

The Exaltation of Christ, With His Present State and Condition in Glory During the Continuance of His Mediatorial Office

by John Owen

The sermon explores the significance of Christ's assumption of glory, the purpose of his mediatorial office, and the nature of his union with God, highlighting the importance of faith in beholding Christ's glory.

Scripture: John 17:24, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 1:10, Ephesians 2:14-16, Philippians 3:21, 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:1, Revelation 5:9-10

Topics: "Exaltation of Christ", "Mediatorial Office"

Description

John Owen emphasizes the exaltation of Christ and His current state in glory as central to the Christian faith. He explains that Christ's ascension into heaven signifies His mediatorial office, where He reigns with sovereign power and continues to intercede for the church. Owen highlights that the glory of Christ's human nature is unique and distinct from that of the saints, as it is eternally united with the divine. The sermon underscores the importance of understanding Christ's present role in heaven, which is foundational for the church's hope and consolation. Ultimately, believers are called to behold and contemplate the glory of God as revealed in Christ, which is essential for their faith and spiritual growth.

Transcript

The apostle, describing the great mystery of godliness -- "God manifest in the flesh" -- by several degrees of ascent, he carrieth it within the veil, and leaves it there in glory -- 1 Tim. iii. 16; God was manifest in the flesh, and "received up into glory." This assumption of our Lord Jesus Christ into glory, or his glorious reception in heaven, with his state and condition therein, is a principal article of the faith of the church, -- the great foundation of its hope and consolation in this world. This, also, we must therefore consider in our meditations on the person of Christ, and the use of it in our religion.

That which I especially intend herein is his present state in heaven, in the discharge of his mediatorial office, before the consummation of all things. Hereon doth the glory of God, and the especial concernment of the church, at present depend. For, at the end of this dispensation, he shall give up the kingdom unto God, even the Father, or cease from the administration of his mediatorial office and power, as the apostle declares, 1 Cor. xv. 24-28, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till

he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All this are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

All things fell by sin into an enmity unto the glory of God and the salvation of the church. The removal of this enmity, and the destruction of all enemies, is the work that God committed unto his Son in his incarnation and mediation, Eph. i. 10. This he was variously to accomplish in the administration of all his offices. The enmity between God and us immediately, he removed by the blood of his cross, whereby he made peace, Eph. ii. 14-16; which peace he continues and preserves by his intercession, Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1. The enemies themselves of the church's eternal welfare -- namely, sin, death, the world, Satan, and hell -- he subdues by his power. In the gradual accomplishment of this work -- according as the church of the elect is brought forth in successive generations (in every one whereof the same work is to be performed) -- he is to continue unto the end and consummation of all things. Until then the whole church will not be saved, and therefore his work not be finished. He will not cease his work whilst there is one of his elect to be saved, or one enemy to be subdued. He shall not faint nor give over until he hath sent forth judgement unto victory.

For the discharge of this work he hath a sovereign power over all things in heaven and earth committed unto him. Herein he doth and must reign. And so absolutely is it vested in him, that upon the ceasing of the exercise of it, he himself is said to be made subject unto God. It is true that the Lord Christ, in his human nature, is always less than, or inferior unto, God, even the Father. In that sense he is in subjection unto him now in heaven. But yet he hath an actual exercise of divine power, wherein he is absolute and supreme. When this ceaseth, he shall be subject unto the Father in that nature, and only so. Wherefore, when this work is perfectly fulfilled and ended, then shall all the mediatory acting of Christ cease for evermore. For God will then have completely finished the whole design of his wisdom and grace in the constitution of his person and offices, and have raised up and finished the whole fabric of eternal glory. Then will God "be all in all". In his own immense nature and blessedness he shall not only be "all" essentially and causally, but "in all" also; he shall immediately be all in and unto us.

This state of things -- when God shall immediately "be all in all" -- we can have no just comprehension of in this life. Some refreshing notions of it may be framed in our minds, from these apprehensions of the divine perfections which reason can attain unto; and their suitableness to yield eternal rest, satisfaction, and blessedness, in that enjoyment of them whereof our nature is capable. Howbeit, of these things in particular the Scripture is silent; however, it testifies our eternal reward and blessedness to consist alone in the enjoyment of God.

But there is somewhat else proposed as the immediate object of the faith of the saints at present, as unto what they shall enjoy upon their departure out of this world. And Scripture revelations extend unto the state of things unto the end of the world, and no longer.

Wherefore heaven is now principally represented unto us as the place of the residence and glory of Jesus Christ in the administration of his office; and our blessedness to consist in a participation thereof, and communion with him therein. So he prays for all them who are given him of his Father, that they may be where he is, to behold his glory, John xvii. 24. It is not the essential glory of his divine person that he intends, which is absolutely the same with that of the Father; but it is a glory that is peculiarly his own, -- a glory which the Father hath given him, because he loved him: "My glory, which thou hast given me; for

thou lovedst me." Nor is it merely the glorified state of his human nature that he intendeth; as was before declared in the consideration of the 5th verse of this chapter, where he prayeth for this glory. However, this is not excluded; for unto all those that love him, it will be no small portion of their blessed refreshment, to behold that individual nature wherein he suffered for them, undergoing all sorts of reproaches, contempts, and miseries, now unchangeably stated in incomprehensible glory. But the glory which God gives unto Christ, in the phrase of the Scripture, principally is the glory of his exaltation in his mediatory office. It is the "all power" that is given him in heaven and earth; the "name" that he hath "above every name," as he sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high. In the beholding and contemplation hereof with holy joy and delight, consists no small part of that blessedness and glory which the saints above at present enjoy, and which all others of them shall so do who depart this life before the consummation of all things. And in the due consideration hereof consists a great part of the exercise of that faith which is "the evidence of things not seen," and which, by making them present unto us, supplies the room of sight. This is the ground whereon our hope doth anchor, -- namely, the things "within the veil," Heb. vi. 19, which directs us unto the temple administration of the mediatory office of Christ. And it is for the strengthening of our faith and hope in God, through him, that we do and that we ought to inquire into these things.

The consideration of the present state of Christ in heaven may be reduced unto three heads:--

I. The glorification of his human nature; what it hath in common with, and wherein it differs in kind from, the glory of all saints whatever.

II. His mediatory exaltation; or the especial glory of his person as mediator.

III. The exercise and discharge of his office in the state of things: which is what at present I shall principally inquire into. I shall not speak at all of the nature of glorified bodies, nor of anything that is common unto the human nature of Christ and the same nature in glorified saints; but only what is peculiar unto himself. And hereunto I shall premise one general observation.

All perfections whereof human nature is capable, abiding what it was in both the essential path of it, soul and body, do belong unto the Lord Christ in his glorified state. To ascribe unto it what is inconsistent with its essence, is not an assignation of glory unto its state and condition, but a destruction of its being. To affix unto the human nature divine properties, as ubiquity or immensity, is to deprive it of its own. The essence of his body is no more changed than that of his soul. It is a fundamental article of faith, that he is in the same body in heaven wherein he conversed here on earth; as well as the faculties of his rational soul are continued the same in him. This is that "holy thing" which was framed immediately by the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin. This is that "Holy One" which, when it was in the grave, saw no corruption. This is that "body" which was offered for us, wherein he bare our sins on the tree. To fancy any such change in or of this body, by its glorification, as that it should not continue essentially and substantially the same that it was is to overthrow the faith of the church in a principal article of it. We believe that the very same body wherein he suffered for us, without any alteration as unto its substance, essence, or integral parts, and not another body, of an ethereal, heavenly structure, wherein is nothing of flesh, blood, or bones, by which he so frequently testified the faithfulness of God in his incarnation, is still that temple wherein God dwells, and wherein he administers in the holy place not made with hands. The body which was pierced is that which all eyes shall see, and no other.

I. On this foundation I willingly allow all perfections in the glorified human nature of Christ, which are consistent with its real form and essence. I shall, therefore, only in some instances inquire into the present

glory of the human nature of Christ, wherein it differ either in kind or degree from the glory of all other saints whatever. For even among them I freely allow different degrees in glory; which the eternal order of things -- that is, the will of God, in the disposal of all things unto his own glory -- doth require.

1. There is that wherein the present glory of the human nature of Christ differeth, in kind and nature, from that which any other of the saints are partakers of, or shall be so after the resurrection. And this is, --

(1.) The eternal subsistence of that nature of his in the person of the Son of God. As this belongs unto its dignity and honour, so it doth also unto its inherent glory. This is, and shall be, eternally peculiar unto him, in distinction from, and exaltation above, the whole creation of God, angels and men. Those by whom this is denied, instead of the glorious name whereby God doth call him, -- "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God," &c., -- do call him "Ichabod," "Where is the glory?" or, there is none that is peculiar unto him. But the mystery hereof, according unto our measure, and in answer unto our design, we have already declared. And this glory he had, indeed, in this world, from the first instant of his incarnation, or conception in the womb. But, as unto the demonstration of it, "he emptied himself," and made himself of no reputation, under the form of a servant. But now the glory of it is illustriously displayed in the sight of all his holy ones. Some inquire, whether the saints in heaven do perfectly comprehend the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God? I do not well understand what is meant by "perfectly comprehend;" but this is certain, that what we have now by faith, we shall have there by sight. For as we live now by faith, so shall we there by sight. No finite creature can have an absolute comprehension of that which is infinite. We shall never search out the almighty to perfection, in any of his works of infinite wisdom. Wherefore this only I shall say, there is such a satisfactory evidence in heaven, not only of the truth, but also of the nature of this mystery, as that the glory of Christ therein is manifest, as an eternal object of divine adoration and honour. The enjoyment of heaven is usually called the beatifical vision; that is, such an intellectual present view, apprehension, and sight of God and his glory, especially as manifested in 240Christ, as will make us blessed unto eternity. Wherefore, in the contemplation of this mystery doth a great part of our blessedness consist; and farther our thoughts cannot attain. This is that wherein the glory of the human nature of Christ doth essentially excel, and differ from that of any other blessed creature whatever. And hereon other things do depend. For, --

(2.) Hence the union of the human nature of Christ unto God, and the communications of God unto it, are of another kind than those of the blessed saints. In these things -- namely, our union with God and his communications unto us -- do our blessedness and glory consist.

In this world, believers are united unto God by faith. It is by faith that they cleave unto him with purpose of heart. In heaven, it shall be by love. Ardent love, with delight, complacency, and joy, from a clear apprehension of God's infinite goodness and beauty, now made present unto us, now enjoyed by us, shall be the principle of our eternal adherence unto him, and union with him. His communications unto us here are by an external efficiency of power. He communicates of himself unto us, in the effects of his goodness, grace, and mercy, by the operations of his Spirit in us.

Of the same kind will all the communications of the divine nature be unto us, unto all eternity. It will be by what he worketh in us by his Spirit and power. There is no other way of the emanation of virtue from God unto any creature. But these things in Christ are of another nature. This union of his human nature unto God is immediate, in the person of the Son; ours is mediate, by the Son, as clothed with our nature. The way of the communications of the divine nature unto the human in his person is what we cannot comprehend; we have no notion of it, -- nothing whereby it may be illustrated.

There is nothing equal to it, nothing like it, in all the works of God. As it is a creature, it must subsist in eternal dependence on God; neither hath it anything but what it receives from him. For this belongs essentially unto the divine nature, to be the only independent, eternal spring and fountain of all being and goodness. Nor can Omnipotency itself exalt a creature into any such condition as that it should not always and in all things depend absolutely on the Divine Being.

But as unto the way of the communications between the divine and human nature, in the personal union, we know it not. But whether they be of life, power, light, or glory, they are of another kind than that whereby we do or shall receive all things. For all things are given unto us, are wrought in us, as was said, by an external efficiency of power. The glorious immediate emanations of virtue, from the divine unto the human nature of Christ, we understand not. Indeed, the acting of natures of different kinds, where both are finite, in the same person, one towards the other, is of a difficult apprehension.

Who knows how directive power and efficacy proceeds from the soul, and is communicated unto the body, unto every the least minute action, in every member of it, -- so as that there is no distance between the direction and the action, or the accomplishment of it? or how, on the other hand, the soul is affected with sorrow or trouble in the moment wherein the body feeleth pain, so as that no distinction can be made between the body's sufferings and the soul's sorrow? How much more is this mutual communication in the same person of diverse natures above our comprehension, where one of them is absolutely infinite! Somewhat will be spoken to it afterward. And herein doth this eternal glory differ from that of all other glorified creatures whatever. And, --

(3.) Hence the human nature of Christ, in his divine person and together with it, is the object of all divine adoration and worship, Rev. v. 13. All creatures whatever do forever ascribe "blessing, honour, glory, and power, unto the Lamb," in the same manner as unto him who sits on the throne. This we have declared before. But no other creature either is, or ever can be, exalted into such a condition of glory as to be the object of any divine worship, from the meanest creature which is capable of the performance of it. Those who ascribe divine or religious honour unto the saints or angels, as is done in the Church of Rome, do both rob Christ of the principal flower of his imperial crown, and sacrilegiously attempt to adorn others with it; -- which they abhor.

(4.) The glory that God designed to accomplish in and by him, is now made evident unto all the holy ones that are about the throne. The great design of the wisdom and grace of God, from eternity, was to declare and manifest all the holy, glorious properties of his nature, in and by Jesus Christ. And this is that wherein he will acquiesce, with which he is well pleased. When this is fully accomplished, he will use no other way or means for the manifestation of his glory. Herein is the end and blessedness of all.

Wherefore the principal work of faith, whilst we are in this world, is to behold this glory of God, as so represented unto us in Christ. In the exercise of faith therein is our conformity unto Him carried on unto perfection, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And unto this end, or that we may do so, he powerfully communicates unto our minds a saving, internal light; without which we can neither behold his glory nor give glory unto him. He "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," shines into our hearts, to give us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. The end, I say, why God communicates a spiritual, supernatural light unto the minds of believers, is that they may be able to discern the manifestation and revelation of his glory in Christ; which is hid from the world, Eph. i. 17-19; Col. ii. 2. Howbeit, whilst we are here, we see it but "darkly as in a glass," it is not evident unto us in its own lustre and beauty. Yea, the remainder of our darkness herein is the cause of all our weakness,

fears, and disconsolations. Want of a steady view of this glory of God, is that which exposeth us unto impressions from all our temptations. And the light of our minds therein is that whereby we are changed and transformed into the likeness of Christ.

But in heaven this is conspicuously and gloriously manifest unto all the blessed ones that are before the throne of God. They do not behold it by faith in various degrees of light, as we do here below. They have not apprehensions of some impressions of divine glory on the person of Christ and the human nature therein, with the work which he did perform; which is the utmost of our attainment. But they behold openly and plainly the whole glory of God, all the characters of it, illustriously manifesting themselves in him, in what he is, in what he hath done, in what he doth. Divine wisdom, grace, goodness, love, power, do all shine forth in him unto the contemplation of all his saints, in whom he is admired. And in the vision hereof consists no small part of our eternal blessedness. For what can be more satisfactory, more full of glory unto the souls of believers, than clearly to comprehend the mystery of the wisdom, grace, and love of God in Christ? This is that which the prophets, at a great distance, inquired diligently into, -- that which the angels bow down to look towards, -- that whose declaration is the life and glory of the Gospel. To behold in one view the reality, the substance of all that was typified and represented by the beautiful fabric of the Tabernacle, and Temple which succeeded in the room thereof, -- of all the utensils of them, and services performed in them, -- all that the promises of the Old Testament did contain, or the declarations of the New; -- as it is the most satisfactory, blessed, and glorious state, that by the present light of faith we can desire or long for, so it evidenceth a glory in Christ of another kind and nature than what any creature can be participant in. I shall therefore state it unto our consideration, with some few observations concerning it.

[1.] Every believer sees here in this life an excellency, a glory in the mystery of God in Christ. They do so in various degrees, unless it be in times of temptation, when any of them walk in darkness, and have no light. The view and prospect hereunto is far more clear, and accompanied with more evidence, in some than in others, according unto the various degrees of their faith and light. The spiritual sight of some is very weak, and their views of the glory of God in Christ are much obscured with inevidence, darkness, and instability. This in many is occasioned by the weakness of their natural ability, in more by spiritual sloth and negligence, -- in that they have not 243habitually "exercised their senses to discern good and evil," as the apostle speaks, Heb. v. 14. Some want instruction, and some have their minds corrupted by false opinions. Howbeit, all true believers have the "eyes of their understanding opened" to discern, in some measure, the glory of God, as represented to them in the Gospel. Unto others it is foolishness; or they think there is that darkness in it whereunto they cannot approach. But all the darkness is in themselves. This is the distinguishing property and character of saving faith -- it beholds the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; -- it makes us to discern the manifestation of the glory of God in Christ, as declared in the Gospel.

[2.] Our apprehension of this glory is the spring of all our obedience, consolation, and hope in this world. Faith discovering this manifestation of the glory of God in Christ, engageth the soul unto universal obedience, as finding therein abundant reason for it and encouragement unto it. Then is obedience truly evangelical, when it arises from this acting of faith, and is thereon accompanied with liberty and gratitude. And herein is laid all the foundation of our consolations for the present and hope for the future. For the whole security of our present and future condition depends on the acting of God towards us, according as he hath manifested himself in Christ.

[3.] From the exercise of faith herein doth divine love, love unto God, proceed; therein alone it is enlivened and inflamed. On these apprehensions doth a believing soul cry out, "How great is his goodness! how

great is his beauty!" God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, is the only object of divine love. Under that representation of him alone can the soul cleave unto him with ardent love, constant delight, and intense affections. All other notions of love unto God in sinners, as we are all, are empty fancies. Wherefore, --

[4.] All believers are, or should be, conversant in their minds about these things, with longings, expectations, and desires after nearer approaches unto them, and enjoyments of them. And if we are not so, we are earthly, carnal, and unspiritual; yea, the want of this frame -- the neglect of this duty -- is the sole cause why many professors are so carnal in their minds, and so worldly in their conversions. But this is the state of them who live in the due exercise of faith, -- this they pant and breathe after, -- namely, that they may be delivered from all darkness, unstable thoughts, and imperfect apprehensions of the glory of God in Christ. After these things do those who have received the "first fruits of the Spirit," groan within themselves. This glory they would behold "with open face;" not, as at present, "in a glass," but in its own beauty. What do we want? what would we be at? what do our souls desire? It is not that we might have a more full, clear, stable comprehension of the wisdom, love, grace, goodness, holiness, righteousness, and power of God, as declared and exalted in Christ unto our redemption and eternal salvation? To see the glory of God in Christ, to understand his love unto him and valuation of him, to comprehend his nearness unto God, -- all evidenced in his mediation, -- is that which he hath promised unto us, and which we are pressing after. See John xvii. 23, 24.

[5.] Heaven will satisfy all those desires and expectations. To have them fully satisfied, is heaven and eternal blessedness. This fills the souls of them who are already departed in the faith, with admiration, joy, and praises. See Rev. v. 9, 10. Herein is the glory of Christ absolutely of another kind and nature than that of any other creature whatever. And from hence it is that our glory shall principally consist in beholding his glory, because the whole glory of God is manifested in him.

And, by the way, we may see hence the vanity as well as the idolatry of them who would represent Christ in glory as the object of our adoration in pictures and images. They fashion wood or stone into the likeness of a man. They adorn it with colours and flourishes of art, to set it forth unto the senses and fancies of superstitious persons as having a resemblance of glory. And when they have done, "they lavish gold out of the bag," as the prophet speaks, in various sorts of supposed ornaments, -- such as are so only to the vainest sort of mankind, -- and so propose it as an image or resemblance of Christ in glory. But what is there in it that hath the least respect thereunto, -- the least likeness of it? nay, is it not the most effectual means that can be devised to divert the minds of men from true and real apprehensions of it? Doth it teach anything of the subsistence of the human nature of Christ in the person of the Son of God? nay, doth it not obliterate all thoughts of it! What is represented thereby of the union of it unto God, and the immediate communications of God unto it? Doth it declare the manifestation of all the glorious properties of the divine nature in him? One thing, indeed, they ascribe unto it that is proper unto Christ, -- namely, that it is to be adored and worshipped; whereby they add idolatry unto their folly. Persons who know not what it is to live by faith -- whose minds are never raised by spiritual, heavenly contemplations, who have no design in religion but to gratify their inward superstition by their outward senses -- may be pleased for a time, and ruined for ever, by these delusions. Those who have real faith in Christ, and love unto him, have a more glorious object for their exercise.

And we may hereby examine both our own notions of the state of glory and our preparations for it, and whether we are in any measure "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." More grounds of this trial will be afterward suggested; these laid down may not be passed by. Various are the thoughts of

men about the future state, -- the things which are not seen, which are eternal. Some rise no higher but unto hopes of escaping hell, or everlasting miseries, when they die. Yet the heathen had their Elysian fields, and Mohammed his sensual paradise. Others have apprehensions of I know not what glistening glory, that will please and satisfy them, they know not how, when they can be here no longer. But this state is quite of another nature, and the blessedness of it is spiritual and intellectual. Take an instance in one of the things before laid down. The glory of heaven consists in the full manifestation of divine wisdom, goodness, grace, holiness, -- of all the properties of the nature of God in Christ. In the clear perception and constant contemplation hereof consists no small part of eternal blessedness. What, then, are our present thoughts of these things? What joy, what satisfaction have we in the sight of them, which we have by faith through divine revelation? What is our desire to come unto the perfect comprehension of them? How do we like this heaven? What do we find in ourselves that will be eternally satisfied hereby? According as our desires are after them, such and no other are our desires of the true heaven, -- of the residence of blessedness and glory. Neither will God bring us unto heaven whether we will or no. If, through the ignorance and darkness of our minds, -- if, through the earthliness and sensuality of our affections, -- if, through a fulness of the world, and the occasions of it, -- if, by the love of life and our present enjoyments, we are strangers unto these things, we are not conversant about them, we long not after them, -- we are not in the way towards their enjoyment. The present satisfaction we receive in them by faith, is the best evidence we have of an indefeasible interest in them. How foolish is it to lose the first fruits of these things in our own souls, -- those entrances into blessedness which the contemplation of them through faith would open unto us, -- and hazard our everlasting enjoyment of them by an eager pursuit of an interest in perishing things here below! This, this is that which ruins the souls of most, and keeps the faith of many at so low an ebb, that it is hard to discover any genuine working of it.

2. The glory of the human nature of Christ differs from that of the saints after the resurrection, in things which concern the degrees of it. For, --

(1.) The glory of his body is the example and pattern of what they shall be conformed unto: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Phil. iii. 21. Our bodies were made vile by the entrance of sin; thence they became brothers to the worms, and sisters unto corruption. To death and the grave, with rottenness and corruption therein, they are designed. At the resurrection they shall be new-framed, fashioned, and moulded. Not only all the detriment and disadvantage they received by the entrance of sin shall be removed, but many additions of glorious qualifications, which they had not in their primitive, natural constitution, shall be added unto them. And this shall be done by the almighty power of Christ, -- that working or exercise of it whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. But of the state whereinto we shall be changed by the power of Christ, his own body is the pattern and example. A similitude of it is all that we shall attain unto. And that which is the idea and exemplar in any state, is the rule and standard unto all others. Such is the glory of Christ; -- ours consists in conformity thereunto; which gives him the pre-eminence.

(2.) As the state of his body is more glorious than ours shall be, so will that of his soul in itself be made appear to be more excellent than what we are capable of. For that fulness of the Spirit without measure and of all grace, which his nature was capacitated for by virtue of the hypostatical union, doth now shine forth in all excellency and glory. The grace that was in Christ in this world is the same with that which is in him now in heaven. The nature of it was not changed when he ceased to be viator, but is only brought into a more glorious exercise now he is comprehensor. And all his graces are now made manifest, the veil

being taken from them, and light communicated to discern them. As, in this world, he had unto the most neither form nor comeliness for which he should be desired, -- partly from the veil which was cast on his inward beauty from his outward condition, but principally from the darkness which was on their minds, whereby they were disenabled to discern the glory of spiritual things; (notwithstanding which, some then, in the light of faith, "beheld his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;") -- so now the veil is removed, and the darkness wholly taken away from the minds of the saints, he is in the glory of his grace altogether lovely and desirable. And although the grace which is in believers be of the same nature with that which is in Christ Jesus, and shall be changed into glory after the likeness of his; yet is it, and always shall be, incomprehensibly short of what dwells in him. And herein also doth his glory gradually [greatly?] excel that of all other creatures whatever.

But we must here draw a veil over what yet remains. For it doth not yet appear what we ourselves shall be; much less is it evident what are, and what will be, the glories of the Head above all the members, -- even then when we shall "be made like unto him." But it must be remembered, that whereas, at the entrance of this discourse, we so proposed the consideration of the present state of the Lord Christ in heaven, as that which should have an "end at the consummation of all things;" what hath been spoken concerning the glory of his human nature in itself, is not of that kind but what abideth unto eternity. All the things mentioned abide in him and unto him for evermore.

II. The second thing to be considered in the present state and condition of Christ is his mediatory exaltation. And two things with respect thereunto may be inquired into: 1. The way of his entrance into that state above; 2. The state itself, with the glory of it.

1. The way of his entrance into the exercise of his mediatory office in heaven is expressed, 1 Tim. iii. 16, He was "received up into glory," or rather gloriously; and he entered "into his glory," Luke xxiv. 26. This assumption and entrance into glory was upon his ascension, described Acts i. 9-11. "He was taken up into heaven," by an act of divine power; and he went into heaven, in his own choice and will, as that which he was exalted unto. And this ascension of Christ in his human nature into heaven is a fundamental article of the faith of the church. And it falls under a double consideration: (1.) As it was triumphant, as he was a King; (2.) As it was gracious, as he was a Priest. His ascension, as unto change of place, from earth to heaven, and as unto the outward manner of it, was one and the same, and at once accomplished; but as unto the end of it, which is the exercise of all his offices, it had various respects, various prefigurations, and is distinctly proposed unto us with reference unto them.

(1.) In his ascension, as it was triumphant, three things may be considered: 1st, The manner of it, with its representation of old; 2dly, The place whereinto he ascended; 3dly, The end of it, or what was the work which he had to do thereon.

[1.] As unto the manner of it, it was openly triumphant and glorious. So is it described, Eph. iv. 8, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." And respect is had unto the prefiguration of it at the giving of the law, Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18, where the glory of it is more fully expressed, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive," &c. The most glorious appearance of God upon the earth, under the Old Testament, was that on Mount Sinai, in the giving of the

law. And as his presence was there attended with all his glorious angels, so, when, upon the finishing of that work, he returned or ascended into heaven, it was in the way of a triumph with all that royal attendance. And this prefigured the ascent of Christ into heaven, upon his fulfilling of the law, all that 248 was required in it, or signified by it. He ascended triumphantly after he had given the law, as a figure of his triumphant ascent after he had fulfilled it. Having then "spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them," Col. ii. 15. So he led captivity captive; or all the adverse powers of the salvation of the church, in triumph at his chariot wheels. I deny not but that his leading "captivity captive" principally respects his spiritual conquest over Satan, and the destruction of his power; yet, whereas he is also said to "spoil principalities and powers, making a show of them openly," and triumphing over them, I no way doubt but Satan, the head of the apostasy, and the chief princes of darkness, were led openly, in sight of all the holy angels, as conquered captives, -- the "seed of the woman" having now bruised the "head of the serpent." This is that which is so emphatically expressed, Ps. xvii. throughout. The ground and cause of all the triumphant rejoicing of the church, therein declared, is, that God was "gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet," verse 5; which is nothing but the glorious ascent of Christ into heaven, said to be accompanied with shouts and the sound of a trumpet, the expressions of triumphant rejoicing, because of the glorious acclamations that were made thereon, by all the attendants of the throne of God.

[2.] The place whither he thus ascended is on high. "He ascended up on high," Eph. iv. 8, -- that is, heaven. He went "into heaven," Acts i. 11, -- and the "heaven must receive him," chap. iii. 21; not these aspectable heavens which we behold, -- for in his ascension "he passed through them," 7 Heb. iv. 14, and is made "higher than they," chap. vii. 26, -- but into the place of the residence of God in glory and majesty, chap. i. 3, viii. 1, xii. 2. There, on "the throne of God," Rev. iii. 21, -- "on the right hand of the Majesty on high," -- he sits down in the full possession and exercise of all power and authority. This is the palace of this King of saints and nations. There is his royal eternal throne, Heb. i. 8. And "many crowns" are on his head, Rev. xix. 12, -- or all dignity and honour. And he who, in a pretended imitation of him, wears a triple crown, hath upon his own head thereby, "the name of blasphemy," Rev. xiii. 1. There are before him his "sceptre of righteousness," his "rod of iron," -- all the regalia of his glorious kingdom. For by these emblems of power doth the Scripture represent unto us his sovereign, divine authority in the execution of his kingly office. Thus he ascended triumphantly, having conquered his enemies; thus he reigneth gloriously over all.

[3.] The end for which he thus triumphantly ascended into heaven, 249 is twofold: -- 1st, The overturning and destruction of all his enemies in all their remaining powers. He rules them "with a rod of iron," and in his due time will "dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel," Ps. ii. 9; for he must "reign until all his enemies are made his footstool," 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26; Ps. cx. 1. Although at present, for the most part, they despise his authority, yet they are all absolutely in his power, and shall fall under his eternal displeasure. 2dly, The preservation, continuation, and rule of his church, both as unto the internal state of the souls of them that believe, and the external order of the church in its worship and obedience, and its preservation under and from all oppositions and persecutions in this world. There is in each of these such a continual exercise of divine wisdom, power, and care, -- the effects of them are so great and marvellous, and the fruits of them so abundant unto the glory of God, -- that the world would "not contain the books that might be written" of them; but to handle them distinctly is not our present design.

(2.) His ascension may be considered as gracious, as the ascent of a High Priest. And herein the things before mentioned are of a distinct consideration.

[1.] As to the manner of it, and the design of it, he gives an account of them himself, John xx. 17. His design herein was not the taking on him the exercise of his power, kingdom, and glorious rule; but the acting with God on the behalf of his disciples. "I go," saith he, "to my Father, and to your Father; to my God, and to your God," -- not his God and Father with respect unto eternal generation, but as he was their God and Father also. And he was so, as he was their God and Father in the same covenant with himself; wherein he was to procure of God all good things for them.

Through the blood of this everlasting covenant -- namely, his own blood, whereby this covenant was established, and all the good things of it secured unto the church -- he was "brought again from the dead" that he might live ever to communicate them unto the church, Heb. xiii. 20, 21. With this design in his ascension, and the effects of it, did he often comfort and refresh the hearts of his disciples, when they were ready to faint on the apprehensions of his leaving of them here below, John xiv. 1, 2, xvi. 5-7.

And this was typified by the ascent of the high priest unto the temple of old. The temple was situated on a hill, high and steep, so as that there was no approach unto it but by stairs. Hence in their wars it was looked on as a most impregnable fortress. And the solemn ascent of the high priest into it on the day of expiation, had a resemblance of this ascent of Christ into heaven. For after he had offered the sacrifices in the outward court, and made atonement for sin, he entered into the most holy place, -- a type of heaven itself, as the apostle declares, Heb. ix. 24, -- of heaven, as it was the place whereinto our High Priest was to enter.

And it was a joyful ascent, though not triumphant. All the Psalms, from the 120th to the 134th inclusively, whose titles are [4298](#); [1460](#); [1497](#); [1512](#); [1461](#); [1497](#); [1492](#); [1463](#); [64318](#); [1463](#); [1469](#); [1506](#); [1456](#); [1500](#); [64331](#); [1514](#);, "Songs of Degrees," or rather ascents or risings -- being generally songs of praise and exhortations to have respect unto the sanctuary -- were sung to God at the resting-places of that ascent. Especially was this represented on the day of jubilee.

The proclamation of the jubilee was on the same day that the high priest entered into the holy place; and at the same time, -- namely, on the "tenth day of the seventh month," Lev. xvi. 29, xxv. 9. Then did the trumpet sound throughout the land, the whole church; and liberty was proclaimed unto all servants, captives, and such as had sold their possessions that they might return unto them again. This being a great type of the spiritual deliverance of the church, the noise of the trumpet was called "The joyful sound," Ps. lxxxix. 15, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

Those who are made partakers of spiritual deliverance, shall walk before God in a sense of his love and grace. This is the ascent of our High Priest into his sanctuary, when he proclaimed "the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isa. lxi. 2, 3.

For in this ascension of Christ, proclamation was made in the Gospel, of mercy, pardon, peace, joy, and everlasting refreshments, unto all that were distressed by sin, with a communication of righteousness unto them, to the eternal glory of God. Such was the entrance of our High Priest into heaven, with acclamations of joy and praise unto God.

[2.] The place whereinto he thus entered was the sanctuary above, the "tabernacle not made with hands," Heb. ix. 11. It was into heaven itself, not absolutely, but as it is the temple of God, as the throne of grace and mercy-seat are in it; which must farther be spoken unto immediately.

[3.] The end why the Lord Christ thus ascended, and thus entered into the holy place, was "to appear in the presence of God for us," and to "make intercession for all that come unto God by him," Heb. vii. 26, 27, ix. 24, 25.

He ascended triumphantly into heaven, as Solomon ascended into his glorious throne of judgement described 1 Kings x. 18-20. As David was the type of his conquest over all the enemies of his church, so was Solomon of his glorious reign. The types were multiplied because of their imperfection. Then came unto him the queen of Sheba, the type of the Gentile converts and the church; when
נְדִיבֵי
עַמִּים, the 251 "voluntaries of the people," (those made willing in the day of his power, Ps. cx. 3,) "gathered themselves to the people of the God of Abraham," and were taken in his covenant, Ps. xlvii. 9 -- margin. But he ascended graciously, as the high priest went into the holy place; not to rule all things gloriously with mighty power, not to use his sword and his sceptre -- but to appear as an high priest, in a garment down to the foot, and a golden girdle about his paps, Rev. i. 13, -- as in a tabernacle, or temple, before a throne of grace. His sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high adds to the glory of his priestly office, but belongs not unto the execution of it. So it was prophesied of him, that he should be "a priest upon his throne," Zech. vi. 13.

It may be added hereunto, that when he thus left this world and ascended into glory, the great promise he made unto his disciples -- as they were to be preachers of the Gospel, and in them unto all that should succeed them in that office -- was, that he would "send the Holy Spirit unto them," to teach and guide them, to lead them into all truth, -- to declare unto them the mysteries of the will, grace, and love of God, for the use of the whole church. This he promised to do, and did, in the discharge of his prophetic office. And although his giving "gifts unto men" was an act of his kingly power, yet it was for the end of his prophetic office.

From what hath been spoken, it is evident that the Lord Christ "ascended into heaven," or was received up into glory, with this design, -- namely, to exercise his office of mediation in the behalf of the church, until the end should be. As this was his grace, that when he was rich, for our sakes he became poor; so when he was made rich again for his own sake, he lays forth all the riches of his glory and power on our behalf.

2. The glory of the state and condition whereinto Christ thus entered is the next thing to be considered; for he is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And as his ascension, with the ends of it, were twofold, or of a double consideration, so was his glory that ensued thereon. For his present mediatory state consists either in the glory of his power and authority, or, in the glory of his love and grace, -- his glory as a King, or his glory as a Priest. For the first of these, or his royal glory, in sovereign power and authority over the whole creation of God, -- all in heaven and earth, persons and things, angels and men, good and bad, alive and dead, -- all things spiritual and eternal, grace, gifts, and glory; -- his right and power, or ability to dispose of all things according unto his will and pleasure, I have so fully and distinctly declared it, in my exposition on Heb. i. 3, as that I shall not here again insist upon it. His present glory, in the way of love and grace, -- his glory as a Priest, -- will be manifested in what doth ensue.

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