

Emphasis: Jesus

By

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“Wherefore also God highly exalted him.” Phil. 2:9.

In the preaching of the apostles a deliberate emphasis was laid upon exalting Jesus as Christ and Lord. In the initial sermon on Pentecost Peter preached Jesus as “being arrested him Peter declared, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew, hanging Him on a tree. He did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior” (Acts 8: 30-31).

Even though they faced death for confessing Jesus, the early Christians deliberately exalted His name with all the means at their disposal.

In the church Jesus was to be preeminent (Col. 1:18). Believers were baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” and when persecuted they considered it a blessing to suffer in His name (1 Pet. 4:16). They taught in Jesus, name (Acts 3:6, 4:11), suffered dishonor for His name (Acts 5:41) and cast out demons in that name (Acts 16:18).

These who were so close to Jesus were not under any delusion that there was magic in His name. They sought to exalt that name because they knew the Person Who bore it. They were convinced that Jesus was God! Thomas, after his momentary spell of doubting, called Jesus “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Not one apostle disagreed with His affirmation. John wrote of Jesus Christ saying “This is the true God” (1 John 5:20) Jesus Himself said that those who had seen Him had seen the Father. (John 14:9). He claimed to be God in the flesh, and Paul explicitly states as much when he writes, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

The apostles knew that to glorify God was to glorify Jesus; that to bow down to God they must give complete allegiance to Jesus Christ. Therefore, the New Testament is filled with expressions of glory and praise to Jesus. Christ is indeed exalted at the right hand of God, so that all the Christian does is to be done in the name of Jesus.

The modern church has lost this sense of the glory and exaltation of Jesus, her King and Lord. I need not elaborate on this thought as it is too painfully obvious, but will focus our thoughts on some causes of the de-glorification of the name of Jesus.

First, the church is told repeatedly that its sole reason for existence is evangelism. Evangelism becomes an end in itself and as a result many Christians live “in a vacuous circle.” They attend the church service to hear exhortations to return for the next service and help make it a bigger one; at the next service the same formula is repeated. The attention of the church is focused on evangelism to the exclusion of all else, including the praise and worship of Jesus and the growth in His grace and knowledge, Many churches are so geared into evangelism that everything is designed to appeal to the sinner, in order

to “win” him. The church becomes human centered. Christ is merely the means of getting more into the church, and unless there are new faces every week there is a spirit of defeat and purposelessness. Members do not attend to praise and exalt Christ and glorify Him, but to see how well they can succeed in “growing” numerically. If converts are not made through the power of the Holy Spirit in the gospel message, then the leaders must devise a scheme or method that will “work.” It must be said of First Church that it is successful. It must be said of the preacher that he is “building up” the church.

Certainly every Christian desires to see sinner’s come to repentance and puts forth his efforts to publish the gospel, even as did the early disciples who went everywhere preaching it. Without a doubt Jesus is exalted when people come confessing His name and being baptized into Him. It is remarkable, however, that this exaltation that should accrue to Christ is so readily snatched from Him by the evangelist, the minister or the church, so that confessions and baptisms are the means of tallying a man’s work and chalking up credit to the servant instead of bringing glory to the Master.

Where Christ is truly exalted the additions to the Church do not receive the focal point of attention but rather add luster to the glory of Jesus. Where He is exalted there **IS** joy and glory and growth, whether or not folk are coming down the isle. Bringing men to Christ is the by-product of our own relation to Him and follows naturally the proper subordination to Him. The church does not primarily exist for evangelism, but as God’s own possession to bring glory and honor and praise to Him through Jesus Christ.

A second means of diminishing Christ’s glory is in church publicity. Men advertise their churches as if they were selling soap, each claiming his brand is whiter. Their churches glow, go and grow. They are the friendliest, the warmest, the fastest growing, the smilingest and the preachingest. The church becomes competitive with the country club, the civic club and the night club. But who is exalted by such advertising? Maybe the church, or the preacher, or a certain denomination? But how often do you see an ad that simply states a sublime truth about Jesus? He is the “forgotten Man” in the church race.

Third, Christ is further robbed of glory by the lust for modernization. There is a zeal among church leaders, especially among preachers, to accept the false doctrine that the church must change with the times in order to get the gospel accepted by a modern changing world.

An example of this is seen in a recent paper extolling the efforts of a campus ministry. The young minister had learned to speak the language of hippy-land. According to him “established religion” is out. The new breed demands a new religion. Christ is presented as a kind of Super- Hippy, as one who makes no demands that would jar the sinner from his fool’s paradise and put him through the painful therapy of repentance. Instead, He meets him “where he is” and, careful not to condemn his lust and idolatry, helps him to identify, relate and to do his own thing and all that. Jesus is not high and lifted up in this ministry. He is not presented as God in the flesh, but is a kind of quarterback, a team man calling the signals and the signals change with each day.

So we have themes such as “Christ for the Space Age” and “Making Christ Real in the Modern World.” What it amounts to is that Christ is simply a man for all seasons. He is removed from the throne of David to a mere hero’s pedestal. Youth are NOT asked to see Him as the Ancient of Days, but as the modern champion of the revolution. His law is not presented as so holy and final that one “jot” or “tittle” cannot be changed, but as a kind of guide line-flexible, of course. His ultimate coming in judgment as a consuming fire is kept a secret from the “now” generation: He is not held as the King Eternal, the Only Potentate, the Mighty God and Everlasting Father. Whoever heard of presenting Christ on the college campus in such terms!

Yet we know that these terms describe Him accurately, and if we are going to exalt Him we must know Him to be the One who fits this description.

Modern education labors under the evolutionist’s idea that all things change and that the old founts are no longer giving forth pure water. Hence preachers are presenting Christ in a new position, several steps down from the Throne on High, no longer at the Father’s right hand but somewhere between here and there, a little above sinners, but not too high, for we must not humble the proud creature by asking him to reach up for grace.

In seeking to make Christ easily accessible to the rebel generation men are robbing youth of the challenge of the true Christ in the only place He can be found, exalted to the right hand of God.

We have become too concerned with bringing Christ down to man, too willing to reduce Jesus to a social worker and too anxious to make the gospel a simple A-B-C exercise that can be grasped in one short lesson, in between the fun games.

Churches have become so fearful of losing numbers that they dare not hold forth a high and holy challenge. Since men will not look up to Christ, they lower the view, so they do not have to strain their flabby necks.

To the extent that we have failed to exalt Christ, we have encouraged unbelievers to think they may enter the Kingdom without Him. Jews and other unbelievers claim to believe in God, but refuse to confess Jesus as Christ and Lord. People speak of such unbelievers as god-fearing and credit them with godly virtue, putting their religion on a par with Christianity because the claim to believe in God. But Jesus stated that “No one cometh unto the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). He said “he that honors not the son honors not the Father which hath sent Him” (John 5:23). This is because Jesus is God in the flesh. Yet it is a common idea that one can believe in God and reject Jesus. Our state colleges and universities are filled with so-called “deists,” those who condescendingly give some credit to whatever God there may be, but see in Jesus only a great teacher. These are poisoning the minds of millions of youth with the false doctrine-that Jesus is Nor God and that He should not be exalted nor obeyed, that one can be acceptable to God without faith in Christ. These must be recognized for what they are, atheists and anti-Christ’s.

To think, as some Doctors in the halls of learning would have us think, that Jesus was the most perfect man and the example of God's highest creature, yet that He was dumb enough and evil enough to claim that He was sinless and divine, is to conceive of the most illogical monstrosity imaginable. Such imagination can stem only from an evil mind.

The world needs to recognize Jesus as the LORD upon His Throne before it can recognize any of the values of Christian faith. The church has echoed its own slogans in place of praising Christ, and has proclaimed its own worth instead of exalting Jesus, Who Himself said, "How can you believe, who receive glory one of another ... ?" (John 5:44). Let us preach Jesus and not ourselves. Let the church glory in Jesus the Lord and not in its leaders and material gains. Let our testimony be of the power and person of God in Christ and not about our own opinions, progress and personal problems.

Christ **IS** the mighty Prince. He **DOES** have all authority in heaven and on earth. He **IS** the **ONLY** Savior and King. He is the **ONLY ONE** who has immortality. He is the "one God, one mediator between God and man, himself man, Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). He is the head of the church and the head of every Christian. He is coming as Judge to destroy once and forever all who reject Him. He has already won the victory over sin and death, and thus gained that victory for each of His own, for the eternal praise of God and the fulfillment of His purpose.

"Wherefore also God highly exalted Him"

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