



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Exalting Christ in the Capitol

PHILIPPIANS 2:9-10

MARCH 3, 2011

Tim Pauley / (304) 767-8430 / www.capitolcom.org / tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

An inauguration is a grand event, whether it is in our state capitol or our national capitol in Washington D.C. It is a ceremony by which we recognize both the authority and honor of the position of our governor or our president as they assume office. There are large crowds, formal traditions, flattering speeches, and great pomp and ceremony. These events, perhaps the most regal and resplendent in our state or nation, are just the smallest picture of the grand exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ described in the passage we are studying this week. In our previous study we saw the amazing self-humiliation – the stepping down of Jesus as He left heaven, took the form of a servant, and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:6-8). The next verses show us how God then exalted Him:

⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:9-11

In this passage Paul describes the super-exaltation of Jesus Christ and the ultimate response of every created being to His exaltation. It is important that we consider our response to His exaltation today. The citizen of heaven will recognize and acknowledge the exalted position of Christ as the ultimate and supreme ruler. Consider for just a moment how we might exalt Christ in our lives and in the capitol.

THE SUPER-EXALTATION

The passage begins to describe Christ's exaltation with the words "for this reason". This refers back to the humility and descent of Christ found in verses 6-8 that we studied last week. It is because of Jesus' willingness to humble Himself and obey the Father in suffering and dying on the cross for our sin that He is now exalted to the ultimate position described here.

God highly exalted Him... "Highly exalted" is literally "super exalted" or "hyper exalted". Just as Jesus' humility in leaving heaven, becoming a servant, and suffering and dying for sin is unimaginable, so is His exaltation to a position of glory and authority.

This exaltation began with Jesus' resurrection. As proof of God's approval and acceptance of Jesus' ultimate act of humility and obedience to His will, God "Raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:20). From there He now rules over all things. The great message of Jesus' exaltation is that He reigns. Paul describes this even more clearly in Ephesians 1:20-22:

²⁰...Which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church... Ephesians 1:20-22

God bestowed on Him the name which is above every name... What is this "name" that God bestowed upon His Son? Certainly it is something greater than "Jesus", which was a common name in that day. Verse 11 indicates it is "Lord". This is the New Testament equivalent to the Old Testament name "Yaweh" – the covenant name of God which was considered so holy it would not even be pronounced out loud.

This exaltation does not mean Jesus gained greater power and authority than before His humiliation. He was already "in the form of God" and shared "equality with God". Nothing could be higher than that. In His prayer in John 17 He asked His Father to "Glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). What He was given in His exaltation was a gain in "official glory", not in "essential glory". How much more is Jesus worshipped and glorified because of how He demonstrated His humility and love for us through His humility, suffering, and death.

THE ULTIMATE RESPONSE

Jesus has been exalted. He has been given a name above every name. Paul now describes what the ultimate response of every person will be.

Every knee will bow... The bowing of the knee is a sign of reverence and worship. It is also a sign of submission. This symbol

BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON – TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)
LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDY: THURSDAYS 8:00 A.M., SENATE PRES. CONF. ROOM (M219).
12:00 NOON, TREASURER'S CONF. ROOM (EB 54)

Exalting Christ in the Capitol (Philippians 2:5-11)

of response to a ruler or leader is perhaps totally lost in our American society and form of rule. In a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people” we do not place our leaders on this high of a plateau or give them this level of reverence or respect. In God’s kingdom, however, citizens of heaven recognize Christ as the ultimate, absolute ruler over all things. “**Those in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth**” refers to every created being, both human and angels.

Every tongue will confess... This is an open, verbal acknowledgment of the rightful place Jesus holds as Lord, or absolute ruler. It is a necessary part of salvation as Paul describes in Romans 10:9:

...That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...

The statements that every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord is another clear declaration that Jesus is God, that He is indeed equal with the heavenly Father. These statements are a direct reference to Isaiah 45:22-23:

²²“Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. ²³“I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.

These words clearly speak of God the Father. In Philippians Paul applies them to the Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is Lord... This is really the defining statement of those who are followers of Christ, of those who are genuinely citizens of heaven. At one point Roman citizens began to be required to utter the phrase “Caesar is Lord” in recognition of the emperor’s absolute sovereignty and divinity. Christians refused to do so and many of them were put to death. The Christian’s proclamation is “Jesus is Lord”! Just a few years later we find the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, a student of the Apostle John:

Polycarp was arrested on the charge of being a Christian -- a member of a politically dangerous cult whose rapid growth needed to be stopped. Amidst an angry mob, the Roman proconsul took pity on such a gentle old man and urged Polycarp to proclaim, "Caesar is Lord". If only Polycarp would make this declaration and offer a small pinch of incense to Caesar's statue he would escape torture and death. To this Polycarp responded, "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Steadfast in his stand for Christ, Polycarp refused to compromise his beliefs, and thus, was burned alive at the stake.¹

The good Roman Citizen recognized Caesar as Lord and proclaimed allegiance to him. The citizen of heaven recognizes only Christ as Lord and proclaims and demonstrates allegiance to Him alone.

We must note this passage describes the ultimate, eventual response of every person to the lordship of Christ. Obviously there are many who reject His position, who rebuff His authority, or even deny His very existence. It is clear from our broken, sinful world that all things are not directly and immediately under His rule. There is both a past and a future aspect to Jesus’ exaltation. Christ has been exalted and is seated at the right hand of God. It is in the future that every person will finally acknowledge His position and authority. It is during this present time that God is giving us the opportunity to acknowledge His authority and our sin against Him. We have the chance to respond to the truth of the gospel, repent and find forgiveness through His work on the cross. That is the opportunity we have now. Every believing heart will joyfully acknowledge and confess Jesus’ sovereign lordship. Every unbelieving heart will also eventually acknowledge Him as sovereign Lord, though in dismal submission and eternal despair. Every person will acknowledge Jesus is Lord. The only question is how and when.

FOLLOWING JESUS’ EXAMPLE

We should remember that Paul’s purpose in writing this section was to challenge the Philippian believers to have the same attitude that Jesus had – that of humility, serving others, and putting others first.

In Jesus’ humiliation and exaltation we see a principle or spiritual law demonstrated which is true for our own lives. If we are willing to humble ourselves and serve others, then God will in due time exalt us and lift us up. We find this truth expressed in Matthew 23:11-12 and several other places throughout the scriptures (see also James 4:10 and 1 Peter 5:6):

“But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.” Matthew 23:11-12

➤ **HAVE YOU ACKNOWLEDGED JESUS CHRIST AS LORD? DO YOU SEEK TO MAKE THAT TRUTH A PART OF YOUR LIFE EVERY DAY, AT HOME, AT WORK, AND IN THE CAPITOL?**

¹ <http://www.polycarp.net/>