

Joy From a Jailhouse

==A Letter to the Philippians==

9 – The Exaltation of Christ

When a Muslim with whom he was speaking slighted Christ, nineteenth-century missionary Henry Martyn declared that he could not endure existence if Jesus were to be continually dishonored. His attitude is reminiscent of David's, when David declared that *"the insults of those who insult you fall on me."* Psalms 69:9 (NIV) When the Lord is insulted and dishonored, those who love Him feel the pain of those insults and dishonor.

Nothing in all of history could possibly match the scorn and defamation that sinful, rebellious men inflicted upon Jesus during His incarnation. We learned about some of this in last week's message. But today, in Philippians 2:9-11 (NASB) we'll learn about the magnificent and unequalled exaltation that the Father then bestowed on the Son. No passage of Scripture more beautifully portrays the height of exaltation experienced by Jesus Christ than does this passage. Let's read these verses now. In fact, let's read these verses aloud together in unison. Ready?

⁹ *For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,* ¹⁰ *so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹ *and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

It was because of *"the joy set before Him"* that Christ *"endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* Hebrews 12:2 (NASB)

Last week, as we considered Philippians 2:5-8, Paul established that the practical result of believers following Jesus' example of humility is unity in the church.

In this day of overwhelming pride, self-love, and self-promotion—even among many professing Christians—it's important to understand that *"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled."*

Matthew 23:12 (NIV) A self-righteous Pharisee prayed, ¹¹ *"God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector."* ¹² *I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."* Luke 18:11-12 (NIV) In reality, he was praying merely to himself, not to God.

Because he exalted himself, God would humble him. But just as surely as God gives grace to the humble, He opposes the proud. But for those who follow Jesus' example of humility, whose attitude is *"the same as that of Christ Jesus,"* Philippians 2:5 there is promise of great reward. Like their Master, they will be exalted by their heavenly Father. James said, *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."* James 4:10 (ESV)

And Peter wrote: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.* 1 Peter 5:6 (ESV)

Philippians 2:9-11 is not just a picture of the exaltation of Christ. It is also a profound illustration of the immeasurable blessing that God offers to those who are His obedient and humble servants. By God's matchless grace, just as believers are humbled with Christ,

we also will be glorified with Christ. Jesus prayed for us, saying, *“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them...”* John 17:22 (NASB)

Our humble, incarnate Savior had now been exalted as the almighty, sovereign Lord. Because of this, we who are in Christ have the assurance that our redemption is certain and our place in heaven is secure. This morning, let’s learn about the exaltation of our Savior. Let’s learn about why Jesus is worthy of our worship!

1. The Source of Christ’s Exaltation. (Vs. 9a)

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him...

The phrase *For this reason also* refers back to Jesus’ humiliation as described in vs. 6-8. His exaltation was for *“the joy set before Him”* that He *“endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Hebrews 12:2 (NASB) **The way to exaltation is always through humility. If this principle was true for the Son of God, how much more true is it for us?**

The phrase *highly exalted* means simply *“to lift up; to raise up.”* God the Father lifted up His beloved Son in the most magnificent way possible. **There are four aspects regarding how Jesus was lifted up...**

- **First, Jesus was lifted up from the dead.**

When the women came to the tomb where Jesus had been buried, an angel said to them, *He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.* Mark 16:6 (ESV)

- **Second, Jesus was lifted up in the ascension.**

When the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection He said to her, *“Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.”* John 20:17 (ESV) Later, after He had given last instructions to the eleven on the Mount of Olives, *As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* Acts 1:9 (ESV)

- **Third, Jesus was lifted up in His coronation.**

Jesus was exalted to become the King of kings and Lord of Lords. Peter testified to the Sanhedrin that *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.* Acts 5:31 (NIV)

As a myriads of worshipers around the heavenly throne will one day declare: *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing...The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”* Revelation 5:12, 11:15 (ESV)

- **Fourth, Jesus was lifted up as High Priest.**

It is from this position, that still today, Jesus continually intercedes for believers. Jesus, who died and was raised from the dead, *“is at the right hand of God...also intercedes for us.”*

Romans 8:34 (NASB) Think of it: If you are in Christ, Jesus is praying for *you* at this very moment. Not only that, but on the worst moment of your worst day, Jesus—who is seated at the right hand of God—will be continually *praying for you!*

For the most part, Jesus' exaltation involved the restoration of what He had eternally possessed before His incarnation. In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus implored: *And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.* **John 17:5** (NIV) In His exaltation, He was not, of course, any *more* divine or perfect than before. You cannot get any more perfect than perfect. But because of His redemptive work, the Father bestowed upon the Son even more honor than He had before. The exaltation of Jesus was the Father giving the Son the honor that He could only receive only after His redemptive sacrifice, which Jesus made in obedience to the Father's will.

Included in Jesus' authority and power is the reality that Jesus is also the final Judge.²² *Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.* **John 5:22-23** (NIV)

Every believer will *"appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."* **2 Corinthians 5:10** (NIV) For the joy set before Him, Jesus became not only the sacrifice for our sins, but also our High Priest and Judge.

2. The Title of Christ's Exaltation. (Vs. 9b)

...and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name...

Bestowed is from a Greek word which conveys the idea of "giving freely and generously." The Father conferred upon the Son the name which is above every name. Jesus so completely satisfied the Father in fulfilling the work of His incarnation, and in providing redemption, that He generously granted Him this exalted title. This name is incomparable—it is the superlative of superlatives.

Paul does not reveal the name which is above every name until **vs. 11**, where he declares that *"every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD."* Lord is the title of authority, honor, power, and sovereignty. One day this exalted name will be expanded to *"King of kings and Lord of lords."* **Revelation 19:16** (NIV) Obviously *Lord*, used in the sense of ultimate authority and command, ranks over all other names. Whoever is Lord—is Lord *over* everyone else—which is precisely the point. **Jesus is Lord over all.**

3. The Response to Christ's Exaltation. (Vs. 10-11a)

...so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...

Ultimately, whether by choice or by force, every creature, human and angelic, will submit to Jesus Christ as Lord. Every knee will bow, just as Isaiah had prophesied some seven hundred years earlier. Through him the Lord declared,²² *Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other.*²³ *By Myself I have sworn; Truth has*

gone from My mouth, a word that will not be revoked: Every knee will bow to Me, every tongue will swear allegiance. Isaiah 45:22-23 (HCSB)

Those who will submit to the authority of Jesus Christ will comprise three groups:

- **First will be those who are in heaven, which will include the holy angels and the redeemed believers of all ages.**
- **Second will be those who are on earth, both redeemed and unredeemed.**

The redeemed will continue our worship of Jesus that began when we were saved. At this same time, however, though unwilling and terrified, the *unredeemed* will also be forced to bow their knees before Him.

- **Third will be those who are under the earth, including the fallen angels and the unredeemed dead who are awaiting final judgment and eternal punishment.**

Revelation 20:11-13 (NIV) is perhaps the most frightening passage in all of Scripture. It depicts the ultimate fate of the unredeemed: ¹¹ *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.* ¹² *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.* ¹³ *The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.*

The centrality of the lordship of Jesus Christ is abundantly clear. **In the New Testament, Jesus is called Lord some 747 times.** In the book of Acts, He is referred to as Savior only twice, but as Lord 92 times. The first known creed of the early church was “*Jesus is Lord!*” The lordship of Jesus Christ is the very essence of Christianity and the necessary confession of anyone who desires to be saved.

Jesus is Savior so that He may be Lord, and He will not save those for whom He cannot be Lord. Merely professing Jesus as Lord without actually allowing Him to *be* Lord of your life is worthless. Early in His ministry Jesus declared: ²¹ *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* ²² *Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’* ²³ *Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’* Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)

W. H. Griffith Thomas, the co-founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote: “The Lordship of Christ over the lives of His people was the very purpose for which Jesus died and rose again. We have to acknowledge Christ as our Lord. Sin is rebellion, and it is only as we surrender to Him as Lord that we receive our pardon from Him as our Savior.”

4. The Purpose of Christ’s Exaltation. (Vs. 11b)

...to the glory of God the Father.

As with everything in the saga of redemption, **The purpose of Jesus' exaltation is the glory of God the Father.** To proclaim the sovereign lordship of His Son is the greatest glory that can be given to God the Father. Jesus' universal acknowledgment as Lord does not make the Father jealous. Instead, this is the supreme objective of the Father's will. Herein, of course, is a great mystery—the mystery of the Trinity. The three Persons are but one God, wholly united and indivisible. They never compete, and they never disagree. Men therefore are not called to worship God *through* Jesus; rather, we are called to worship Jesus *as* God.

Jesus explained that ³¹ *“The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him.”* ³² *And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will soon give glory to the Son.* John 13:31-32 (NLT)

Throughout all eternity, the Father will continue to say of the exalted Lord Jesus: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”* Matthew 3:17 (NASB)

Jesus is Lord. The question is, “Is Jesus *your* Lord?” It's not enough to just say it with your lips. For those who are truly saved, it is the reality of their lives.

/s Jesus truly Lord of your life? What would Jesus say?