

The Exaltation of Jesus Christ

by J. Glyn Owen

The exaltation of Jesus Christ is a divine reversal of every false evaluation of him, and it is the reward of his voluntary mission and passion.

Duration: 50:07

Topics: "Jesus Christ"

Description

The sermon transcript emphasizes the importance of the cross in the gospel, but also highlights other aspects of the gospel that are precious and necessary. It discusses the condescension of Jesus, who willingly took on human nature and became a humble servant, even to the point of death. However, Jesus' obedience and sacrifice were followed by his glorious exaltation, where everything is now under his feet. The sermon concludes with a call to repent, believe, trust, and obey the message of the gospel for salvation and to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Transcript

Will you kindly turn with me in the Word of Scripture to Philippians chapter 2, and we are going to be meditating this morning upon verses 9 to 11. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The exaltation of Jesus Christ, our Lord's immeasurable stoop in becoming man and assuming our human nature to his divine nature, in order to bear our sins in his body to the tree, is not the end of the story.

The cross is the heart of the gospel, but it is not the only aspect of the gospel, and here we find something which is exceedingly precious and necessary to the glad tidings, which the New Testament proclaims in and through Jesus, the Son of God. The condescension described by Paul in verses 6 to 8 was followed by the glorious exaltation, announced here in verses 9 to 11 and elsewhere in scripture. Obedience to the Father in the service of others will never, never be unrewarded.

The first word in verse 9, if you look at it, the word therefore points to the moral propriety of the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to a logical necessity, but a moral propriety. He did not cling to equality with deity. As he saw mankind in sin and lostness, he was prepared to take to himself our nature, and in our nature to become a humble servant, a servant of the law and of the edicts he himself had been involved in making, to make himself servant even to the point of death, even to the death of the cross.

Therefore, there is a moral necessity written into the very dealings of God with men, whereby you cannot humble yourself for his name and his glory and the service of his kingdom in vain. Now, in referring to our Lord's exaltation, Paul here telescopes the two events of his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to the Father's right hand. He does not refer to them by name, but you can see that he brings both of them together as one movement.

Sometimes they are considered as two separate movements. We can certainly separate them in thought and in history. Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day after he was crucified, and he ascended a period after that.

But they belong to one movement of God in his reaction to the crucifixion of his son on the cross of Calvary. God exalted him, and within that movement of exaltation, we have particularly the raising of the Lord Jesus from the dead and his ascension to the Father's right hand to be a prince and a savior, Lord of lords and King of kings, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. Now, it is to this theme of his exaltation that we turn this morning.

And we need great grace, were it only to have a glimpse of what is involved here. I don't think it is possible for us to live the same again when once we've caught a glimpse of our exalted Lord. It matters not whether we are involved, as they say, in full-time Christian ministries, missionaries or ministers or whatever, or whether we are involved in a secular task and there witnessing as Christians and seeking to make Christ known there.

It makes no difference. When once you and I have seen the exalted Savior, it will transform our lives, it will transform our understanding of our human situation, and it will transform the manner in which we see things and the opportunities of each succeeding day. God grant us that vision in some measure today.

Now, we focus first of all on the divine action here. This is basic to everything else. Therefore God exalted him, says the NIV, to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.

There are two distinguishable aspects to God's sovereign action in response to his son's self-humbling in his incarnation and death for others. The one focuses upon his elevation as God-man to the highest place. Now, if you find difficulty in remembering things, think first of the highest place.

God exalted him to the highest place. The King James Version used to say, God has highly exalted him. Well, that's good, but this goes a little further and I'm sure it represents the underlying Greek.

God has not only highly exalted him, but God has exalted him to the highest place. There is no higher. Now, you may read your books, you may study your philosophies and your history of religions, but it is the affirmation of this passage of Scripture that no one anywhere at any time has or ever will occupy a place higher than the place that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, occupies this morning.

He's been exalted to the highest place. Now, matching this, he is in his exaltation given the loftiest name. And the two things match, of course.

You see, God never does things in halves. We do. He doesn't.

He is able. He is able. And he matches this exaltation of his Son to the highest place with the conferring upon him of the loftiest of all names.

Now, let's look at these two as expounding our first point, the divine action in the exaltation of the man Christ Jesus. The exaltation, first of all, of the person of Christ to the highest place. Now, having already noted that the divine action in our Lord's exaltation involved the resurrection and the ascension, we can come straight to this and just look it straight in the face.

What does it say? What is involved? What is the significance of this great act of God involving his resurrection and his ascension to the right hand of the Father upon high? I think we must proceed to consider at least two major implications in the significance of that act of God. One, the twofold action concertedly affirms the divine reversal of every false evaluation of Jesus Christ. When God raised him from the dead and caused him to ascend to his own right hand and seated him there, crowned with glory and honor, God contradicted the contradictions of men.

God challenged the false views of Christ's enemies and he turned the whole verdict of Calvary upside down. And that is something that is awesomely significant. This honor bestowed upon our Lord by the Father is an outright rejection and reversal by him of the evaluation of Christ's life and person which lay behind his crucifixion and death.

Why was Jesus crucified? Now, we don't need to go into the details. Let's just get the pith, the principle. Jesus was crucified because neither Jew nor Gentile believed that he deserved to live.

Put positively, the religious leaders of his day believed that he should die, that he was unfit for life and that he should die the cruelest kind of death imaginable because of crimes he had allegedly committed against their religion. They persuaded Herod, representative of the Gentile authority, to carry out the deed. Now, Herod tells us, I'm sorry, Pontius Pilate tells us three times that he found no fault in him but Pontius Pilate did not think that Jesus of Nazareth deserved that he should take much trouble to try and defend him and if the Jews are making this awful row and threatening turmoil in order to crucify Jesus of Nazareth well then, says Pontius Pilate to himself I'd better hand him over.

I'm not going to get into difficulty. I'm not going to jeopardize my future in the civil service or whatever. I'm going to see that my own skin is unscarred.

Let him be handed over. That's why Jesus was crucified. No one thought he was worthy to live.

They thought he was worthy of death. Now, the resurrection confounded that arrogant and jaundiced notion. God, you see, moved in the very opposite direction and raised his son up from the grave with a view to elevating him on high.

The blind arrogance and perverted judgment of Jew and Gentile both of them are contradicted by God himself by an act that only could be an act of God. The God of Abram and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob and the God of David contradicted what the representatives of Moses had done in their day and what the Gentile authorities had done. Now, you see, had we been in their shoes we would probably have done exactly the same thing.

So don't let's look at anybody and say we're better than you are. God have mercy upon us, but this is what they did. The apostle Peter particularly lays hold of this fact and he there most graphically, I think more graphically than any of the apostles.

He makes use of it, you remember, on the day of Pentecost. The point that I am making, Peter seemed to take hold of it and he used it with tremendous effect in Acts chapter 2. This man Jesus, you, he says, with

the help of wicked men referring to the Gentiles Pontius Pilate and so forth you with the help of wicked men put to death by nailing him on a cross. But God, you see, the opposition, you see the contrast you did this, but God raised him from the dead exalted to the right hand of God.

It is he who has poured forth this that you now see and hear. That is the Holy Spirit with the evidences of his presence on the day of Pentecost. He's exalted, God has exalted him and in so doing he has contradicted all and sundry and they come under his judgment.

The exaltation of our Lord needs also to be seen of course as the reward of his voluntary mission and passion. Such obedience and such voluntary services as is rendered by our Lord to his Father here could not go unrewarded. He earned this.

He deserved this. He merited this. The fact that the exaltation of Jesus was merited by his deeds appears as already indicated from the word therefore to which we've referred right at the beginning of verse 11.

Therefore God has highly exalted him. It could not be otherwise. He in mercy became our slave, our servant to bear the heaviest burden ever placed on a human soul or on a human shoulder.

And he took it all away. There was a moral necessity that God should recognize the merits of Jesus Christ. For he was no sinner and he had no sin.

But for sinners he became and took our bodies, took bodies, a body like ours and died. But now this is a principle shot through the scriptures. And those who humble themselves in the service of God are always honored.

Let me just read to you, throw out a few passages. You can follow them up. I read in Matthew chapter 23 and verse 12.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Again in James 4.10. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up. And again Peter says almost identically the same thing.

1 Peter 5.6. Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. You humble yourselves, says Peter, and sooner or later the God of all grace and mercy will lift you up again. There is always an exaltation that follows the self-humbling of a man or a woman.

The writer to the epistle to the Hebrews makes the point and makes it very clear unequivocally so. Stressing the fact that Jesus was crowned with glory and honor quote, because of the sufferings of death. Hebrews 2.9. That is, his honor, his coronation was merited.

You and I will never merit things like this. But he merited, he merited his position on the throne. The honor he merited was nevertheless fully and ungrudgingly given by God the Father.

And this is the way I like to look at the words before us. Therefore God has exalted him to the highest place. You know, God does not begrudge him this.

God does not just say, all right, sir, I'll put you in the honors list. No, no. As a matter of fact, Paul employs a word at this point which is not found anywhere in classical Greek nor in the New Testament.

He seems to have coined it himself. Winston Churchill used to do that. When he found that he couldn't find a word in the vocabulary that expressed what he wanted it to express, he coined it himself.

I heard him say so. He said, why can't I? Well, why can't the apostle Paul? And he's got a word here which nobody knows where it's come from unless from Paul's own imagination. One commentator at least translates it as super exalted.

It means that God exalted him abundantly over and above what you can imagine or think. You can study it. You can read the record of it.

But you can't take the half of it in. There is always more to it than meets the eye. Super exalted him.

You cannot see the furthest reaches of the glory which he has inherited. Now, other scriptures, of course, will more clearly enlarge upon that. Scripture interprets scripture.

And that is how, I suppose, we are meant to read the Bible one passage interprets another passage. Many people, many people miss the glories of scripture because when they're reading a passage they only think of one passage and they forget about the whole of the rest of scripture. But you see, one passage needs to come under the light of another passage.

And the light of the whole must come upon the part and that's why we must read the whole. There are many passages of scripture that cast a gleaming light upon what we have before us this morning. Think, for example, of how the epistle to the Hebrews throws light upon this that we are considering now.

The honor that our Lord merited and that was ungrudgingly given him by the Father exalted him to the highest place. I read in Hebrews 4.14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens through the heavens he wasn't simply exalted into heaven. I read in Hebrews 7.26 Such a high priest meets our need one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners exalted, listen, above the heavens.

He's not only gone through the heavens, he's above the heavens. Wait a minute. In Hebrews 4.10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens.

Listen to Hebrews 9.24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. He entered heaven itself. Now to appear in the very presence of God for us.

What are these scriptures saying? They're saying, my dear friends, that God exalted Christ his Son in his exalted manhood into his very presence the presence of his throne and he sits at his right hand, whatever that means. There is no conceivable glory that is beyond this. Paul, in his attempt to express this you know he really baffles us with thought upon thought in Ephesians 1.20-22 Do you remember his words? He that is God, says Paul, raised him up from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

Now follows this startling statement. Far above all rule and authority power and dominion and every title that can be given not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be the head over everything to the church.

My friend, can you see it? However dimly. He who condescended to be a babe in the virgin mother's womb and in her arms he who was slandered and spat upon and crucified and nailed to the tree and

buried in the borrowed tomb he who died under the curse of our sin is now raised from the dead and exalted and everything is under his feet. There is nothing above, not a thing, not a person not anyone, no authority, no power no name that is named in this world or the world to come.

Everything is under his feet. Hallelujah. There's an awesomeness about this that ought to grip our souls as we go out into the world for a new week's witness and service and perfecting of our own sanctification.

The highest place that heaven affords is his and his by right the king of kings and lord of lords and heaven's eternal light. If this is not so then there's no reason why we should be so full of zeal. There's no reason why we should be missionaries of the gospel.

There's no reason why the church should bear its testimony and suffer. There's no reason why we should deny ourselves. All the rationale is based upon this.

We have such a wonderful savior. God became incarnate. When the work of the incarnate lord was finished in his glorified humanity he is seated at the father's right hand from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

But now corresponding to this is the bestowal upon him in the highest place of the loftiest name and gave him the name that is above every name. I must hurry. What is this? We've sung this morning about the name of Jesus.

What is this one name? What is this name that is above every name? Every name given to our lord Jesus either by Old Testament scriptures looking forward prophetically, symbolically or whatever every name given him is precious. And I suppose most of us would want to say that the name Jesus has a peculiar a peculiar beauty and attraction to us. He was given this before he was born by the angel.

Really, by God the father through the angel. It was at the divine commission that he was given the name Jesus. He himself apparently loved to refer to himself as the son of man Probably understanding it in the sense of Daniel 7. You'll read that passage.

He was also called the son of God. He was called so many things and there were so many epithets so many descriptions of him given so many chosen by himself. I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life I'm the bread of life, I'm the water of life I'm the door, I'm the first and the last.

What's this name that is above every name? Well of course that is easier to identify than perhaps we might at first appreciate because when we go on you notice what we're told here. God exalted him to the highest place gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. There's no question about it.

That is the name that is above every other. That name was above every other in the Roman world. The Roman world called Caesar Curias meaning Lord, the very word we have here not because he was the head of state not because he ruled not because of his power though all these things were involved.

Do you know why the Romans called him Curias Caesar? For this reason they believed he was divine and they worshipped him of course they burnt incense to him they thought that the Caesar was what was a God and because of that they called him Curias.

In the New Testament it is the equivalent of the Old Testament words for God to especially, I don't need to I can't take the time this morning to describe why to Adonai and Jehovah this is the equivalent of the highest loftiest name used by the Jews of Old Testament days for their God, the God of Abram and Isaac and of Jacob Jesus is given the name that is above every other name the exaltation of Jesus Christ then is something that took place by the sovereign action of almighty God in response to his son's gross humiliation in becoming incarnate and dying our death it focuses upon his elevation to the highest place and being given the loftiest name and the second thing, the other thing I wanted to speak about this morning is the intention behind that that at the name of Jesus, the exalted

one in the highest of all places that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father the super exaltation of Jesus Christ and his endowment to the highest of all names is not simply a symbolic or a decorative thing it's not a decorative gesture as when someone is given a title by her majesty in the New Year's honors list no, no, there is more to it than that God purposed the most far-reaching consequences when he gave his son the name that is above every name his own name as God-man seen against the background of the whole New Testament the exaltation of our Lord is shown both to involve privilege and responsibility privilege of course that we have such a wonderful

Savior you and I should never be ashamed of him when we see him either in his humiliation or his exaltation but the emphasis here is not on the privilege but on the responsibility Paul here expresses the demands that our Lord's exaltation will make and does make upon mankind in all ages to the end of time and there is no one left out it applies to everybody I want to say two main things one, since God has highly exalted him the whole creation must humbly bow down before him that, at the name of Jesus, the Exalted One every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth God's intention in the exaltation of his son is hinted at in the opening word that which means in order that in order that God exalted him in order that what? this should take place that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bow that includes you that includes me it includes men and women of all the nations of all the earth of all time and there's a day coming when all men that have ever lived will have to do that here then is a major implication of our Lord's exaltation all creatures whether in heaven or on earth or under the earth will have to do it and this of course this must not be confined to some kind of physical genuflection honoring the son going on your knees or crossing yourself as an indication of respect no, no, no, no this is a matter of acknowledging him from the depth of the heart in a practical way it must be deeper than any genuflection of the body though that of course may be truly significant when people are sincere it's a matter of mind a matter of will a matter of

heart which concedes all this to him with all that the concession involves now such an acknowledgement must needs be intimately personal that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow every knee if you'll pardon me I hope I'm not taking this too literally you can't even do this on one knee you'll have to bend both knees so will I this is not a token submission this is a total acknowledgement it would appear that we must do this individually and personally just as Jesus refused to cling to his equality with God thought of the things and of the needs of others and humbled himself to become a servant even to die so we must die to ourselves and our ideas of ourselves in order to obey God and bend the knee to his son Dr.

Paul Rees in his book *The Radiant Cross* it was written years ago it's a lovely little book very well worth reading I've had it on my shelves for a long long time and I came across it when we were moving last summer and in it he speaks of a friend of his who was visiting Copenhagen or Copenhagen however you

like to pronounce it and he was in the cathedral there and was looking at Thorwaldsen's sculpture of Christ which is on exhibition there and if you know anything about this sculpture then you know that the head of Christ is leaning forward so that the features of his face are not easily discernible if you're a tall person you've got to look down bend down and look up Dr.

Paul Rees' friend was very tall somewhere in the region of the seven foot mark and he came in and he was admiring this statue from a distance but evidently he was not seeing the glory of it and the custodian came up behind him and pulled his sleeve and said Sir, he said pardon me but you can only see his features and the glory of his face if you bend at his feet and look up and that's exactly what he did he knelt at his feet my friend whatever you read about the Lord Jesus Christ whatever you hear about him from others there is a glory and there is a grace and there are distinctive features of his that you can only know for yourself when you bow at his feet and look up and that's what it means to acknowledge his Lordship to bend the knee such humble personal recognition of Jesus Christ as

exalted must be ultimately universal in heaven and on earth and under the earth no intelligent being can opt out of this necessity no one can sidestep Jesus Christ you know you talk to people and they're quick in argument and they kind of evade the issues that you bring up in your presentation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus and you say oh these people are too clever don't get away with it don't you believe it God has made it so you can't sidestep him God has raised him from the dead he's exalted him to be at his right hand forever a prince and a saviour he is king of kings and lord of lords and men and women will come back from the dead to be faced with him as judge heaven earth under the earth the whole cosmos the whole history of mankind will be involved in this there's no let out here

and the other thing I wanted to say time is going since God has personally conferred on our Lord the name that is above every other name every tongue must acknowledge him as Lord not simply must every knee bow but every tongue every mouth will have to acknowledge that he is Lord now to confess verbally that Jesus is Lord out of a heart of repentance and of faith is to be saved this is the great gospel if thou shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead and then confess with your lips you are saved says the apostle Paul believing in the heart means trusting not only the historical fact of the resurrection but its essential significance as setting the seal of God's favour upon the life and death of his son have you done that? do you verbally acknowledge him as your Lord

your Saviour or do you still see him as a prophet among prophets a king among kings a ruler among rulers my friend your eyes have got to be opened he is high over all there is no one else where he is he is the one and only he is the only king on his level he sets kings on their thrones and he takes them down again he is Lord of lords he is king of kings his kingdom outlives every other Daniel 7 all other kingdoms will fall into smithereens they are disintegrating and they will be judged and all that offends of all the kingdoms of time will be cast aside into the fiery burnings of God but his kingdom lasts forever and he is king over all the one and only as a matter of fact it will be seen that these words from verse 11 are actually a quotation from Isaiah 45.3 their God says God Jehovah

the triune God of the Old Testament their God says that all creatures shall one day bow and swear to him Paul applies that now to the Son the incarnate Son glorified and honored to confess Jesus to be Lord other than out of such faith of course out of faith and repentance and submission honest willing submission is not salvation there are those who will have to acknowledge Jesus to be Lord not willingly but grudgingly but you see sooner or later every mouth will have to acknowledge it audibly Satan and his hosts of demonic and human followers will not have the luxury of an eternity in which they can justify

themselves for the rejection of their Son of God's Son that is one thing that will not be possible in hell no man, no woman will be able to justify himself or herself he deserves my

rejection why? because before you get there the glory of the Son of God will be seen again as he returns in his glory to judge the world and at the spectacle of that glory that is yet to be seen by every eye and those raised from the dead and brought back from the waters of the sea they will so recognize his glory that they will confess that he is Lord and the gall of eternal misery will be enhanced by the knowledge that whatever the excuse of the time it was all wrong God reversed it he is Lord brothers and sisters I ask you this morning is there any man or woman in our worship in our service who does not acknowledge this where you sit in your seat without any fuss, without any bother acknowledge him in your heart this is biblical Christianity there is no other it's not just being able

to sing heartily or even know the scriptures but it is acknowledging with the heart this is so God has exalted him and I must give him the place that is his due he deserves it and notice I haven't said anything about this Paul has linked up not only the deserts of Christ but also the glory of God together it is all to be done to the glory of God the glory of God is made to hang upon this that the whole of creation will have to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ one day oh I plead with you don't be satisfied with a minuscule vision of Jesus of Nazareth see him for the one he is in the light of God's throne and of God's book and crown him as such and honor him as such I conclude with this see this kind of study and I urge you to take it much further than I can do it this morning this

kind of study shows you Jesus Christ's total and his exclusive uniqueness and capability to be the Savior for there is no one in the same category oh there are some good men spawned up by other religions and philosophies which are non-christian and not even religious some great men great thinkers great doers great what have you but my dear friends it is the message of this book and of our faith that there is no one in this category so you don't need to be ashamed of him what is more he deserves the acknowledgement of the nations God has made it so abundantly clear that the view of Jew and Gentile was wrong and his son in his humanity has been glorified to the highest place given the highest name and that is an advance notice that those who think otherwise and live otherwise are on a

collision course with God hence the message of the gospel repent and believe and trust and obey and be saved so let it be oh that this day would be a day of salvation oh that it might be as God meant it to be a day of grace not only grace manifested towards us but grace received by us that we may walk in the ways of the Lord let us pray great great God our heavenly father how to thank you for your word and for your spirit to help us in our attempt to understand your word and apply it to ourselves and to our generation we know not but as best we can we do acknowledge our privilege oh Lord and we ask that you will enable us to respond to what we are learning of your son in a manner that is pleasing to you in a manner that is so pleasing to you that we may find ourselves here and now

fulfilling the very purpose for which we were first created and then when we had got lost the purpose for which we were redeemed and recreated in Christ and are now being sustained and challenged from your holy word oh bless your people remember those among us who have very heavy problems and burdens and some heartbreaks help them to look into the face of every foe every enemy every circumstance from under the arm of him whom God has exalted high over all put your arms oh Lord Jesus Christ around your people this morning and carry them out and carry them on and carry the lambs in your arms to your bosom clasp them until we all reach the end of our journey and finish our work we ask it through your blessed name as our mediator and our savior Amen

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