

ARE YOU EXALTING JESUS AS LORD?

Here we are—**the Sunday after** our celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead! What happens after Easter Sunday? Well, **that depends** on where you look!

--Some **schools** have spring-break the week **before** Easter, so that means the kids go back to school.

--Some **homes** get decorated for Easter, so afterwards the decorations are taken down.

--Some **individuals** gave up things for Lent, so they now **indulge** in whatever it was they chose to **abstain** from.

--Some **churches** had special events—like a Passion Play or an Easter Cantata—so they put the **props back** in storage—and **discontinue the extra practices** they had been putting in prior to the big day!

--In a nutshell, then, life goes back to “normal”—**for us, anyway!**

--But for the **eleven disciples**—and the **women** who followed Jesus during His time on earth—their lives were **anything but normal** after Jesus rose from the dead!

I’m not going to talk about that specifically, however. Instead, I want to continue with the thought I introduced to you a couple of weeks ago. **What** thought was that? That just as the disciples **saw** things—and didn’t fully **comprehend** what it was they were seeing—we can **read about** things in God’s Word and not truly grasp the **significance of what actually took place**.

--**Two** weeks ago, we looked at the **crucifixion**—and what the “beholders” “beheld” as they witnessed Jesus dying on the cross. **Humanly speaking**, they saw the **unprecedented injustice** of a perfectly **innocent man** being **tortured on a cross** because an angry mob wanted Him crucified! **But in reality**, it was the **greatest display of love** imaginable because **God the Creator died** for those He had created—in response to them **choosing to rebel and sin** against Him!

--**Last** week, we looked at the **resurrection** of Jesus and how **the disciples**—who had been **told directly by Jesus** Himself on multiple occasions that He would rise from the dead—were some of the slowest to believe it!

And—to a certain degree—we are a lot like them! They were warned ahead of time about **the heart-ache** they would face when **He left**—just as we are warned about **the trials** that will take place in our lives! They were warned that their loss **would only be temporary**, though—just like our losses and trials are! And they were promised—just as we are—that the **trials of this life** are nothing compared to **joy that awaits** us in the future!

But, sadly, we—just like them—often don’t have the **joyous faith** in the midst of trials that God wants us to have! In other words, we **believe**—but not with the kind of **faith that leads to joy!**

This morning we are going to look at the **culmination** of Jesus’ life here on earth—His **ascension** back to heaven! And just like **the disciples** didn’t understand the significance of **Jesus’ return** to the Father, **we often** fail to recognize the **significance of what took place**—even though we have the completed Word of God!

Please take your Bibles and turn to Philippians 2 and follow along as I read vs 1-11. In vs 1-4, we see Paul’s **exhortation** to be Christ-like. In vs 5-8, we see the **example** of Christ. And in vs 9-11, we see the **exaltation** of Christ. And the last one—Christ’s exaltation—is what we are going to focus on this am.

1. The purpose for Christ’s exaltation (vs 6-8)

Why was Christ exalted? **Why** was He given a name above every name? We have the answer in the **very first word** of vs 9: “Wherefore...” Whenever we see a “therefore” or “wherefore,” we are to ask ourselves **what** question? What is the “therefore”—or “wherefore”—**there** for, right!?

And the “wherefore” points back to **who Jesus is**—and **what Jesus did**—as found in verses 6-8! For the sake of time, we will be looking at these verses rather quickly.

First, God exalted Jesus... **A. Because of who Jesus is (vs 6)**

--**Who** is Jesus? God in the flesh, right? Notice what it says in verse 6: “**Who, being in the form of God...**”

In the **Greek** it literally reads, “Who in the form of God existing...” F.F. Bruce put it like this: “being already in the form of God.” (*New International Biblical Commentary – Philippians*, pg 68).

Many verses bear out the truth that Jesus is God in the flesh; here’s one we haven’t looked at in a while. **Hebrews 1:3** “Who being the brightness of His glory, and **the express image of His person**, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins...”

--Jesus is the **express image** of God because He **was, is, and always will** be God!

--And Jesus is God because **He upholds**—He sustains—all things—by the word of His power!

--And Jesus is God because only God—and God alone—**can purge** (make purification) for our sins!

That’s not all, though. Notice the rest of vs 6: “...**thought it not robbery to be equal with God:**”

Commentators wrestle with what Paul—and ultimately God—meant by this phrase. Without getting too technical, here are the **two most common** interpretations.

1) First, it was not robbery **to God**—it did not **take away anything from God** and His glory—to state that Jesus was in the **form of God**—meaning equal to Him.

2) The second view—and the one I lean toward—takes a slightly different meaning of the Greek word that “robbery” comes from. Instead of it meaning “taking something from someone by force,” it can also mean “a thing to be grasped or held on to.” With that definition, the verse would go something like: “Who, although being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be held on to.” I believe this fits the context better because if Jesus had insisted on **hanging onto** His equality with God, He would not have been able to do what He came to earth to do!

Why did God exalt Christ and give Him a name above every name? Because of Who He is and was! But there is a **second** reason, and it is this... B. Because of what Jesus did (vss 7-8)

--**What** did Jesus **do**? Several things are mentioned in vss 7-8; I’m only going to touch on a couple of them.

In vs 7, we see: “But made Himself **of no reputation**...” What does that mean? It means He “emptied Himself.” But what did Jesus “empty Himself” **of**? In **one rendition** of Charles Wesley’s hymn *And Can it Be*, **stanza three** has the words: “Emptied Himself of all but love.” But theologically, that is not correct!

Jesus didn’t **leave behind** any of His divine attributes when He came to earth! Instead, Jesus chose to **lay aside the independent use** of His attributes—and He demonstrated that by taking on the form of a servant! But to be the **servant He came to be**, Jesus needed to take on **the body** of a man!

Hebrews 10:5 bears that out: “Wherefore when He [Jesus] cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, **but a body** hast thou prepared me:”

--So Jesus humbled Himself to **become a man**—then humbled Himself **even further** by obediently dying on the cross **as a man!** We see that in vs 8. And because it was for **us** that Jesus died, He **redeemed us**—He purchased our freedom—from the **punishment we deserve** for our sins!

--I Peter 1:18-19 reminds us that we were not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the **precious blood of Christ**. **Revelation 1:5b** “Unto Him that **loved us**, and **washed us** from our sins **in His own blood.**”

--Wesley certainly got this part of the song right: “*Amazing love! How can it be that Thou my God shouldst die for me!*”

Why was Jesus exalted—and given a name above every name? Because of **Who He was**—God in the flesh; and because of **what He did**—die on the cross to **redeem** us...and **conquer death**...and **defeat** Satan!

Next, let’s consider... **2. The pronouncement of Christ’s exaltation (vs 9)**

--Vs 9: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name:”

A. The “Person” doing the exalting (vs 9a)

--**Who** exalted Jesus? “Wherefore **God**...” **God** is the One doing the exalting!

--**Acts 5:30-31a** “The **God of our fathers** raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath **God exalted**...”

--It’s one thing for **men** to exalt another man—but quite another when **God** exalts someone!

--But God didn't **just exalt** Jesus—He hath **highly exalted** Him! And “highly exalted” doesn't really capture the full meaning!

So let's consider next... B. The position Christ is exalted to (vs 9b)

What is the **position** that Christ is exalted to?

In John 17, the disciples got to **listen-in** on Jesus' prayer to the Father before His crucifixion—and part of that prayer is recorded for us. Notice **John 17:5** “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self **with the glory which I had with thee** before the world was.”

In other words, ‘Restore me to the position that I had before I came to earth—and before the world was even created!’ And God answered that prayer because “highly exalted” means to “raise to the **highest** position.” He has been given a **position** that is **above everyone else—and a name** that is **above every name!**
--**Why** is that significant? Because God is God—and God **does not share His glory** with anyone—or anything!
--**Isaiah 42:8** “I am the Lord: that is my name: and **my glory will I not give to another**, neither my praise to graven images.” Isaiah 48:11b “...and I will not give my glory unto another.”

So for God to exalt Jesus to the **highest position** is to proclaim that **Jesus is God!**

--We also see that truth taught in **Isaiah 45:22-23** “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: **for I am God, and there is none else**. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, **That unto me every knee shall bow**, every tongue shall swear.”

--Unto **whom** will every knee bow?

Unto **God every knee shall bow!**

--So if God is the **only God**...and He says every knee shall bow **to Him**...and He then proclaims that **Jesus is the One** who is to **be bowed to**, He is obviously saying that Jesus **is the Yahweh—the Jehovah**—that is referred to in the Old Testament!

So, we have the **purpose** for Christ being exalted—His voluntary humility—and God's **pronouncement** that He has exalted Christ above **everyone and everything!**

Next, let's consider...**3. The plan for Christ's exaltation (vss 10-11)**

God has exalted Christ—and given Him a name above every name. But **why** did God do that? God plainly states in verses 10-11 that His **plan** for Christ's exaltation included responses from **people!**

A. The **desired** response

--**Who** does God want to respond?

-- In **vs 10** it says, “**every** knee;” in **vs 11** it says, “**every** tongue.” That means “Loddy, Doddy, and Every Boddy”—with no exceptions! And that—obviously—includes **you and me!**

--But vs 10 doesn't end there, does it? It goes on to say: “of **things** in heaven, and **things** in earth, and **things** under the earth;” Not sure about you, but to me that **wording is a bit confusing!**

What does it **mean to bow “of” things**? We understand what it means to bow “**to**” things—but not **of them!** And maybe you noticed that “things” is italicized in each phrase—meaning they were **added by the translators** to help us understand what is being said. In this case **I'm not sure it helps**, though!

Here's the thought that is being conveyed: The **knees of all those** who are in heaven, and the **knees of all those** who are on earth, and the **knees of all those** who are under the earth, will bow to Christ some day!

So God is certainly stressing that His **desired response** is that **all people**—regardless of their current “location”—are to bow their knee to Christ!

But—based on the **places mentioned**—it probably refers to **more than just people!** There are certainly **people in heaven**—but there are also **angels!** And we know that God's desire is that **angels worship** Christ because that is **happening now in heaven** according to Revelation 4 and 5!

But what is meant by those “**under the earth**”? Does it **just mean** those who have not trusted Christ during their lifetime and are now in hell? We **know it includes them** based on **Romans 14:9** “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived [came back to life], that He might be Lord both **of the dead and living.**”

But it also may very well refer to God's *desire* for the *disobedient angels*—including Satan himself—to bow down to Jesus Christ and acknowledge His place of authority over them! But that isn't happening now, is it? And even if "heaven, earth, and under the earth" is a reference to *just people, most people* do not "bow their knee" to Christ—meaning *worship* Him—now; or confess that He is Lord—meaning the *Master* of their lives.

So if *God's plan* is for Christ to be honored by everyone and everything—but that is not happening now—does that mean God's plan has been *forever defeated*? Not at all!

Why? Because it isn't just a *desired* response, it is also... B. The *decided* response

What does that mean? It means that since God has *decided* it is going to happen, it is going to happen!

--Every *single angel*—that sided with Lucifer and rebelled against God—will acknowledge Jesus as Lord when Jesus casts them into the lake of fire!

--Every *single unsaved person* is going to acknowledge Jesus as Lord when they stand before Him at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:11). The *books* will be opened—and their *sins* will be revealed (Rev 20:12); their *mouths* will be stopped as they acknowledge *their guilt* before God (Rom 3:19); and they will *hear the dreaded words* from Jesus Himself: "I never knew you! Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

--And *every single child of God* will acknowledge Jesus as Lord when we fall on our knees before Him in humility—and gratitude—and join in singing the song of heaven: "**Worthy is the Lamb** that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and **honour**, and **glory**, and **blessing**." (Revelation 5:12)

That is God's plan—and that plan will be carried out—in *the future*. But what about *now*—and what about *you*? What is... **4. The proper response—now—to Christ's exaltation**

And the answer is...*it depends!* It depends *on what*? It depends on if Jesus is *your Lord and Savior* now—or if He is *your Judge!*

A. The proper response for the *saved*

How does God want *His born-again, blood-bought children* to respond to the exalted Christ? Verse 10 says, "That at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**..." And verse 11 says, "And that **every tongue should confess** that Jesus Christ is Lord." What do these things *mean*—and what will they *look like*?

In a nutshell, I believe it is this: "Since He is your Lord and Savior—treat Him like your Lord and Savior! --*As your Savior*, you should be amazed at, humbled by, and grateful for His love for you! I was thinking this morning about the words "And it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Isaiah 53:10). "Bruise" isn't really strong enough to convey the idea. It means to crush...to destroy...to break into pieces.

Why was God pleased to *crush* His Son? Because He *loved you* and doesn't want to *crush you!*

That love *for you* should lead you to want to *please Him*—and to *praise Him!*

--*As your Lord*, you should acknowledge *His absolute right to rule over you*—and *seek to serve* Him!

I'm going to remind us all of a very pointed question Jesus asked His disciples—and now asks us—as found in **Luke 6:46** "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and **do not the things which I say?**"

Fair question, isn't it? Imagine Jesus saying to you when you meet Him, "You called me your Lord—which means Master—why didn't you do the things I told you to do?" How will you answer that?

--Will you say, "I was *too busy* to try to find out what you wanted me to do?"

--Or, "I *didn't know how* to find out what you wanted me to do?"

--Or, "I *didn't think it would matter* that much if I did what *I wanted to do* instead of *what you wanted me to do!*" I don't believe we will say that to Jesus—then—but that is what *some of you* are saying to *yourselves now!* Why call Him "Lord"—and do not what He says? Some of you need to stop making excuses—and start doing what God wants you to do!

B. The proper response for the *unsaved*

What about the *unsaved*, those who have *never repented of their sins* and turned to Christ for forgiveness and salvation from the penalty of their sins? What is the proper response *for them*? There is *only one*: bow the knee to Christ now—in this life—so you don't have to meet Him *as Judge* in the next life!

Notice **Psalm 2:12** on your outline: “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

What does it mean to “kiss the Son?” To “kiss” means to pay homage to a superior by kissing his hands or feet. It expresses **submission** to the One you are kissing—who in this case is the **Son of God!** But how do we “kiss” Jesus when He is in heaven—and we are here on earth? We can’t—**physically**, can we?

But we can show our submission to Jesus by coming to Him **in humility and repentance**, acknowledging our sins—and sinfulness—and our need for cleansing and forgiveness. And the promise of Jesus is that “him that cometh to me, I will in no wise [way] cast out” (John 6:37).

What if we don’t do that? The rest of the verse says, “...lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Simply put, you cannot reject the **greatest act of humility**—God becoming man; and the **greatest act of love**—God dying for sinful mankind—and expect to get into heaven!

So what about you? Have you come to Christ in humility and faith? John 1:12 says, “But as many as **received Him** [Jesus], to them gave He power [authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His [Jesus’] name:” If you haven’t done that, why not do that today?

So what does God want you to do in light of what you’ve heard this morning?

You already know, don’t you?

1. If you **aren’t a child of God**, you need to humble yourself and receive Jesus as the payment from your sin. If you don’t, the crushing that Jesus endured will come upon you in hell—the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

2. If you **are a child of God**, do you love Him because of His great love for you? Are you serving Him with all your heart—or just calling Him “Lord”—and not doing what He says?