



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The State of Exaltation

The difference between Jesus' state of humiliation and state of exaltation is not that Jesus began to be God or to possess divine attributes and powers in His exaltation. No, Jesus was God and possessed all of God's attributes in His state of humiliation. The difference is that in His state of exaltation Jesus began to use fully and continuously the divine attributes that He possessed already at His conception because of the union of human nature and divine nature in one Person.

Jesus' state of humiliation is in the past and it does not ever have to be repeated. Jesus' state of exaltation began shortly after His burial and continues to the present time. It will continue in the future even to eternity. **"Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God"** (Romans 6:9-10).

After telling the Christians in Philippi that Jesus humbled Himself even to the point of death on the cross, the apostle Paul spoke of Jesus' state of exaltation: **"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus' disciples recognized Jesus' body as the same body that had been nailed to the cross, but His body was now a glorious body, as Paul wrote: **"The Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself"** (Philippians 3:20-21). After He came to life again, Jesus appeared and disappeared at will; He went through locked doors on Easter evening. After He ascended into heaven, He appeared to Stephen and the apostles Paul and John in a glorious form. The apostle Peter also used the term "glory" to describe Jesus' state of exaltation: **"The Spirit of Christ (in the Old Testament prophets) testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow"** (1 Peter 1:11).

When Jesus' followers gathered around Him at the appointed mountain in Galilee, Jesus proclaimed His new glorious existence among them: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:18-20). When Jesus returns at the end of the age, He will not come in a humble form as in His first coming, for we read: **"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory"** (Matthew 25:31).

In His state of exaltation Jesus did not give up His human nature. He remains the God-man, with all divine powers and attributes at His disposal. Jesus' exaltation is presented in Scripture as a gift from God to His human nature. **"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession"** (Psalm 2:8). **"You have crowned Him with glory and honor. You have made Him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under His feet"** (Psalm 8:5-6). Peter said to the murderers of our Lord: **"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior"** (Acts 5:30-31). The apostle Paul wrote: **"He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at**

His 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 age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet” (Ephesians 1:20-22).

It is clear from Scripture that Jesus remains a true human being with a human nature in His state of exaltation. The incarnation remains in effect. The apostle Paul uses the same word “man” for both Adam and Jesus Christ in his grand comparison of the two: **“If by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many”** (Romans 5:15). Paul used the same comparison in his first letter to the Corinthians: **“The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven”** (1 Corinthians 15:47). **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”** (1 Timothy 2:5).

When Jesus’ body was in the tomb, He was made alive again. That is when His exaltation began and, according to Scripture, His exaltation will never end. The prophet Isaiah wrote of Him: **“He shall prolong His days”** (Isaiah 53:10). God told Daniel in a dream: **“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed”** (Daniel 7:14). The angel Gabriel informed Mary before Jesus’ conception: **“He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end”** (Luke 1:33). The letter to the Hebrews says of Christ: **“He continues forever”** (Hebrews 7:24). Jesus said to His apostle John on the island of Patmos: **“I am alive forevermore”** (Revelation 1:18).

In His state of exaltation Jesus is Lord over all persons, things, and places. In His state of humiliation **“Jesus was not yet glorified”** (John 7:39). That was obvious, because the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out on His followers. But on Pentecost Peter proclaimed that Jesus was indeed now glorified: **“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear... Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”** (Acts 2:32-33, 36). **“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Philippians 2:10-11).

Although Jesus is presently in a state of exaltation, Christ’s Church on earth has not yet been glorified. Although every believer in Jesus possesses all of Christ’s treasures by faith in Him, the state of Christ’s Church, as well as of every believer in Christ, is still a state of humiliation. We bear the cross of Christ and endure shame for Christ’s sake. Jesus and His apostles made this clear many times and in many ways. For example, Jesus said: **“Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”** (Luke 14:27). He warned: **“In the world you will have tribulation”** (John 16:33). The apostle Paul did not promise his converts an easy life but told them: **“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22).

But there is glory for every believer in Christ in the future. The glorious future that is promised to us makes it easier for us to bear the trials of this life: **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory”** (Colossians 3:1-4).

Questions

1. What is the difference between Jesus' state of humiliation and His state of exaltation?
2. What kind of body does Jesus have in His state of exaltation?
3. What is the difference between Jesus' first coming and His second coming?
4. What does God give to Jesus' human nature in His exaltation?
5. How do we know that Jesus' human nature continues even now?
6. When did Jesus' state of exaltation begin, and when will it end?
7. What did Peter proclaim to the murderers of Jesus on Pentecost?
8. What is the condition of Christ's Church on earth until He returns?
9. What did Jesus tell His disciples to comfort them in their trials?
10. What does Jesus want you to remember when you are persecuted?