

## JESUS CHRIST IS EXALTED

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I Peter 3:15-22 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup> For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> After being made alive,<sup>[a]</sup> he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— <sup>20</sup> to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, <sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.<sup>[b]</sup> It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Dear friends in Christ,

I've heard it said that everyone gets 15 minutes of glory in his or her lifetime. Supposedly, for that brief quarter of an hour or so, we get put on a pedestal, so to speak, and praised for something we have done, or maybe for something rather fortunate or unusual that happened to us. So, have you had your 15 minutes of glory? Maybe it's still coming, huh? I suppose if we are the humble people we want to be it should not matter if we get our 15 minutes of glory in this world or not. As Christians we are more concerned with eternal glory in the world to come. And as Christians we are much more concerned about God's glory and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ than with our own.

St. Peter helps us to focus on Jesus' glory this morning. More precisely he helps us to focus on what we call Jesus' "exaltation." JESUS CHRIST IS EXALTED Peter tells us. He urges us to believe it, enjoy it and proclaim it.

### I

We confess Jesus is exalted every time we recite the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed. But just what is meant by Jesus' "exaltation"? Carson, Gavin and Jordan (Jim), one of the last lessons you had in class was about Jesus' exaltation.

To help us better understand Jesus' exaltation Peter first takes us to the lowest points of Jesus' humiliation. He says "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." Jesus humbled himself to the extent that he suffered the punishment for the sin of the world. He who had no sin became sin for us, suffered on the cross in our place and with his death fully paid the debt we owe God. Jesus satisfied God's justice and opened heaven for us. He only had to do this once, then was buried, so complete was his humiliation.

Since the debt was paid there was no reason for him to remain dead in the grave. Thus Peter says "He was . . . made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits

in prison, who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.”

This was the first step in Jesus’ exaltation, the first step up. In the Apostles’ Creed we sum up this truth in the words “He descended into hell.”

This was a step up for Jesus, part of his exaltation, because he did not descend to hell to suffer. That was completed on the cross. He descended to hell to proclaim his victory. All those people who scoffed at Noah’s message about the coming flood and rejected God’s forgiveness in the promised Savior, died in the flood and their souls went to hell. Jesus descended there briefly to proclaim his victory to them and to the devil. Hell could not hold him. He left immediately.

Then he came out of the grave alive, just as he said he would. He showed himself alive to his disciples for forty days. That, too, is part of his exaltation, a step up for Jesus. He is alive never to die again.

The next step in Jesus’ exaltation, Peter says, is that he “has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand- with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.” What glory! Jesus exercises his almighty power as God, as supreme Ruler over everything. You can’t get anymore exalted than that! Or can you?

There is one more step in Jesus’ exaltation. Peter does not mention it in our text, but Jesus himself taught it and we believe it. This is that “he will come again to judge the living and the dead.” The Judge of all, the one who declares who goes to heaven and who goes to hell- that’s Jesus. That’s how much JESUS CHRIST IS EXALTED.

## II

We believers find much joy in Jesus’ exaltation because it ultimately assures us that we will be exalted to heaven some day, too. It assures us we are saved from our sins and their eternal consequences. It is because of Jesus’ exaltation that we rejoice or find joy in our baptism.

Peter referred to our baptism in connection with Noah’s ark when he said, “In it (the ark), only a few people, eight in all were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also.” Those eight people in the ark did not have to fear that water. The water that destroyed the rest of mankind was the very water that saved those in the ark. Can we begin to imagine the joy of those people in the ark at that time?

We can and we do have that joy. We have it in our baptism with the water and the Word. In that simple act of baptism we were joined with Jesus who suffered the punishment for our sins on the cross, died there and was raised again. In that simple act of baptism we are guaranteed freedom from punishment in hell for our sins just as Noah and the others in the ark were guaranteed freedom from drowning in the flood when they walked into the ark. In baptism we get the benefit of Jesus’ descent to hell where he proclaimed his victory over Satan.

I’m sure there were anxious moments in the ark for Noah and his family. We have our anxieties in life, too. But just as the flood water kept them safe, the water of baptism keeps us safe.

Forget that 15 minutes of glory here on earth. We have an eternity of glory waiting for us in the world to come because JESUS IS EXALTED.

### III

We believe it. We enjoy it. There is one more thing Peter mentions in connection with Jesus' exaltation- we proclaim it. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have," Peter urges us.

The "hope that we have" of course, is to be in heaven with Jesus forever. Why do we "hope" to be there? It is because we are not there yet, but Jesus is. And Jesus has promised that we will be there with him someday. Through out our lifetimes we will have opportunity to tell people this.

Perhaps we will be at the bedside of someone seriously ill in the hospital. The person is afraid of dying and says so. "I'm not afraid to die," we tell the person. "Why not?" the person asks. "I know that I will go to be with Jesus, my Savior, in heaven when I die," we reply. "What makes you so sure," the person asks again. "Jesus paid for my sins, and yours, too, when he died on the cross. Three days later he rose from the dead and then ascended to heaven. He promises that all who believe in him will go to heaven, too. And that includes you," we tell the person.

A simple little conversation like that can take place under many different circumstances- on break at work, visiting with a school friend or neighbor, whatever. It probably won't count as your 15 minutes of glory on earth, but it will glorify Jesus Christ, and may well lead to eternal glory for the person with whom you have the conversation if that person comes to faith in Jesus. And of course, we always find joy in giving glory to Jesus in such ways.

Carson, Gavin and Jordan (Jim), the Rite of Confirmation you will undergo in just a little while also does not count as part of any 15 minutes of glory for you. Confirmation is not something you accomplish, some form of honor for you. In the Rite of Confirmation you will give glory to Jesus, you will exalt him as you promise that with his help you will remain faithful to him, even to the point of death, rather than turn away from him, from your exalted Lord and Savior. Amen.