

# THE EXALTED CHRIST

1 Peter 3:21-22

## INTRODUCTION

- “Knowledge is power”, so said philosopher, Francis Bacon
- Those with knowledge have an advantage over those who don’t
- Knowledge equips those with it to do great things, for good or for evil
- “A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength” (Proverbs 24:5)
- Our strength increases in proportion to our knowledge
- This is especially true in the spiritual realm
- How do we come to salvation?
  - ✓ By a knowledge of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1)
  - ✓ Through knowing the holy scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15)
  - ✓ By a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ (John 17:3)
- Then as believers, we grow and are strengthened in our knowledge of the word and of Christ (2 Peter 3:18)
- When we come to a verse such as we are studying today which describes the Lord Jesus Christ in his state of exaltation, it is not merely to inform us concerning certain doctrines about Christ, but rather to strengthen our faith and assurance, which in turn will lead us to a godly walk in this world
- In v.18, Peter encouraged his readers who were suffering for their faith, by pointing them to Jesus Christ who also suffered

- Then in vv.19-21, Peter digresses to back to Noah, who preached to his generation, most of which rejected his message, yet he and his house were saved in the ark; furthermore, the waters of the flood are a figure of baptism, which saves us, not from sin, but from the wicked world around us
- At the end of v.21 Peter returns to where he left off in v.18 – the resurrection of Christ, then in v.22 he describes what Christ did after his resurrection
- The ministry of Christ from his incarnation through to his eternal kingdom can be divided into two “states” – his state of *humiliation* and his state of *exaltation*
- “Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition (Luke 2:7), made under the law (Galatians 4:4), undergoing the miseries of this life (Isaiah 53:3), the wrath of God (Matthew 27:46), and the cursed death of the cross (Philippians 2:8); in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time (Matthew 12:40)”
- The word “humiliation” has its origin in the Latin word for the ground – *humilis*
- There was never such humiliation, nor ever will be, as Christ’s
- He went from the highest heights of glory and majesty, to the lowest depths of humiliation
- Yet he chose to suffer this humiliation for our sakes (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- The resurrection of Christ ended his humiliation and marks the beginning of his exaltation
- “Christ's exaltation consists in his rising again from the dead on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4), in ascending up into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19), and in coming to judge the world at the last day (Acts 17:31)”

- To the suffering Christians, Peter points them not only to the humiliation of Christ, but also to his exaltation, reminding them that their own humiliation in this world will soon be over and they will be exalted with Christ
- Moreover, the resurrection, ascension and session of Christ have real and vital impact on believers today – how important it is then that we study these truths
- As we behold the glorified Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the Scriptures, and as the Spirit testifies of Christ in our hearts, we are “changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

## **I. CHRIST IS RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD**

A. The connection between the believer’s baptism and Christ’s resurrection

1. A sinner is saved by believing the gospel, which is the atoning death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
2. The new believer confesses Christ’s lordship, and believes in his heart that God has raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10)
3. The new believer identifies with Christ in his baptism
  - a. As he is lowered into the water he is dead with Christ
  - b. Under the water he is buried with Christ
  - c. Coming out of the water he is risen with Christ

B. The resurrection is Christ’s declaration

1. It revealed Christ’s power over death (Revelation 1:18)

2. It confirms all his claims to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4)
  3. It attests the acceptance of his work by God
  4. It crowns the process of the redemption of the world (Romans 4:25)
  5. It marks the beginning of the New Creation, wherein those who are Christ's have assurance of their own resurrection to life eternal (1 Corinthians 15:17,20)
  6. Its knowledge is a sanctifying influence in the believer (Philippians 3:10; Romans 6:9)
- C. Christ's resurrection gives great assurance to the believer
1. That as Christ rose, so shall we rise to eternal life
  2. That Christ is greater than all our enemies, even Satan and death (Hebrews 2:14)
  3. That his resurrection power (Philippians 3:10) indwells me and enables me to live to his glory (Galatians 2:20)

## **II. CHRIST IS ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN**

- A. Christ "is gone" from earth, bodily and visibly
1. He spent forty days on earth after his resurrection, showing himself alive by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3)
  2. He appeared to the apostles, as well as hundreds of other brethren (1 Corinthians 15:6), witnesses chosen before of God (Acts 10:40-41)
  3. He ascended from the Mount of Olives outside of Jerusalem (Acts 1:12)
  4. He went into the clouds (Acts 1:9)

5. His ascension was associated with angelic apparitions (Acts 1:10-11)
  6. He went up with a shout, and with the sound of trumpet (Psalm 47:5)
  7. He ascended into heaven that he might be returned to the glory he had before the world was formed (John 17:5)
- B. He ascended “into heaven”
1. This heaven is the “third heaven”, the dwelling place of God (2 Corinthians 12:2)
  2. This is his “Father’s house” (John 14:2)
  3. Christ’s body has ascended to a particular locality and place called heaven – his body is not *ubiquitous*, contrary to the Lutheran doctrine of the *real presence*
  4. Christ ascended to the glory of heaven he had before his humiliation; but now with one great difference – he has entered into heaven *bodily* as a Man
  5. His ascension from earth was and is for the church’s good
    - a. The disciples were sorrowful when Christ told them of his departure (John 16:5-6)
    - b. Yet Christ said, “It is expedient for you that I go away”, as it opened the way for the Holy Ghost to come down (John 16:7)
    - c. Though bodily Christ dwells in heaven, his divine nature remains with his people, indwelling individual believers (John 14:23; Colossians 1:27), and in the midst of the church (Matthew 18:20 28:20; Revelation 2:1)

### C. Christ's ascension gives great assurance to the believer

1. That God has accepted his atoning sacrifice for our sins
2. That his Spirit is poured out upon the church, as he promised (Acts 2:33)
3. That he has gifted the church with all she needs to accomplish the task he has set her (Ephesians 4:8)
4. That he will come again in like manner as he ascended (Acts 1:11)
  - a. It will be visible (Revelation 1:7)
  - b. It will be in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30)
  - c. There will be a shout and sound of trumpet (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
  - d. He will alight upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4)
5. As Christ's resurrection assures the believer of his own resurrection from the dead, so Christ's ascension assures the believer of his own ascension into heaven (John 14:3)

### III. CHRIST IS SEATED BY THE FATHER

- A. This is known as Christ's *session*, from Latin *sessionem* "act of sitting"
- B. This indicates his authority and rule
  1. The "right hand" is the place of honour and power (cf. 1 Kings 2:19)
  2. He now shares the Father's glory and has completely unlimited power (Psalm 110:1)

- a. Note that as God, he has eternally exercised lordship over his creation
  - b. But in addition to this, he holds a lordship over all things by virtue of his triumphant work of redemption (Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:9-10)
3. He is “the prince of the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5)
  4. Angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto him (Ephesians 1:20-22; Colossians 2:15)
- C. Christ’s session gives great assurance to the believer
1. Seated at the Father’s right hand, Christ our King reigns over us, as well as our enemies
  2. Christ is not only our King, but our Priest, who makes intercession before us (Romans 8:34)
  3. Enthroned in heaven, he now gives repentance and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31)
  4. From his exalted place in heaven, he takes particular concern for his lambs in their suffering (Acts 7:55-56)
  5. As his resurrection and ascension guarantee the believer’s resurrection and ascension, so his enthronement in heaven assures us of our own enthronement and reign with him in glory (Revelation 3:21)

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The world mocks Christ, rejects him and blasphemes him
2. Their hatred of Christ extends to those of us who are his disciples
3. When the world attacks us for our allegiance to Christ, far from being discouraged, we ought to be encouraged, knowing that our Saviour endured far worse, yet is now exalted high in glory

4. His triumph becomes our triumph, so that ultimate victory over our enemies is assured – “we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37)
5. Just as Christ’s exaltation promises victory to the believer, so it promises doom to the unbeliever
  - ✓ His resurrection assures there will be a day of judgment where all men’s works will be judged (Acts 17:31)
  - ✓ His ascension assures that Christ will come again in great power and glory to take vengeance on the unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
  - ✓ His session at the Father’s right hand assures that he has absolute authority to judge and condemn sinners, and that he will soon establish his kingdom of righteousness upon the earth (Psalm 110:1)
6. May our meditation of the exalted Christ be sweetness to our souls (Psalm 104:34), changing us into his glory (2 Corinthians 3:18), conforming us to his image (Romans 8:29)