

The Exaltation of Christ Jesus

Philippians 2:9-11

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

We here will consider these four aspects of the exaltation of Christ Jesus: 1. its **reason**; 2. its **author**; 3. its **degree**; 4. its **purpose**.

I. The reason for the exaltation of Christ Jesus (note that this is the name by which He is called in v.5): This is indicated in *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him.”*

The word “therefore” denotes that the reason for the exaltation of Christ Jesus is found in the preceding verses (vv.6-8). In simplest terms, God exalted Christ because Christ humbled Himself.

We therefore find in verses 6-11 what are commonly identified as the two states of Christ Jesus in His incarnation, as Son of man: humiliation (vv.6-8) and exaltation (vv.9-11).

Christ Jesus’ humiliation involved the following downward steps:

1. *“... who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation ...”* (vv.6-7a).

Christ Jesus is here first presented in His essential glory: as divine (as in John 1:1f); as therefore co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father (as in John 5:23); and as not considering His glory in heaven something that must never slip from His grasp.

But He is also presented as voluntarily emptying Himself of His existence in that manner. This He did for the sake of becoming the Mediator between God and men as their Savior.

This is not to say Christ ceased to be divine. Deity is eternally immutable. It therefore can neither be attained, greatened, lessened, or surrendered. Even after Christ ceased to exist in His pre-incarnate manner, He was named “God With Us” (Isaiah 7:14 / Matthew 1:18-23) and “Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6), and was called “God” by His divinely inspired apostles (John 1:1; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20) and by God the Father (Hebrews 1:8).

Rather, in making Himself “of no reputation”:

- Christ surrendered His position with regard to God’s law in order to be subject to it and to fulfill it, and to

thereby sanctify God’s elect (Hebrews 10:1-14). The law-giver became a law-keeper.

- Christ surrendered His heavenly riches in order to experience earthly poverty, and to thereby make God’s elect rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).
- Christ surrendered His heavenly glory in order to possess “no beauty that we should desire Him”, and to thereby make God’s elect desire none other (Isaiah 53:2-3ff).
- Christ surrendered His independent exercise of authority in order to do His Father’s will (John 5:19, 30; 14:24).

Therefore, when His earthly ministry was successfully completed, He could pray, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5).

2. *“... taking the form of a servant ...”* (v.7b). The divine Master of all became the servant of God (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) and of even men (Matthew 20:28).

3. *“... and coming in the likeness of men ...”* (v.7c). The immortal God assumed humanity (John 1:14; Galatians 4:4; 1 Timothy 3:16), thereby becoming the unique God-man, possessing in one person the dual natures of God and man.

4. *“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself ...”* (v.8a). He continued to humble Himself even after becoming a lowly mortal, and proved to be the only man in whom there was never any pride of self.

5. *“... and became obedient ...”* (v.8a). The Master of all was perfectly obedient to His earthly parents (Luke 2:52) and His heavenly Father (Romans 5:19; see also Hebrews 7:8 in context).

6. *“... to the point of death ...”* (v.8b). His obedience knew no bounds! Having lived perfectly and therefore deserving not to die, but having voluntarily taken upon Himself the sin of God’s elect, He died in their place and stead (Isaiah ch.53).

7. *“... even the death of the cross”* (v.8c). Such a death was not only a most painful manner in which a man could die, but to God it was the most accursed manner (Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23).

Christ therefore humbled Himself to the ultimate degree – from the throne of glory to an accursed tree.

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him!”

II. The author of the exaltation of Christ Jesus: “God has highly exalted Him.”

1. The *elements of nature* obey Him (Matthew 8:27), but they are unable to exalt Him, for they are

inanimate creatures.

2. *Angels* worship Him (Hebrews 1:6), but they cannot exalt Him, for they are inferior to Him (Hebrews 7:7): “Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.”

3. *Satan* refuses to exalt Him, because he is Christ’s arch-adversary: “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31), “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4), “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2; also 1 John 5:19; 1 Peter 5:8).

4. *Demons* have no desire to see Him exalted, and have no power to exalt Him, for they are subject to Him (Matthew 8:29-31): “And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’ ... So the demons begged Him”

5. *Men* in their natural state cannot exalt Him, for they despise and reject Him (Isaiah 53:3): “He is despised and rejected by men And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”

6. *Christ* refused to exalt Himself, and instead humbled Himself (Mark 10:45): “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

7. But, and therefore, *God* has highly exalted Him (Acts 2:36): Peter declared, “God has made this Christ, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

III. The degree of the exaltation of Christ Jesus: “God has *highly* exalted Him.”

Paul here teaches us that God has exalted Christ Jesus to the loftiest height. Christ has, in His exaltation, and as the Mediator of God’s people, “become higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26) and “far above all the heavens” (Ephesians 4:10).

The exaltation of Christ is comprised of three steps: resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and enthronement in glory.

Paul here emphasizes two vital aspects of this last step.

1. God has given to Jesus Christ the supreme *name* (v.9): “God also has ... given Him the name which is above every name.” This name therefore excels the name of every creature.

The only name fitting this description is God’s incommunicable name par excellence, *Jehovah* (derived from the Hebrew tetragrammaton *JHWH*).

Jesus Christ is eternally Jehovah. But God in His exaltation of His Son declares it to be so (as in Romans 1:4; Acts 2:36):

• He was “declared to be the Son of God [having His

Father’s divine nature] with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”;
• “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Christ Jesus is “Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14; 19:16), and therefore “Jehovah your God [who] is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome” (Deuteronomy 10:17).

2. God has given to Jesus Christ the supreme *position* (Ephesians 1:20-22): “He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things ...” (cp. Acts 5:31; 1 Peter 3:22).

Christ Jesus sits on the throne of the universe and rules over all things, which position and authority belongs to Jehovah alone!

IV. The purpose of the exaltation of the Christ Jesus: “*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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

Here is the fulfillment of the prophecy made by Jehovah in Isaiah 45:23: “I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.”

That oath is this: “*Jesus Christ is Jehovah!*”

Paul the apostle in Romans 14:10-12 refers to the same prophecy in declaring that “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: ‘As I live, says Jehovah, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Everyone will confess that God has highly exalted Christ Jesus, and that Christ Jesus is Jehovah to the glory of God the Father.

• Believers will do so in this present life, and at the final judgment be ushered into eternal glory.
• Unbelievers will refuse to do so until the final judgment, but then be condemned to everlasting damnation for confessing Him too late.

Confess Christ Jesus the Lord now!

– Daniel E. Parks