

Jesus The Exalted King

Philippians 2:9-11

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I want to read Philippians 2:5-11, since it's all one section. Then we'll tie this in with the last session.

Paul says, "Let this mind..."—or "attitude" or "outlook"—"...be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God..."—or "essence God"—"...did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross. 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."

Christmas is upon us, and it makes sense that we should focus at Christmas on the Christ of Christmas, because there are so many things at Christmas time that so often distract us from the real heart and essence of what Christmas is. We get busy with cooking and baking and eating. I've already eaten too many cookies. (Have mercy on me, O Lord.) We get busy shopping; you know how busy the stores are—the lines—everywhere you go. There are Christmas parties, and you have to decide where to go and what to buy. Because of all the things we have to do, we often don't think about Christ. We even like to X His name out of the word "Christmas"; we make it "Xmas." It's "Christmas," and Christ is to be the center of this season.

What better place to look at the Person of Christ than in Philippians 2. It's known by theologians as the great "kenosis passage," which means that He who was God in heaven humbled Himself and emptied Himself and came down to earth to take on the form of a servant and "became obedient to...death, even the death of the Cross."

Now we move from Christ's humiliation, in verses 6-8, to Christ's exaltation, in verses 9-11. We see that Jesus gained more in His exaltation than He lost in His humiliation. Jesus gained more in His humiliation, by being exalted, than He would if He had never come on Christmas day and been born on earth. He became the God-man. He was raised from the dead in an immortal body. He ascended victoriously to heaven and is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is now the exalted God-man in heaven. So He gained more in His exaltation than He lost in His humiliation.

I want to note four truths in this text, Philippians 2:9-11, about Christ's exaltation. First, we see that the source of Christ's exaltation was the Father, in verse 9. It says, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him." We saw in verse 8 that Jesus "humbled Himself." But now in verse 9 we see a contrast; that He did not exalt Himself. So He did humble Himself, but He didn't exalt

Himself. God the Father was the one who exalted God the Son.

The “therefore” in verse 9 was because of what Jesus did in verse 8: “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross.” So here we see His Crucifixion. We see in verse 6, His deity; in verse 7, we see His humanity; and in verse 8, we see His humility in His Crucifixion upon the Cross. Because of that, because of what Jesus did, God the Father now “highly exalted Him.”

This is a Biblical principle. In 1 Peter 5:6, it says, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God...”—or “God the Father”—“...that He may exalt you in due time.” So the principle is that God humbles the proud but exalts the humble. So Jesus, who humbled Himself at Christmas, left the glories and splendor and majesty of heaven and laid it aside. He took off His kingly robe and put on the robes of flesh; He was God veiled in flesh. He walked in humility, being born in a stable. Then He died on the Cross a substitutionary death. So we’re going to see that God the Father exalted Him. What a glorious truth that is.

The one who exalts Jesus Christ is God the Father; He is the source of the exaltation. It was the Father’s reward to the Son for His humble submission. Notice the phrase that appears in verse 9: “highly exalted.” It is only used here in the New Testament. It means “to be lifted above” or “lifted beyond.” We get our word “hyper” or “huper” in the Greek. It means to be “hyper-exalted” or “to lift above and beyond.” What it means is that Jesus Christ is the sovereign one. Because He left heaven and took on humanity, He died and rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, God highly exalted Him or super exalted Him. It would have been enough for Paul to say that God exalted Him, but he said that God “hyper-exalted” Him or He “super-exalted” Him.

This act of God was actually a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In Isaiah 52:13, the prophet said, “Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.” So all the way back in the Old Testament, about 600 years before Jesus was even born, the prophet Isaiah spoke about His exaltation.

What exactly is meant by the exaltation of Christ? It involves three steps. The first step is that Jesus Christ was resurrected. In verse 8, we see Him crucified, and in verse 9, we see Him resurrected. After the Crucifixion, God the Father looked down and said to mankind, “You have done your worst, but I’m going to do My best.” It is as though God said, “You did your worst in crucifying the Son of God, but I’m going to do my best in raising Him from the dead.”

Remember when Jesus hung on the Cross and He cried, “It is finished,” “Tatelestai” or “Paid in full”? Then God the Father said, “Amen” to Jesus’ statement by raising Jesus from the dead. What a glorious truth that is.

In Romans 1:4, the Apostle Paul said that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God...by the Resurrection from the dead” or that He was set off to be the Son of God “by the Resurrection from the dead.” So the first phase of Jesus’ exaltation was His Resurrection.

When Jesus came out of the grave, it was in a glorified, immortal, eternal body. No one before Him and no one after Him have ever been raised in an immortal body; Jesus is the first. The Bible calls Him “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” or “died.” Jesus is the first in order or the prototype of our future resurrection.

The second phase of the exaltation is that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. For a period of 40 days after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to and then disappeared from His disciples. On the day of His Resurrection, Mary and Martha saw Him. Mary grabbed ahold of Him, but Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father.” So Jesus predicted His own Ascension.

In Acts 1:9, it describes His Ascension. It says that “He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” The disciples were standing with Jesus on the Mount of Olives when He went up to heaven. In Jesus’ Ascension, He went up physically, bodily and visibly. The disciples looked at Him, they watched Him and they saw Him go up to heaven.

Since Jesus came from heaven and entered the world through the womb of the Virgin Mary, you would expect His exit to be just as grand. It would have to be a visible exit, otherwise, no one would know that He rose from the dead. So Jesus was buried—they knew where the burial place was—the stone was rolled away from the tomb, the angels were there, the grave was empty and for 40 days He appeared to His disciples. Then with eyes wide open, the disciples watched Him go back up into heaven “and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” At that moment, some angels showed up and asked, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?” I would have answered, “What do you expect us to do? Jesus just went up there!” If you saw the Ascension, you’d be staring up into heaven, too. The same angels said, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Do you know that Jesus is no longer in a cradle? Do you know that Jesus is no longer hanging on the Cross? Do you know that Jesus is no longer in a grave? He is seated and exalted at the right hand of God Almighty in heaven. Isn’t that glorious? So it’s fine to get sentimental about the baby of Bethlehem, but we need to remember that led to a cross, which led to the tomb, which led to His Resurrection, which led to His Ascension.

The third phase of Jesus’ exaltation is Jesus Christ’s coronation. Jesus Christ was crowned in glory in heaven. In Psalm 110:1, the prophet David, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” This is a reference to Yahweh, “the Lord,” said to “my Lord,” or “Adonai” that He would be resurrected, that He would ascend, that He would be glorified and that His enemies would become His “footstool.”

Jesus alluded to this in Matthew 22:44, where He talked about David speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He said, “The Lord said to my Lord...”—which is David’s Son, “the Messiah,” showing that God the Father called God the Son “Lord.”

Remember when Stephen was being stoned in Acts? When the stones were hitting his body and he was about to die, he looked up into heaven, and God gave him a vision. The heavens opened and he saw Jesus in heaven, not seated but standing at the right hand of God the Father.

When we use the term “right hand,” it doesn’t mean that God has a hand; He doesn’t have a body. But the phrase conveys the idea of the place of authority or the place of supremacy. So Jesus was standing to welcome home that first martyred Christian, Stephen. His name fits what happened to him. He was martyred, he got a martyr’s crown and his name means “stephanos” or “the victor’s crown.” What a glorious thing that is. He got the victory and was taken to heaven. He saw Jesus in heaven.

So if anyone wants to know where Jesus is right now, He’s in heaven. What is He doing in heaven? He’s sitting on the throne. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, the sovereign ruler of the whole universe. So we have His Resurrection, His Ascension and His coronation.

Now Jesus is the exalted God-man in heaven. And Jesus received more in His exaltation than He did in surrendering in His Incarnation and humiliation. He is now exalted or super- exalted.

This is what a lot of people don’t think about when it comes to Jesus. When He was conceived in the womb of Mary, humanity and deity were fused into one person for all eternity. Jesus is, and forever shall be, the exalted God-man in heaven. It means that when we get to heaven, we can touch Him and we can hug Him. And He can hug us; He’ll give us a big Jesus hug. And we’ll be able to reach out and touch Jesus and see Him face to face. What a glorious hope that is.

The angel said that He’s in heaven preparing a place, and He’ll come again. The same way He went, He’ll come “in like manner.” Jesus said in John 14:2-3, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

I’m looking forward to living in heaven. I’m ready to go anytime. Are you ready? Are you ready to see Jesus face to face? He’s the sovereign over all creation and the church. He sent the Holy Spirit, who indwells us and guides us and leads us. He is preparing a place for us. Jesus is the exalted one.

The second, main point I’d like to make is that Jesus, who is exalted, is given a “name which is above every name.” There is the name of Christ’s exaltation. Verse 9 says, “God also has... given Him the name which is above every name.” So the source of Christ’s exaltation is God the Father; He exalted God the Son. And the name of His exaltation is His “name which is above every name.”

The word “above” in verse 9 is the same word translated “highly” in verse 9. So you have “hyper” or “highly exalted” or “set beyond.” Then you have the same word in verse 9: “highly” or “greatly exalted.” So Jesus Christ has been given a name that is “above every name.”

Is it the name “Jesus” that is the name “above every name”? Verse 10 says, “...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.” A lot of people focus on that name “Jesus,” and rightly so; the name “Jesus” is precious to us. But there are other people who also are named Jesus. In the Old Testament, the name “Jesus” was “Joshua” or “Jehovah-Shua” or “God is salvation.” In the New Testament, “Joshua” became “Jesus,” and today people use that same name. The name conveys what He came to do; He came to save us.

But I think it's better to understand that the name that is given to Jesus that is above all other names does not appear until verse 11. In the Greek, that is just one long sentence; it just flows, and there is really no break. Verse 10 says, “...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...”—then notice verse 11—“...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is...”—and here's the name—“...Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

That's what the whole passage is about: He, who was the Lord of all, left heaven, came to earth, died on the Cross, was resurrected, ascended, was glorified in heaven and God the Father gives Him that name “Lord,” which is equivalent to the Old Testament name “Yahweh.” The concept is that He is the Lord or Jehovah; that He is sovereign, the ruler over all things. When we say that Jesus Christ is Lord, we are saying that Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord.

Even in our salvation, Romans 10:9 says, “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” So it is believing in Jesus as Lord and trusting in Him that we are saved.

So Jesus was given this name, or “Kyrios,” Yahweh, Jehovah or sovereign Lord.

Notice, thirdly, the response to Christ's exaltation, verses 10-11: “...that at the name of Jesus...”—two things happen—“...every knee should bow...”—then, secondly, verse 11—“...every tongue should confess.” This verse means that every living being, every personality, every person—even angels—are going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and will bow their knee.

Notice that “every knee should bow.” It means submission, respect and reverence. It is universal in its scope. First, verse 10 says, “in heaven”—that's all the holy angels and the redeemed men who have died. Read Revelation 4, where all the angels worship Him, where the 24 elders take their crowns and cast them down at the feet of Jesus and worship Him. Secondly, notice “on earth,” verse 10. This is the saved and the unsaved; every human being living on planet earth will do two things: they will bow their knee and they will confess or admit “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Thirdly, notice it will happen “under the earth.” So even fallen angels, demons and unsaved men in the underworld will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Notice, secondly, that “every tongue should confess” something. Paul doesn't say when this

happens. But it's described in Revelation 20, when all the wicked dead are resurrected and they stand before the "great white throne" of judgment with Jesus Christ the Lord on the throne—Jesus, the one who died, rose from the dead, ascended and is exalted in heaven. Jesus is on the throne.

They have been using His name in the wrong way their whole lives, as people like to do. I don't know, when people are hitting a nail with a hammer and they hit their finger, why they don't say, "Oh, Buddha!" or "Oh, Confucius!" Why do they say, "Jesus"? Because there's power in that name. There is coming a day when they will say, "Jesus is Lord!" And they will bow their knee.

But here's the sad thing: If you wait until after you've died, then it's your condemnation; it's not salvation. If you bow your knee right now and you confess Jesus as Lord, then it means your salvation. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved," Romans 10:9. So either you bow your knee now, and it means you're saved, or you bow your knee then, and it means you're condemned.

Notice the whole title in verse 11: "Jesus Christ is Lord" or "Kyrios Jesus Christos" or "Lord Jesus Christ."

Notice fourthly and lastly, the goal or purpose of Christ's exaltation, in verse 11: "to the glory of God the Father." It says, "Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This is my favorite phrase in this whole kenosis passage. That is because the work of salvation has its ultimate purpose the glory of God.

Christmas is God's redemptive plan for mankind; sending His Son to redeem man. His plan was to give Jesus a body so He could reveal His love for mankind and reign one day upon the throne of David. God drew up the plan of salvation, He sent it down to man and then Jesus purchased it on the Cross. But the plan is all God's; salvation, from beginning to end, is all God's grace, mercy and love. Salvation is all for the glory of God.

When we get to heaven and we're worshipping God, we aren't going to sing songs like, "I feel good; I knew that I would." We're going to be singing "Holy, glory, majesty, praise and honor be unto Him!" We'll take our victor's crowns, our "stephanos," and throw them down at the feet of our Savior, and we will worship Him. That's going to be our theme song for all of eternity, praising our glorious redeemer.

So God has devised and God has arranged—we saw it started at Christmas when Jesus came into this world—the whole salvation plan; that all praise and glory and honor be to God. That's how salvation is set up.

What did the angels say that first Christmas when Jesus was born in Bethlehem? They said, "Glory to God in the highest." It's all about the glory of God. This is why salvation is not by works, but it is by grace through faith, Ephesians 2:8-9: "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves..."—that would be glory to me; it's glory to God.—"...it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." There is no boasting. So we are

saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. All glory be to God alone.

The Bible says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I hope you will do that.