

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Deity of Christ		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	4		Gary L.W. Johnson
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CHRIST'S EXALTATION

Thomas Watson (1620-1686) was one of the truly great Puritan preachers. He was probably born in Yorkshire, although the exact place and date of his birth are unknown. He studied at Emmanuel College, Cambridge (BA, 1639; MA, 1642), where he was apparently a diligent student. Certainly his intellect is apparent in his writings, which show a profound grasp of the English language, as well as a solid understanding of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. He quotes from the early church fathers, and his familiarity with the breadth of the scriptural canon is stunning. Cross-references from the entire biblical *corpus* are sprinkled throughout his sermons, revealing a deep understanding of many texts obscure to most modern-day Bible students. A solid understanding of history, botany, medicine, physics, the classics, logic, and various trades are revealed in his sermons.¹ His sermon on Christ's Exaltation was designed in part to refute the errors of Socinianism – the 16th and 17th century movement of Faustus and Lelio Socinus, who professed belief in the God of Scripture, but denied original sin, the substitutionary aspect of Christ's atonement, the deity of Christ, and consequently the Trinity.² This sermon can be found in his works.³

“Wherein consists Christ's exaltation? In His rising from the dead, His ascending into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God the Father, etc. In what sense hath God exalted Christ? Not in respect of Christ's Godhead, for that cannot be exalted higher than it is. As in Christ's humiliation, the Godhead was not lower, so in His exaltation, the Godhead is not higher; but Christ is exalted as Mediator – His human nature is exalted. How many ways is Christ exalted? Five ways: God hath exalted Christ I. In His titles; II. In His office; III. In His ascension; IV. In His session at God's right hand; V. In constituting Him judge of the world.

“I. **God hath exalted Christ in His titles.** *First title:* He is exalted to be Lord: ‘The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified’ (Acts 19:17). He is Lord in respect of His sovereignty; He is Lord over angels and men. ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth’ (Mat 28:18). Christ hath three keys in His hand: (1) the key of the grave, to open the graves of men at the resurrection; (2) the key of heaven, to open the kingdom of heaven to whom He will; (3) the key of hell (Rev 1:18), to lock up the damned in that fiery prison. To this Lord all knees must bow: ‘That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow’ (Phi 2:10). *Name* is put here for *person* – to that ‘holy thing’ Jesus (Luk 1:35), to the scepter of that divine person every knee shall bow. *Bowing* is put for *submission* – all must be subdued to Him as sons or captives and submit to Him as to the Lord or Judge: ‘Kiss the Son’ (Psa 2:12) with a kiss of love and loyalty. We must not only cast ourselves into Christ's arms to be saved by Him, but we must cast ourselves at His feet to serve Him. *Second title:* Christ is exalted to be a prince: ‘And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince’ (Dan 12:1). Some think it was a created angel; but it was *Angelus foederis* – ‘the angel of the covenant’⁴ He is a great prince: ‘The prince of the kings of the earth’ (Rev 1:5). They hold their crowns by immediate tenure⁵ from Him.

His throne is above the stars [and] He hath angels and archangels for His attendants. Thus, He is exalted in His titles of honor.

“II. God hath exalted Christ in His office. He hath honored Him to be the Savior of the world: ‘Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour’ (Acts 5:31). It was a great honor to Moses to be a temporal⁶ savior; but what is it to be the Savior of souls! Christ is called the ‘horn of salvation’⁷ (Luk 1:69). He saves from sin (Mat 1:21) and from wrath (1 Th 1:10). To save is a flower that belongs only to His crown: ‘Neither is there salvation in any other’ (Act 4:12). What an honor this is to Christ! How it makes heaven ring with saints’ praises! They sing hallelujahs to Christ their Savior. ‘And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation’ (Rev 5:9).

“III. God hath exalted Christ in His ascension. If He be ascended, then He is exalted . . . But the Scripture is plain: He ascended into heaven, ‘far above all heavens’ (Eph 4:10; Luk 24:51) – therefore above the firmament.⁸ He is ascended into the highest part of the empyrean heaven,⁹ which Paul calls ‘the third heaven’ (2 Cor 12:2). Concerning Christ’s ascension, two things: 1. The *manner* of Christ’s ascension: (1) Christ, beginning to ascend, blessed His disciples. ‘And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven’ (Luk 24:50-51). Christ did not leave His disciples houses and lands, but He left them His blessing. (2) Christ ascended as a conqueror in a way of triumph. ‘Thou hast led captivity captive’ (Psa 68:18; Eph 4:8). He triumphed over sin, hell, and death; and Christ’s triumph is a believer’s triumph: Christ hath conquered sin and hell for every believer. 2. The *fruit* of Christ’s ascension: Christ’s ascension to heaven causeth the descension of the Holy Spirit into our hearts: ‘When he ascended up on high, he . . . gave gifts unto men’ (Eph 4:8). Christ having ascended in the clouds, as His triumphant chariot, gives the gift of His Spirit to us, as a king at his coronation bestows gifts liberally to his favorites.

“IV. God hath exalted Christ in His session at God’s right hand. ‘After the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God’ (Mar 16:19). ‘He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come’ (Eph 1:20-21). What is meant by Christ’s sitting at God’s right hand? To speak properly, God hath no right hand or left; for being a Spirit, He is void of all bodily parts. But it is borrowed speech -- a metaphor taken from the manner of kings who were [in the habit of advancing] their favorites next to their own persons, seating them at their right hand. Solomon caused a seat to be set for his mother the queen and placed her at his right hand (1 Ki 2:19). So, for Christ to sit at the right hand of God is to be in the next place to God the Father in dignity and honor. The human nature of Christ, being personally united to the divine, is now seated on a royal throne in heaven and adored even by angels. By virtue of the personal union of Christ’s human nature with the divine, there is a communication of all that glory from the deity of Christ that His human nature is capable of. Not that the manhood of Christ is advanced to an equality with the Godhead, but the divine nature being joined with the human, the human nature is wonderfully glorified, though not deified. Christ as Mediator is filled with all majesty and honor beyond the comprehension of the highest order of angels: Christ in His humiliation descended so low that it was not fit to go lower; and in His exaltation, He ascended so high that it is not possible to go higher. In His resurrection, He was exalted above the grave; in His ascension, He was exalted above the airy and starry heaven; in His sitting at God’s right hand, He is exalted above the highest heavens far, ‘far above all heavens’ (Eph 4:10).

“V. **God hath exalted Christ in constituting Him judge of the whole world.** ‘The Father . . . hath committed all ‘judgment unto the Son’ (Joh 5:22). At the Day of Judgment shall Christ be exalted supereminently.¹⁰ ‘He cometh in the glory of his Father’ (Mar 8:38). He shall wear the same embroidered robes of majesty as the Father; and He shall come with all His holy angels (Mat 25:31). He Who was led to the bar¹¹ with a band of soldiers shall be attended to the bench with a guard of angels. Christ shall judge His judges; He shall judge Pilate that condemned Him! Kings must leave their thrones and come to His bar. And this is the highest court of judicature,¹² from whence is no appeal. Use. 1. Of information: Branch 1: See Christ’s different state on earth and now in heaven. Oh, how is the scene altered! When He was on earth, He lay in a manger – now He sits on a throne. Then He was hated and scorned of men – now He is adored of angels. Then His name was reproached --- now God hath ‘given him a name which is above every name’ (Phi 2:9). Then He came in the form of a servant. And as a servant, [He] stood with His basin and towel and washed His disciples’ feet (Joh 13:4-5) – now He is clad in His prince’s robes, and the kings of the earth cast their crowns before Him. On earth He was a man of sorrow – now He is anointed with the oil of gladness. On earth was His crucifixion – now His coronation. Then His Father frowned upon Him in desertion – now He hath set Him at His right hand. Before he seemed to have no form or beauty in Him (Isa 53:2) – now He is in the brightness of His Father’s glory (Heb 1:3). Oh, what a change is here! ‘God also hath highly exalted him’ (Phi 2:9). Branch 2: Was Christ first humble and then exalted? Hence learn, the way to true honor is humility: ‘He that humbleth himself shall be exalted’ (Luk 14:11). The world looks upon humility as that which will make one contemptible, but it is the ready way to honor. The way to rise is to fall, the way to ascend is to descend. Humility exalts us in the esteem of men, and it exalts us to a higher throne in heaven. ‘Whosoever . . . shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’ (Mat 18:4), viz,¹³ he shall have a greater degree of glory in it. Branch 3: Christ suffered and then was exalted. See hence that sufferings must go before glory. Many desire to be glorified *with* Christ, but they are not content to suffer *for* Christ. ‘If we suffer, we shall also reign with him’ (2 Ti 2:12). The wicked first reign and then suffer; the godly first suffer, and then reign. There is . . . no way to heaven, but through sufferings; no way to the crown, but by the way of the cross. Jerusalem above is a pleasant city – streets of gold, gates of pearl; but we must travel through a dirty road to this city – through many reproaches and sufferings (Acts 14:22). We must enter glory as Christ did: first He suffered shame and death, and now [He] is exalted to sit at God’s right hand.”

CONCLUSION: “1. Let us exalt Christ in our hearts. Believe! Oh, adore and love Him! We cannot lift Christ up higher in heaven, but we may in our hearts. Let us exalt Him with our lips: let us praise Him! Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, our tongues must be the organs in these temples. By praising and commending Christ, we exalt Him in the esteem of others. Let us exalt Him in our lives by living holy lives . . . Not all the doxologies and prayers in the world do so exalt Christ as a holy life; this makes Christ renowned and lifts Him up indeed, when His followers walk worthy of Christ. 2. Let us exalt Christ’s truths. Bucholcerus,¹⁴ in his *Chronology*, reports of the nobles of [Poland] that whenever the gospel is read, they lay their hands upon their swords, intimating that they are ready to maintain the gospel with the hazard of their lives. Let us exalt Christ’s truths [by maintaining] the truths of Christ against error, the doctrine of free grace against merit, [and] the deity of Christ against Socinianism. Truth is the most orient¹⁵ pearl of Christ’s crown! Contend for the truth as one would for a sum of money that it should not be wrested¹⁶ out of his hand. When we exalt His truths, wherein His glory is so much concerned, Christ takes this to be an exalting of Him.”

ENDNOTES

¹TheBannerofTruth.org.Thomas Watsonbio.

²As we have seen, Kermit Zarley in his book, *The Restitution of Jesus Christ*, is a modern-day representative of the Socialism heresy.

³I have adapted this particular sermon from *The Select Works of the Rev. Thomas Watson* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 137-140, in the public domain.

⁴**angel of the covenant** – title of Christ as mediator, “messenger (angel) of the covenant” (Mal 3:1; cf. Gen. 48:16; etc.)

⁵**tenure** – authority.

⁶**temporal** – earthly.

⁷**horn of salvation** – The “horn of salvation” is drawn from the OT, where it pictures an ox with horns that is able to defeat enemies with the powerful thrust of its protected head (Deu 33:17). (Bock, Luke 1:1-9:50, Vol. 1, 180).

⁸**firmament** – heaven or sky.

⁹**empyrean heaven** – highest and purest region of heaven.

¹⁰**supereminently** – supremely exalted; exalted above others in rank or dignity.

¹¹**to the bar** – place in a court of law where the accused person stands.

¹²**judicature** – administration of justice; highest court of a judge’s authority.

¹³**viz.** – from Latin *videlicet*: that is to say; namely.

¹⁴**Abraham Buchholzer** (1529-1584) – German Protestant theologian; devoted himself to chronological research and 17 years later published *Index Chronologicus*, in which he described the story of the creation of the world until the year 1580.

¹⁵**orient** – bright; glittering.

¹⁶**wrested** – taken by force.