UBF Message

04/21/2024

The Exalted Christ (Sit)

Acts 5:17-42

Key verse 31

“God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.”

I would like to begin my sermon with a question, “What is the most cited Old Testament text in the New Testament?

As we think about today’s passage, we will come to know which text and why it is the most quoted in the New Testament. A month ago we had the season of Lent and Easter, which ended with Jesus’ death and resurrection. Today’s passage is about Peter and the apostles who spoke to the Sanhedrin about the Exalted Christ who became Prince and Savior, sitting at the right hand of God. The message on the Exalted Christ is not popular and even neglected by Christians. We hear the message of Jesus who died and was raised from the dead for our sins every year. However, we hardly hear the message of Jesus who was exalted in heaven. In theology, being exalted to the right hand of God is called, “Session,” referring to Sitting at the right hand of God. The Gospel is the story of Jesus. But it should be the *full* story of Jesus: birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, Session and Second Coming (Picture).

So, we can summarize Jesus’ life with two words, “Passion and Session,” suffering as a man on earth and being glorious as God in heaven. We should see both sides of Jesus’ image since He is both a man and God. If we focus on learning only about his earthly life: birth, life, death and resurrection, we would miss the other half of the Gospel: ascension, Session and The Second coming. In fact, the author of Hebrews calls learning about his earthly life “milk,” while learning about his heavenly life “meat.”(Heb 5:11-14) We need to wean off milk and begin to eat meat. So today’s message is a little hard to chew and digest. I pray that God may give you spiritual enzymes to digest it through the Holy Spirit.

Last week Msn Joseph Han spoke about God’s judgment on the deceptive couple, Ananias and Sapphira. God removed their bad influence in the church. Then great fear seized the whole church. The apostles performed many miracles, healing the sick. In today’s passage, Peter and the apostles were brought to the Sanhedrin. There Peter told them about the Exalted Christ who became Prince and Savior by sitting at the right hand of God. Today, we will focus mainly on key verse 31, thinking about the meaning of the Exalted Christ and how the Exalted Christ impacts our lives now. I pray that God may open our eyes to see the Exalted Christ so that we may obey God and learn how to rule our life. My message has two parts: Peter’s Sermon (17-32) and Gamaliel’s Sermon (33-42)

1. Peter’s Sermon (17-32)

In the previous passage, the apostles performed many miracles and healed many people. Crowds gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and all of them were healed. Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the Sanhedrin, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out and said in verse 20. “Go, stand in the temple courts and tell the people all about this new life.” In the old NIV, it says, “Tell the people the *full message* of this new life.” Angels did not tell them to hide themselves but to go and tell the people about the full message of the Gospel. So,at daybreak they entered the temple courts and began to teach the people.

The apostles, however, were brought back to the Sanhedrin where the high priest said in verse 28. “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” The high priest threatened the apostles. ButPeter and the apostles were not afraid of them and boldly replied in verse 29b, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” They did not defend themselves but exalted Jesus. Peter said in verse 30, “The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead - whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.” Peter directly confronted them about their sins, saying, “*you* killed Jesus, but *God* raised him from the dead,” *you* rejected him, but *God* vindicated him.

Peter did not stop there but said further in verse 31, “God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.” How could Peter know that God exalted Jesus to his right hand as Prince and Savior? He must have been inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Previously Peter told this same message to the crowd on the Day of the Pentecost in 2:32-36, which says, “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A32-36&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26985a)] “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Being inspired by the Spirit of God, Peter quoted Ps 110:1, saying, “God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior.” The meaning of Ps 110:1 was enigmatic, not clear, at that time. So some Jewish scholars believed that when David said “my Lord” he was referring to himself, Abraham, or the messianic figure. But here Peter told the Sanhedrin that the Lord David referred to was *Jesus* and you killed him but God raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in heaven.

Answering the question at the beginning of the message, “What is the most cited Old Testament text in the New Testament?” “Ps 110:1.” “‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2%3A32-36&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26985a)] It is cited 20 times: Mt 19:28, 22:44, 25:31, 26:64, Mk 12:36, Lk 20:42, Acts 2:33, 34-35, 3:21, 5:31, 7:55, 1Cor 15:24-25, Eph 1:20, Col 3:1, Heb 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2, 1Pet 3:22. Whenever we recite the Apostles’ Creed every Sunday, we recite, “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” Every Sunday we acknowledge and declare the Exalted Christ. However, we are not familiar with Ps 110 despite the fact that it is the most cited in the NT. The most frequent citation implies that Ps 110 is the most important text in the NT.

Why is Ps 110 the most important OT text in the NT? Because it speaks about the Exalted Christ. Why is the Exalted Christ important in our life? How does the Exalted Christ impact our life at present? Matthew's Gospel describes the Exalted Christ four times (19:28, 22:44, 25:31, 26:64). Mat 19:28 states, “Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” When we read, “at the renewal of all things,” what comes to mind? It sounds like His second coming. However, when we read the original Greek text, It has a totally different meaning. It states, “In the regeneration when the Son of man sits in the glorious throne.” The word “regeneration” in Greek is *palingenesia*, which is a combined word from *palin*, “again,” and *genesis,* “birth.” This word is written only twice in the NT: here and Titus 3:5, which says, “**5** he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of *rebirth (palingenesia)* and renewal by the Holy Spirit,” Here, “rebirth” is *palingenesia*. So Mat 19:28 means not the second coming but after ascension when the Son of Man was exalted at the right hand of God.

Someone may raise the question, “What about, then, “you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones”? Did the disciples sit on twelve thrones? Yes. They spiritually sat there because Paul said in Eph 2:6, “And God raised *us* up with Christ and seated *us* with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” When Christ was exalted to the right hand of God, *we* were also raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms. Notice that It is a past tense, not future tense. It *happened* when Jesus rose from the dead, ascended, and sat down at the right hand of God in heaven. Paul calls new birth “new creation” (Gal 6:15, 2 Cor 5:17). New birth is a personal and local event. However, it is also a cosmic event. In other words, Jesus’ resurrection and ascension is a cosmic event. Through Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, God made a new creation by recreating spiritual humanity and set a new world order by elevating new humanity to the right hand of God. In a sense, God upgraded humanity through new creation, which is far better than the first creation in the beginning. Through union with Christ we sit with Christ in the right hand of God. As a result, we are placed with Christ far above all rule, authority, power, dominion and the dark force of evil in the world (Eph 1:20-21). In other words, although our bodies are here on earth, we, in spirit, sit with Christ at the right hand of God, ruling the spiritual world with Christ.

 So when we read the Book of Acts, we find that Mat 19:28 was being fulfilled. Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God and the disciples ruled the spiritual world by praying, preaching the Word, healing the sick, and casting out demons. That is why Peter repeatedly said the Exalted Christ in 2:33, 34-35, 3:21, 5:32, 7:55 (Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God). In this passage, Peter told the Sanhedrin that the exalted Christ is Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. Although the apostles were in Jerusalem, they sat at the right hand of God with Christ in spirit. That is why they ruled fear, being not intimidated by the Sanhedrin nor afraid of them. Rather, they were very bold, saying, “We must obey God rather than human beings.”

When Yahweh God said to Christ: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet,”’ how would God put enemies under Jesus’ feet since Jesus is in heaven? In addition, based on Acts 3:21a (NLT) which states, “**21** For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things,” how could all things be restored while Jesus remains in heaven? The answer is “through His church.” Since Jesus remains in heaven, we, the church, as His Body, are to restore all things and put the enemies under Jesus’ feet by the help of the Holy Spirit. When we restore all things through repentance and forgiveness by the help of the Spirit, Christ will come at the Second Coming. The reason that His Coming is delayed is that we are not doing our job. God has been waiting for us to restore all things by putting the enemies under Jesus’ feet for two thousand years.

Peter’ sermon began and ended with a word of obeying God. “We must obey God rather than human beings. So is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” How can we sit with Christ at the right hand of God? Fundamentally, this position is given to us by grace through new creation. But we cannot experience it unless we obey God. When we obey God, God gives us the Holy Spirit, through whom we sit with Christ in the heavenly realm, ruling over the spiritual world. One thing we can obey is to pray continually. When we pray, our spirits move to the heavenly realm and we sit with Christ at the right hand of God, although our bodies are here on earth. Usually we pray in a sitting position. So when we pray, we spiritually sit at the right hand of our Father God in heaven. I made a symbolic word for *sit*: S refers to Spirit, i refers to i, and t refers to cross. So when I *sit* in prayer, the Spirit is before me and the cross behind me.(Picture) When I sit in prayer, the Spirit goes before me and the cross is my backup. But this morning I realized that it would be better to say that “t” refers to the throne. When I *sit* in prayer, I sit on the *throne*. When I sit in prayer, I begin to rule over the spiritual world by asking God for help, declaring the blood of Jesus, and decreeing the Word of God. When we sit in prayer, we begin to rule, beginning with ruling our feelings. When we rule our feelings, we rule ourselves. When we rule ourselves, we rule our households. When we rule our households, we influence the community, the city, and the world.

The idea of ruling may be foreign to people. But it is God’s original idea from the beginning when God made Adam and Eve in His image. God commanded them to *rule* over the earth. The idea of ruling is a part of God’s image. We are supposed to rule over the spiritual world, like demons. But we cannot learn how to rule overnight. So, ruling begins with fighting. We must first learn how to fight. Then we must learn how to overcome and win. That is why Jesus repeatedly said to seven churches in Revelation 2-3 that he would reward those who overcome. Once we win, we begin to rule. In other words, we must first become soldiers before becoming a king. If we cannot overcome our sinful habits, we cannot rule ourselves. Many times we experience failure in overcoming our sinful habits and give up and fall into despair. But I assure you that if you are truly born of the Spirit, you are endowed with God’s DNA that you are destined to overcome and rule over the spiritual world, beginning with your personal sinful habit. I pray that God may bless you and me to continue to grow in the Word of God and the Spirit of God so that we may learn how to fight, overcome and finally rule over the spiritual world.

II. Gamaliel’s sermon (33-42)

When the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up and advised the Sanhedrin, sharing two similar incidents in the past, saying in verses 36-39, “Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing.After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” Gamaliel was wise and his speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

If the church were of human origin, as Gamaliel said, it would have perished like Theudas and Judas a long time ago. However, the church has been thriving not just in Israel but all the continents over the last two thousand years no matter how many times people try to remove it. This proves that the church is of God’s origin. If someone tries to get rid of church, he or she is fighting against God because God is the *One* who began the church. Today’s passage ends in verses 41-42, which say, “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.” They continued to teach the Gospel. And the church continued….

In conclusion, how does the Exalted Christ impact our life now? New birth is a new creation, in which God set a new world order. In that new order, we were elevated to the heavenly realm in spirit far above the dark force of evil because of the Exalted Christ. Christ will remain in heaven until we restore all things by the help of the Holy Spirit and put our enemies under Jesus’ feet. Then Christ will come at the Second Coming. So at present, we are to rule over the spiritual world with Christ, beginning with our sinful habit, by praying, teaching/decreeing the Word of God, and serving and healing people. All these things are possible when we obey God and pray.

Personally I would like to rule my life, beginning with my feelings. When I pray in the morning, sitting with Christ on the throne, I am able to rule my day, especially at my work place where so many patients need care, crying babies or kids with vaccine and blood test, answering many phone calls from patients and pharmacy, many questions from students, fixing many mistakes students made, and so on. I am not able to rule my work if I don’t sit with God in the morning. Sometimes, I lose my temper, not being able to rule, especially when parents keep demanding unnecessary medicines or kids cry too much with blood drawn, delaying time, while patients are waiting in a waiting room. So I pray that I may rule my day especially at my workplace by sitting with God in the morning so that I may bring healing to my patients and students.

The question I would like to ask you is “Do you rule your day? If not, why and how can you rule it?” I pray that God may help us rule our days by sitting with God in prayer in the morning so that we may bring healing and blessing to others.