

# Westminster Larger Catechism

## *Question 51*

Halifax, 31 August 2008

### **Q. 51 What was the estate of Christ's exaltation?**

**A. The estate of Christ's exaltation comprehendeth His resurrection, ascension, sitting at the hand of the Father, and His coming again to judge the world.**

#### **Introduction:**

As we approach this question tonight about Christ's exaltation, we would do well to go back to Question 42.

- **Q. 42: Why was our Mediator called Christ?**
  - **A. Our mediator was called Christ, because He was anointed** (remember, the word "Christ" as well as the word "Messiah" means "anointed one") **with the Holy Spirit above measure; and so set apart and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the office of prophet, priest, and king of His church, in the estate both of His humiliation and exaltation.**
  - You see that this question (Question 42) introduces Questions 43-56.
    - In fact, it provides an outline of these questions...
      - Q. 43 pertains to Christ as prophet
      - Q. 44 pertains to Christ as priest
      - Q. 45 pertains to Christ as king
      - Then Questions 46-50 speak of Christ's humiliation...with 46 being the general introductory question...
      - And Questions 51-56 speak of His exaltation...
        - with Q. 51 (which we are looking at today) being the general introduction to Questions 52-56.
  - For the past several weeks we have been looking at Christ's humiliation...
    - We have seen that He emptied Himself of His glory—not His essential glory, but His revealed glory.
      - Rather than appearing to us as inapproachable light and consuming fire,
        - which is how He would appear to us as sinners if His glory were to be fully revealed,
        - He came to us in a lowly form—even taking to Himself human flesh, a form in which He could be spit upon and at last crucified.

- It was a form in which He could bear the wrath and curse God for our sin—in which He could bear the shame for our sin.
- It is a most remarkable thing that the Son of God should do all this for sinners like us.
  - In Christ humbling Himself to the degree that He actually bore our iniquities before the Father, we see a love and grace so great that we will never fully comprehend it all.
  - He, who was very God of very God, God the Son,
    - was willing to become a representative of a vile, sinful, cursed people and bear for them everything that they deserved.
    - And the wonderful thing about it is, that even through we are so vile that we all deserved to spend an eternity in Hell,
      - even though we were that repulsive according to His just evaluation,
      - Yet, He willingly became our representative so that He might suffer our penalty.
      - What a humiliation!
        - The highest One becomes the lowest One, all because of love.
- When I introduced the topic of Christ’s humiliation to you a few weeks ago,
  - I read from Philippians 2:1-11 because it speaks about His humiliation—
    - about how He made Himself of no reputation for us.
  - But today, I am going to use this passage again.
    - I am going to use it again because it also speaks about Christ’s exaltation as our Mediator.
    - Listen now as I read to you from Philippians 2:1-11.
      - READ Phil 2:1-11

When we looked at His humiliation, I focused on verses 5-8.

- but this time we will focus on verses 9-11.
- You can see, first of all, that these verses show clearly that:

**I. Christ was exalted after His humiliation.**

A. In fact, it says that He was *highly* exalted and given the name which is above every name.

1. To be exalted is to the opposite of being humbled—

- It means “to be lifted up”
  - It speaks of a complete turn around
    - from the place of shame to the place of honour,
    - from the place of suffering to the place of comfort,
    - from the place of misery to the place of happiness.
2. To be given a name above every name means that He was given authority and honour...
- And for it be a name above every name means that it is a position above all others.
  - It is, to use the language of Matthew 28, to be given all authority in heaven and earth.
    - He is the one that everyone must answer to—there is no higher court of appeal.
    - He is at the top.
    - Daniel speaks about this in Daniel 7:14:
      - **Dan 7:14: Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.**

TRANS> So you see that Christ was exalted to highest place of all.

B. But notice when this took place...

- It was *after* His humiliation...
1. The word “**therefore**” at the beginning of verse 9 ties together His humiliation with His exaltation...
- He humbled Himself to the point of the cross—
    - **Therefore** God has highly exalted Him...
  - a. You need to understand that if He had remained in the form of God, it would have been impossible for Him to be exalted in the way that this verse speaks about...
    - If He had not humbled Himself and come to us in the form of a servant, and taken this lowly, shameful place at the cross
    - If He had remained in the form of God, it would be impossible to exalt Him because He would have already been as exalted as He could be.
      - God cannot be raised to a higher station or given a place of higher authority and honour than He has.
      - He is already at the very top.

- b. Now you will say,
    - “But doesn’t the scripture often call us to exalt God? Do the Psalms not often say that we ought to exalt Him?”
      - Yes, of course they do.
      - But it is a different kind of exaltation.
    - When you exalt God, you do not confer upon Him a higher place of authority or honour—
      - (which is the exaltation spoken of in verse 9)...
      - You rather come to more fully recognise the authority and honour and glory that He already has...
        - And you help others to recognise the authority and honour and glory that are already His.
        - You do not add anything to Him.
  - c. So then does this verse simply say that God exalted Him back to where He had been—
    - restored to Him the honour that He had laid aside when He humbled Himself?
    - Is the “**therefore**” in verse 9 simply saying that because He was in this lowly estate,
      - God restored the glory that He had laid aside when He came to earth and made Himself of no reputation?
2. No, there is something more here...
- a. You need to see that Christ is here exalted as Mediator.
    - He did not become our Mediator (except by promise) until He came into the world and was anointed to be the Christ...
      - to be the One who would serve as prophet, priest, and king for His people,
      - to be their Head, the one who represented them before the Father.
    - This office was officially conferred upon Him at His baptism when the Holy Spirit came upon Him to anoint Him...to anoint Him for His offices of prophet, priest and king...
      - It was after this that His public ministry began.
      - Of course,

- He set out to undertake this ministry when He was sent from heaven and was conceived in Mary's womb...
- but He did not officially take the office of Mediator and become the head of the church until He was baptised and anointed.

1) It was an amazing thing for Him to undertake this office.

- It meant that He had made Himself one with all the elect...
- It meant that all of the sins of His people had become His responsibility...
- It meant that He was the prophet of an ignorant people who would have to be taught by Him.
- It meant that He was the priest of sinful people who would have to be redeemed by His own sufferings.
- It meant that He was the king of a rebellious people who would have to be subdued and brought to complete obedience.
  - What a bunch to align Himself with!

TRANS> But now He was something that He had not been before.

- He was the mediator of a sinful people, His church.
- The Son of God had not been a mediator until He took this office.

2) And you see, it was because He took responsibility for the sins of the whole body that He humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross...

- It was the only way to deal with our sin...
  - He had to give Himself to pay the ransom for the whole body...
  - He prayed earnestly to the Father that if there was some other way, the cup of suffering the curse would pass from Him...
    - But there was no other way.
    - Everything depended on Christ.
    - And because it all depended on Him,
      - Away to the cross He went...
      - He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross where the Father's wrath fell upon Him for all of us.

b. And you see,

- it was because He humbled Himself like this that He was highly exalted and given the name that is above every name...

- 1) At His exaltation, He also became something that He was not before...
  - As mediator of His sinful church, He now became the redeemer of the church...
  - We was raised and exalted to be Lord and Christ.
  - He was given authority to bestow salvation upon all His people!
  
- 2) I want you to understand that before He suffered He did not have authority to do this and neither did the Father.
  - It was not possible for the Son or the Father to justify sinners apart from the humiliation of Jesus Christ to the depths of the suffering of the cross.
  - Until this was done, there was no basis upon which it could be said that sinners were pardoned and made righteous in God's sight...
    - I don't mean to say that the people in the Old Testament were not justified...
    - They were justified on the basis of the promise—on the basis of what Christ was going to do...
      - But if it had not been something that He was really going to do, they could not have been justified.
      - It was necessary that it actually be accomplished, and until it was accomplished, the debt had not been paid.
  - Hebrews 11:39-40 explains that even the finest of the Old Testament saints were dependent on what would happen in the day of Christ:
    - **Heb 11:39-40: And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**
    - They were waiting for Jesus to come even after they died.
    - They were waiting for Him to come and pay the penalty of sin.
    - I don't mean that they were suffering until He came,
      - but I do mean that they were not redeemed—their debt was not paid—until He actually came and paid it...
      - till He was humbled to the cross and then exalted.
  
- 3) Now you can see why the word 'therefore' opens verse 9:
  - After speaking about His humiliation, Paul says,

- “**Therefore** God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above every name.”
- It was because of what He had done to pay for our sin that He could now be exalted, not at the Son of God per se,
  - but as mediator.

## II. Let me now show you what His exaltation involves.

A. It involves a change in His status as one who did not have authority to save to one who does have authority to save.

1. The point is that this humiliation of His and this suffering of His really did have to be done...it was not optional.
2. This is why when Peter preaches in Acts 2,
  - he says that after Jesus was raised, He was **made** “Lord and Christ.”
  - And that is why in Matthew 28 when Jesus met with His disciples He was able to say,
    - “All authority in heaven and earth is given to me—Go and make disciples of all nations...”
    - He did not have this authority before.
      - It was given to Him because of His completion of the work of redemption.
3. He was not given the name above every name until after His humiliation.
  - Yes, He had been the Son of God, He had been the One who is Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge,
  - But He had not yet become our Mediator with authority to bestow salvation on His church.

TRANS> The change in the status of Jesus from one with no authority to save to one with full authority to save also brings a change to the church...

B. It involves a change in the status of the church...

1. From a church that was promised redemption to a church that has received redemption.
  - From a church that is promised a Saviour to a church that has been given a Saviour.
2. Before we were a people to be redeemed, but now we are a people who are redeemed.

- There is a huge change in our worship that results...
    - Before we worshipped in shadows that presented the promise,
      - but now we worship in spirit and truth...
    - The Old Covenant had Christ promised, but the New Covenant has Christ given.
- C. We should be very glad for the change in the status of Christ from humiliation to exaltation...
1. Glad for His sake...
    - a. What a terrible thing it would have been if He had come to bear our sin, and that sin had been so heavy upon Him that it kept Him down...
      - That He had been left upon the cross under the wrath and curse of God indefinitely!
      - What a terrible thing it would have been for our dear Redeemer...
    - b. But it could not be so—because He is the Son of God...
      - Because He is the Son of God, justice was fully satisfied in those three hours...
      - But don't you ever entertain that blasphemous thought that it was only a little thing for Him...
        - The reason He could satisfy for the sin and guilt of all His people in three hours was because it was such a horrific thing for Him...
          - For **Him**, who loved the Father so much better than we do, to bear His wrath and displeasure—
            - to endure His rejection as the chief of sinners—
            - to be cut off from the One He loves with a deeper love than we can ever know—
            - to be charged with our sin when He hates sin with such a perfect hatred...
        - It was, in all justice and righteousness, equivalent to all the redeemed in all the ages bearing God's curse forever and ever.
          - The fact that He was exalted shows that the Lord accepted His sacrifice.
          - As Isaiah 53:11 puts it,
            - **Isa 53:11: He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.**



TRANS> We should be glad for the sake of our dear Lord Jesus who did all this for us that He was not left to suffer forever, but was exalted out of His humiliation.

2. We should also be glad for our own sake...

- a. That fact that He was exalted means that God accepted His sacrifice as the satisfaction for our sins.
  - If He had been left to suffer, it would have meant that despite His suffering, there was still no satisfaction for our sins...
- b. So you see there is no need for you to go around bearing the burden of your sins!
  - There is no need to pay the penalty twice!
    - Jesus has paid it in full.
    - You dishonour Him if you go around as if you must pay it—as if you could pay it—as if His suffering was for naught!
  - No my dear brothers and sisters,
    - You honour Him when you are glad that all has been provided!
    - You honour Him when you are filled with joy and thanksgiving, not when you go about as though His work were insufficient and incomplete.

**III. And now that Christ has been given this name and this authority, it requires us all to bestow honour upon Him—not only as the Son of God, but now also as Jesus Christ the Lord.**

- The Son of God has always been Lord, but now Christ (the mediator) is Lord.
  - Not that they are two persons, but that one is the divine without humanity, and the other is the divine-human head of the church.
  - He was not our mediator until He was anointed, and He was not Lord and mediator until He was made Lord because of His sufferings.
    - This means that everyone must respond to Him—to Jesus—as Lord and mediator.

A. First, that Jesus Christ must be worshipped as Lord.

1. When it says “that every knee should bow”

- it means that everyone should worship Him and honour Him as Lord...
  - It’s talking about this one who is both God and man...
  - This one who hung the cross...
    - Everyone has to bow the knee to **Him!**

2. Believers do this most willingly!
  - a. When He opens your heart to believe and you realise what He has done to save His people,
    - You come gladly to bow before Him that you might have His blessing—all the benefits of His salvation.
    - You leave all to follow Him—you have found the Saviour!
  - b. And of course following Him means that you submit to His word...
    - It means that you lay aside your pride and self-sufficiency and acknowledge that you are undone by your sin apart from His saving work...
    - It means that you come to delight in His law and desire to walk as He walked—not in a subjective whatever you think Jesus would do...
      - but in accordance with the truth of the Word given to us in scripture.

TRANS> That is what those who willingly bow to Him as Lord will do...

3. All others will bow to Him at last...
  - Now they mock the cross...
    - They act as if they do not need His services!
    - They go on as if they do not need to be reconciled with God!
    - They act as though all that He did was a waste—a useless exercise.
  - But the day will come when they fall down before Him in terror—
    - When He comes again—not to die on the cross, not to be mocked and spit upon...
    - But to devour His adversaries with vengeance as a consuming fire!
      - Then they will fall before Him as Lord.

## B. Second, that Jesus Christ must be confessed as Lord.

1. It says that every tongue is to confess that He is Lord.
  - This was the standard confession of Christians that was begun in the early church.
    - Paul mentions it in Romans 10 as a necessary confession for Christians to make.
      - That we must believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord if we would be saved.

- We do not claim to have any authority to save ourselves, but we confess Him as the Lord who has been given authority to save through His work on the cross.
2. Those who do not confess Him now, will confess Him on the day of judgement.
    - What they refuse to admit now, they will have to admit then...
    - They are full of envy now—that they should have to come to a man in order to have salvation...
    - They want to think that they are good enough without Him, so they refuse to confess Him...
      - But when they see Him on His throne of judgement...
        - then they will confess that He is Lord with terror.

C. God the Father is glorified in all of this.

1. He is glorified because HE is the one who sent His Son to do all this...
  - He is glorified that He should be so gracious as to send Him
  - He is glorified that He accepted His offering for us—in our place
2. And He is glorified because His justice is satisfied...
  - By the church's embrace of Him as Lord
  - And by the wicked's final acknowledgement of Him as Lord.