all His people: He freed them from death.

- f. This was the beginning of Christ's exaltation: His resurrection.
- B. But there was more: Paul also tells that Christ was seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places.
1. Now in order to get to heaven, He had first to ascend there.
 - a. The way He came down was through the incarnation, by being conceived and born.
 - (i) God the Son didn't actually leave heaven.
 - (ii) He remained there the whole time.
 - (iii) But as a man, He wasn't in heaven, but on earth.
 - (iv) He descended from heaven by becoming a man.
 - b. And now He was caught up into heaven.
 - (i) This would be the first time the human nature of Jesus had ever been to heaven, the first time the man Christ Jesus had seen it.
 - (ii) Certainly, since He had been in heaven as the Son of God, He remembered what it was and what it was like.
 - (iii) But this would be a new experience for Him as a man.
 2. But the ascension was only the means to get Jesus to His throne.
 - a. It was the fulfillment of prophecy:
 - (i) Daniel spoke of the Son of Man coming on the clouds. But it was there He was to receive a kingdom.
 - (ii) He writes, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13-14).
 - b. This was the throne the Father had prepared for Him, the seat at His right hand, the place of honor. Paul writes, He "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*" (v. 20).
 - c. It was there that Jesus would be crowned – this was His coronation day – the symbol of His authority was placed on His head (Rev. 6:2).
 - d. And He was given authority – authority "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" (v. 21).
 - e. And not just some things, but "all things" were placed "in subjection under His feet" (v. 22).
 - f. Jesus was given power over all things to rule and reign for the good of His kingdom.
 - g. Paul writes in Philippians 2:9-11, "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.”

- h. Paul tells us in our passage that even after this age is over and the new age, the eternal state, when Christ submits Himself and His kingdom to the Father, He won't lose that authority, but continue to rule under His Father.
 - i. He reigns “not only in this age, but also in the one to come” (v. 21).
3. This authority means that eventually every single enemy of His – who are also our enemies – will be defeated.
- a. David writes, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.’ The LORD will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, *saying*, ‘Rule in the midst of Thine enemies’” (Psalm 110:1-2).
 - b. And Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:25, “For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”
 - c. Jesus will destroy the kingdom of the evil one. He will do away with abortion, drug abuse, infidelity, immorality, murder, slander, strife and contention.
 - d. “The last enemy that will be abolished is death” (v. 26).
 - e. And when that enemy is defeated through the resurrection, He will bring in His everlasting kingdom of peace. Amen.
4. Needless to say, His authority also extends over His church.
- a. Paul writes, God “gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all” (vv. 22-23).
 - b. The church is His body, and He is her head, and He is a gracious head.
 - c. There is no authority we should rather have, because His reign is good and He wants what is good for us.
 - d. That's why it's so important that the elders rule His church according to His rule: it's the right thing to do and it's the best for us.
- C. Paul doesn't mention it here, but there is one more part of Christ's glorification: and that is His coming again to judge all men on the last day.
- 1. One of His privileges for His work is that He will be the judge all men have to face on that final day.
 - a. Jesus says, “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order 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” (John 5:22-23).
 - b. And Paul writes, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).
 - c. Jesus Himself said, “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as

the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left” (Matt. 25:31-33).

2. And on that day, He will judge righteously.
 - a. Which is why we should prepare ourselves now for that judgment.
 - b. We can prepare ourselves now by trusting in Jesus for our salvation and by doing His works.

III. Application: Finally, Paul applies Christ’s exaltation three ways:

- A. First, he wants us to know what is the hope of His calling (v. 18).
 1. This is the hope He has called us to.
 2. It is the hope of heaven, of everlasting life, of eternal joy, peace and happiness, of removing our sin and the sins of others, so that we will finally be able to love each other as we should.
 3. It is the hope of spending eternity with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, with our sin taken away, so that we can love them the way we have always wanted to.
 4. The fact that Jesus has been exalted guarantees this hope to us.
- B. Second, he wants us to know the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (v. 18).
 1. This either refers to the riches of glory that His saints will receive, which will be glorified bodies, sinless perfection, and the enjoyment of the presence of the Lamb.
 2. Or it refers to what Jesus will receive in us: a people made perfect and glorified together with Him.
 3. Either way, doesn’t make much difference for us. But this is what the exaltation of Jesus Christ guarantees to every Christian.
- C. And third, he wants us to know just how great the power is that God exerts towards us who believe in saving us.
 1. This power that the Father used to raise and exalt Jesus is the same power that has raised us to life, that will keep us in life, and will eventually raise and glorify us after our lives in this world are over.
 2. The fact that He has put Christ on the throne is the guarantee that what we hope for now will be ours.
 3. I hope that the Lord has enlightened your eyes this evening to see this.
 4. If He hasn’t, or if you don’t see it well enough, let’s pray that He would show us more clearly. Amen.