

'The Exaltation of Christ. Bangalore Bible Class. 8 September 2013.

My reading for this morning comes from the very familiar passage in Philippians chapter 2 ... breaking in at verse 5.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation ('made Himself of no account made Himself nothing'), taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

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 shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This morning, with my eye on the repeated word 'every' in verses 9 to 11 of our reading, I want to look with you at three things which, in response to the self-humbling and self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, God has either already bestowed on Him or has decreed will be His in the future. For God has already given Him a name which is above every name, and has decreed that one day every – but every – knee will bow to Him, and that every tongue will confess His (Jesus') universal lordship.

But before we consider these matters in any depth, we first need to get our bearings.

Speaking for myself, I find it helpful to view our Lord's great example of self-denial – which occupies from verse 6 to 11 – under *five headings*.

First, that of *His status and nature as God before He became a man* – which occupies most of verse 6.

Second, that of *His breathtaking descent from His throne and outward display of glory and majesty associated with dwelling on equality with God to the manger at Bethlehem* – which occupies the remainder of verse 6 and all of verse 7.

As the apostle expressed it, the Lord Jesus 'made Himself of no reputation ('made Himself nothing')'. I contrast this with the repeated charges brought against Him by the Jews in the Gospel of John:

First in chapter 5, 'Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His own Father, making Himself equal with God'.¹

Then at the close of chapter 8, 'Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do you make yourself?'²

Then in chapter 10, 'The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God".³

And finally in chapter 19, 'The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God".⁴

But, contrary to their claims, He didn't 'make Himself' the Son of God ... neither did He 'make Himself' equal with God ... nor did He 'make Himself' God. Far from it. The truth was not that He, being a man, made Himself God, but that He, being God, was made man. In doing this, Paul says, He 'made Himself of no reputation' ... He 'made Himself nothing'.

My third heading is that of *His self-humbling when a man, taking Him down to death on a cross* – which occupies verse 8 ... when, as one modern paraphrase⁵ renders it, 'He walked the path of obedience *all the way* to death' ... and not merely death, for it was, the apostle makes clear, *in the manner* of His death – namely, death *on a cross* – that our Lord's humiliation reached rock bottom.

The ancients considered death by crucifixion to be not just any execution, but the most obscene and horrific form of execution known to man.⁶

It was reckoned the 'most cruel and hideous form of punishment' (to quote Cicero, a Roman statesman of the first century BC⁷), and 'the most wretched of deaths' (to quote Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived shortly after our Lord was here and who witnessed many crucifixions). One famous Roman lawyer listed crucifixion in first

place as the worst of all capital punishments, placing it ahead of death by burning, death by beheading, or death by the wild beasts.⁸

The death my Saviour died was indeed, as one of the so-called Church Fathers described it, 'the utterly vile death of the cross'.⁹

And I note that this method of execution was almost exclusively reserved for rebels, military foes, violent criminals, robbers, and slaves.¹⁰ 'For slaves' please note.

As just one example of this, Appian, a Roman historian of the second century, told how, after the slave rebellion led by Spartacus was crushed, the Roman general Crassus had six thousand of the slave prisoners crucified along a stretch of the main road leading into Rome.¹¹

But 'death on a cross' was very often the chosen means of execution for slaves. In fact, slaves were so routinely crucified that crucifixion became known as the 'slaves' punishment'.¹²

And so it was that the One who, in His incarnation, assumed the 'form' (the nature) of a bondservant (*a slave*) to God (having come down from heaven to do His (God's) will¹³) ... He then stooped so low when in the world as to suffer the death reserved, among others, for *a slave to man*. And all for me!

My fourth heading is *that which, in response, God has already done for Him* – which occupies verse 9.

And my fifth, and last, heading is *that which God has decreed shall be done for Him by all others in the future* – which occupies verses 10-11.

Whenever I read the section down to verse 8, I want to exclaim with Philip Bliss, 'Hallelujah! What a Saviour!'

Just to think that He cared less for His heavenly glory and splendour – less for Himself and His own things – than He did for me! Say that again, Malcolm, ... the Lord Jesus cared less for His heavenly glory and splendour – less for Himself and His own things – than He did for me!

Back in December 1979, one Lady Cooper, then 86 years old, attended a gala concert at the Royal Festival Hall to honour the 100th birthday of the musical benefactor Sir Robert Mayer. Sir Robert had been one of the founders of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and going by his autobiography published that year, had a rather lively sense of humour – he gave it the title '*My First 100 Years*'.¹⁴ Sir Robert went on to live for another 5½!

But, back to Lady Cooper. Her sight wasn't good and she had great difficulty recognizing faces - including, on occasions, it was said, even that of her own son. During an interval in the concert, she found herself chatting with "an extremely pleasant lady" who seemed vaguely familiar, but Lady Cooper's failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest. After struggling through some general conversation, Lady Diana noticed that her fellow guest was wearing magnificent diamonds and suddenly realized she was talking to the Queen. 'I sank into a curtsy', she later recalled, 'and said, 'I'm terribly sorry, Ma'am, but I didn't recognise you without your crown'.¹⁵

And when my Lord was in the world He wore no crown.¹⁶ And He wasn't 'recognised' as who He was.¹⁷ Had He been, no doubt – as the apostle Paul once wrote of the religious and political 'rulers of this age' – 'they would not have crucified the Lord of glory!'¹⁸

'Even death on a cross!' 'What a Saviour!' indeed.

But when I come to verse 9, I note the change in the principal Actor – this role no longer being filled by the Lord Jesus, but by God the Father – who takes the initiative from then on. So, although, according to verse 6, *the Lord Jesus* 'made *Himself* of no reputation (of no account)', and, according to verse 8, 'He humbled *Himself*', according to verse 9, it is *God* who exalted *Him* – who raised *Him* high – the word 'Him' being emphatic.¹⁹

Because the Lord Jesus descended to *the lowest depth*, God exalted Him to *the loftiest height* – unrivalled now in glory as once in suffering.

For, according to your New Testament, following His resurrection and ascension, He has not only – as we noted earlier – passed through the heavens,²⁰ He has been made higher than the heavens,²¹ having ascended far above all heavens.²²

For God not only 'exalted' Him, but '*highly* exalted' Him! He 'supremely exalted' Him. ... He '*hyper*-exalted' Him, if you want to transliterate the first part of the actual word Paul used²³ – and that to the very highest pinnacle of all.

And I note that the word translated 'highly exalted' here is used in the Greek Old Testament of Psalm 37 verse 35; 'I saw', says David, 'the ungodly *highly exalting himself*'.²⁴ And the apostle Paul himself uses a synonym in 2

Thessalonians 2 verse 4 to describe 'the man of sin ... the son of perdition, who ... *exalts himself above* all that is called God or that is worshipped'.²⁵ The contrast is striking. Both the ungodly man and the man of sin *highly exalt themselves*. The Lord Jesus *didn't* highly exalt *Himself* – God did it for Him!

If we are happy, as many are, to see in 'Lucifer, son of the morning' of Isaiah 14, not only the personification of the pride of the kings of Babylon, but an allusion to Satan himself, we might note that verse 13 of that chapter speaks of the ambition of Lucifer ('the morning star' – 'the bright – the radiant – one') as three-fold: 'You have said in your heart, I will *ascend* into heaven, I will *exalt* my throne above the stars of God: I will also *sit* upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north'.

'I will ascend ... I will exalt ... I will sit!' It would be difficult not to link that 'morning star's' threefold aspiration with what Paul says concerning the Lord Jesus – our 'bright and morning star' according to Revelation 22 verse 16 – in his (Paul's) main so-called 'Prison Epistles'; namely Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. For it is as if each of these epistles takes up one of Lucifer's assertions.

Over against Lucifer's 'I will *ascend*', stands what we have already seen the Ephesian letter says of our Lord in chapter 4, 'He that descended is the same also that *ascended up far above all heavens*, that He might fill all things'.²⁶

Over against Lucifer's 'I will *exalt*', stands what this, the Philippian letter, says of our Lord here in chapter 2, 'God also has *highly exalted* Him'.²⁷

To the one who announced, 'I will exalt my throne', God announced, 'you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit'.²⁸ Are we not reminded of our Saviour's own words in Matthew 23, with His eye on the scribes and Pharisees, 'whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted'?²⁹ And we remember that these last words were spoken by the One of whom Paul now writes that, 'being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself ... Therefore God also has highly exalted Him'.

And then, thirdly, over against Lucifer's 'I will ... *sit*', stands what the Colossian letter says of our Lord in the opening verse of chapter 3, '... seek those things which are above, where Christ is, *sitting at the right hand of God*'.³⁰

As we know well, in the ancient world, for someone to sit at another's right hand was to occupy the position of the very highest honour and eminence.³¹ I note that, when the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described the seating arrangements in the camp of Israel's King Saul, he recorded that 'there sat by him (King Saul) *his son* Jonathan *at his right hand*, and Abner, the captain of his host, at his other hand'.³²

And scripture itself tells us that, when 'Bathsheba went into King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah ... the king rose up to meet her, bowed himself to her, sat down on his throne, and caused a seat ('a throne', literally) to be set for the king's mother; and she sat *at his right hand*'.³³

Again, the Roman historian Suetonius informs us that when Tiridates, king of Armenia, visited Emperor Nero³⁴ at around the time when Paul probably wrote his letters to Philippi and Colosse, the Emperor gave Tiridates a seat *at his right hand* in the theatre as a token of respect and honour.³⁵

But we rejoice with the saints at Colosse to know that our Lord Jesus is *not* seated at the right hand, either of any *monarch* in Israel or *monster* in Rome – for monster Nero certainly was. No, indeed – for, as the writer to the Hebrews would express it, He is seated 'at the right hand of the throne of the *Majesty* (of 'the Greatness') in the heavens'.³⁶

Note please, then, Lucifer, that our Lord hasn't only 'ascended', but has '*ascended up far above all heavens*'! ... He isn't only 'exalted', but is '*highly exalted*'! ... and He isn't just seated, but is seated '*at the right hand of God*'!

We can hardly miss what I mentioned earlier – namely, the three occurrences of the word 'every' in verses 9 to 11 – one mention in each verse.

First, we read of '*the name which is above every name*'.

Speaking personally, this reminds me of *the days of the men of Babel* in Genesis 11, men who aspired to make themselves a name. 'Go to', they said, '*let us* build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and *let us make us a name*, lest we be scattered ...'.³⁷ Not a good idea, gentlemen!

For then we read, 'the Lord said (doubtless in mocking repetition of the builders' rallying cry)... *Go to, let us* go down, and there confound their language ... So *the Lord scattered them* ... and they left off to build the city. Therefore is *the name* of it called Babel' – a word which, although probably meaning 'Gate of God' (or, 'of the gods') in the language of Babylonia, in Hebrew signifies 'confusion'.³⁸ How fitting, the Holy Spirit is saying, was the name

they gave to the city, for in the language of Old Testament revelation it means 'confusion'. *Some name* they made for themselves!

But, Paul makes clear, the name of Jesus is *above all* others!³⁹

But what *is* the name which God is said here to have given to the Saviour?

Well, there is *something* to be said for 'the name' referring to our Lord's earthly, human name of 'Jesus'. That, after all, is the name which is picked up in the next phrase, 'at (or, as it should be, 'in') ... 'in the name of Jesus'. If 'Jesus' *is* the name, Paul clearly doesn't mean that it is only at His exaltation He has been given that name – for that had been His personal name from before His incarnation – the angel Gabriel had brought it for Him from heaven. Paul would have to be saying, I guess, that, in highly exalting the Saviour, God has enriched and invested the name 'Jesus' with an added and special significance.

But we should note that verse 10 reads, not 'in *the name Jesus*', but 'in the name of Jesus'. That is, 'in the name which belongs to Jesus' – without tying us down to 'Jesus' being that name. I suggest that, in the context, it is far more likely that Paul is referring to the word 'Lord' – and I have in mind particularly the confession of verse 11 – 'that Jesus Christ is Lord'.

In other words, in response to our Saviour '*taking*' the form of a '*bond-servant*', God '*gave*' Him the contrasting name of '*Lord*'.⁴⁰ Which fits well with Peter's message on the day of Pentecost, in which, having spoken of the One who had '*been exalted* to the right hand of God', Peter says that '*God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*'.⁴¹

'Exalted to the right hand of God' were Peter's words. And I note from Paul that, if, according to verse 9 of our passage, in renown, our Lord's *name* is '*above every name*', according to verse 21 of Ephesians 1, in rank and dignity, His present *position* at God's 'own right hand' is '*far above ... every name* that is named'.

Second, in verse 10 we read, 'every knee shall bow'. And, if 'the name which is above every name' reminds me of the days of the men of Babel, this reminds me of ***the days of the prophet Elijah***, when, in effect, Jezebel's decree was that every knee should bow to Ba'al – Jezebel, now Queen of the northern kingdom of Israel by marriage, being by birth a Phoenician princess – the daughter of Ethba'al (IttoBa'al the First) – a particularly nasty piece of work – who, according to Flavius Josephus, was not only king of Tyre and Sidon,⁴² having gained the throne by murder,⁴³ but was also a priest of Asherah, the principal goddess of Tyre and Sidon. And Jezebel certainly had a great deal of her father's blood in her.

We read in 1 Kings 19 that, when Elijah fled to the cave in Horeb, in response to his (Elijah's) repeated 'I' ('I have been very zealous for the Lord ... I, even I only, am left – all said twice⁴⁴), the Lord declared His 'I ... 'Yet I have left in Israel seven thousand, all whose knees have not bowed to Ba'al'.⁴⁵

'No, Elijah', the Lord was saying, 'you are *not* the only one "*left*"; there are 7,000 "*left*" – "*left*" by me and for me – all of whom have steadfastly refused to bow their knees to Ba'al'.

In Elijah's days, God's resistance movement stood firm; they would *not* bow! But, Paul assures us, God has decreed that *all will* bow to the lordship of Jesus!

There were those, who, 'in the days of His flesh', willingly bowed the knee to our Lord – such as the man at the foot of the Mount of the Transfiguration in Matthew 17 – 'when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son'⁴⁶ ... such as the leper of Mark 1 – 'a leper came to him beseeching him, and, kneeling down to Him, said, If you will, you can make me clean'⁴⁷ ... and such as the rich young ruler of Mark 10 – 'when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and, kneeling down to Him, asked Him, Good Teacher, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?'.⁴⁸ But the Father's sworn decree is that one day *every knee shall bow*.

And I note that the 'Lord' to whom all in heaven, on earth and under the earth⁴⁹ are to bow, has, according to verse 6, Himself been 'in heaven' ... has, according to verse 7 and the first half of verse 8, Himself lived 'on earth' ... and has, according to the latter part of verse 8, Himself visited, albeit briefly, the domain of the dead. That is, He (the Lord Jesus) is personally familiar with all three realms over which He will one day hold universal sway.

And, third, again in verse 10, we read, 'every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord'.

And if 'the name which is above every name' reminds me of the days of the men of Babel, and if the statement that 'every knee shall bow' reminds me of the days of the prophet Elijah, this reminds me of ***the days of the Roman Emperor Domitian*** at the close of the first century, at the time when the Book of the Revelation was likely written. Domitian happily claimed divine honours for himself during his lifetime, and, during his reign it was state policy that

all residents of the Empire were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Emperor, declaring 'Caesar is Lord', along with burning a pinch of incense to an image of the Emperor.⁵⁰

Although the Roman state regarded both oath and incense only as a display of political allegiance, the early Christians interpreted it (and rightly so) as idolatry – and so refused to conform – for which they paid dearly – often with their very lives. But, given their Christian commitment, these courageous men and women could not – and would not – confess that Caesar was 'Lord'.⁵¹

But, Paul insists, there will be no exceptions in that day. Then *every – but every* – tongue will confess that Jesus Christ – and that no-one but Jesus Christ – is Lord.

Back in Acts 25, the Roman Governor Porcius Festus had spoken of the then Emperor (Nero) as 'the lord' ... addressing King Agrippa, Festus said, 'when I found that he (Paul) had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus (to the Emperor, that is), I decided to send him. But I have nothing certain to write to *the*⁵² *lord* concerning him'.⁵³

But to Paul it was *not* the Emperor in and of Rome, whether Nero – before whom one day he would stand on trial for his life – or any other – Domitian or whoever – who was the only true and universal 'Lord'. It was 'Jesus Christ' And Paul knew that the day was – and it still is – to come when, not only he and his readers – for the most part Roman citizens – but high and mighty 'Lord Caesar' himself – will join all others in bowing before and in acknowledging the absolute lordship of the very One who was once crucified on the authority of a Roman prefect.⁵⁴

In summary then, Paul would have us know that God has *highly exalted* the One who *humbled Himself* ... that God has *given the name which is above every name* to the One who made Himself of no account, *who made Himself of no reputation* ... and that God has decreed that He is one day to be *universally acknowledged as 'Lord'* who voluntarily became a *'bond-servant'*!

Well then do we sometimes sing Miss Thompson's moving hymn⁵⁵ :

Every mark of dark dishonour
Heaped upon Thy thorn-crowned brow,
All the depths of Thy heart's sorrow
Told in answering glory now.

Footnotes

¹ John 5. 18.

² John 8. 53.

³ John 10. 33.

⁴ John 19. 7.

⁵ The Good News Bible.

⁶ 'For Paul to boast in the cross and be determined to preach no other message than Jesus Christ and him crucified was extraordinary, a mystery of foolishness to the Greeks and a cause of deep offence to the Jews. How could his disciples proclaim Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah? He had not merely died; he had been completely humiliated at the hands of the Gentiles. The true Messiah should have followed David's success against Goliath and vanquished the Romans, not be thoroughly dishonoured, mocked and dismissed by them'. Terry Virgo ...

<http://blog.terryvirgo.org/?cat=47>

⁷ *Verrem* 2:5.168.

⁸ The Roman jurist Julius Paulus.

⁹ 'Mors turpissima crucis', Origen.

¹⁰ See the excellent article on crucifixion ... <http://www.orldutheran.com/html/crucify.html>. For Appian, see ...

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appian>.

The Spartacus quote from Appian is, 'The battle was long and bloody, as might have been expected with so many thousands of desperate men. Spartacus was wounded in the thigh with a spear and sank upon his knee, holding his shield in front of him and contending in this way against his assailants until he and the great mass of those with him were surrounded and slain. The Roman loss was about 1000. The body of Spartacus was not found. A large number of his men fled from the battle-field to the mountains and Crassus followed them thither. They divided themselves in four parts, and continued to fight until they all perished except 6000, who were captured and crucified along the whole road from Capua to Rome'.

Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived shortly after our Lord was here, told that, as an example of crucifying rebellious foreigners, Josephus records that when the Romans were besieging Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the Roman general Titus, at one point, crucified five hundred or more Jews a day. In fact, so many Jews were crucified outside of the walls that 'there was not enough room for the crosses and not enough crosses for the bodies' (*Wars of the Jews* 5:11.1).

¹¹ The Spartacus quote from Appian is, 'The battle was long and bloody, as might have been expected with so many thousands of desperate men. Spartacus was wounded in the thigh with a spear and sank upon his knee, holding his shield in front of him and contending in this way against his assailants until he and the great mass of those with him were surrounded and slain. The Roman loss was about 1000. The body of Spartacus was not found. A large number of his men fled from the battle-field to the mountains and Crassus followed them thither. They divided themselves in four parts, and continued to fight until they all perished except 6000, who were captured and crucified along the whole road from Capua to Rome'. ('The Civil Wars', Book 1, Paragraph 120.)

¹² '*Servile supplicium*', Valerius Maximus 2:7.12.

¹³ John 6. 38; Heb. 10. 5.

¹⁴ <http://www.paperbackswap.com/First-Hundred-Years-Sir-Robert-Mayer/book/0905715098/>

¹⁵ Source: Nigel Ryan, *Daily Telegraph*, June 21, 1986. (Lady Cooper died on 16 June 1986, so presumably this was her obituary.) See <http://www.anecdotage.com/index.php?aid=13242>.

¹⁶ Until men gave Him one of thorns!

¹⁷ John 1. 10.

¹⁸ 1 Cor. 2. 8.

¹⁹ By its position. He has passed through the heavens, Heb. 4. 14; been made higher than the heavens, Heb. 7. 26; has ascended far above all heavens, Ephesians 4. 10; and entered into heaven itself, Heb. 9. 24.

²⁰ Heb. 4. 14.

²¹ Heb. 7. 26.

²² Eph. 4. 10.

²³ 'Highly exalted' is not comparative but superlative.

²⁴ See too its use in 'Thou art Lord most high over all the earth; thou art *greatly* (*highly*) *exalted* above all gods' (i.e. God has not 'been' highly exalted), 97. 9, and in 'Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and *highly exalt* and glorify the King of heaven', Dan 4. 34. Note also Isaiah's use of the word 'exalted': 'the Lord alone shall be *exalted* in that day', Isa. 2. 11, 17, and 'Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, He shall be *exalted* and extolled, and be very high', 52. 13. (Compare also Isa. 30. 18; 33. 5, 10.)

²⁵ 2 Thess. 2. 4.

²⁶ Eph. 4. 10.

²⁷ Phil. 2. 9.

²⁸ Isa. 14. 15.

²⁹ Matt. 23. 12.

³⁰ Col. 3. 1. 'The right hand' is the place of great honour and dignity. Kings and other great personages would place those they wished to honour at their right hand – as in the case of Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, who, when she came with a petition to him, he caused to sit on a seat on his right hand, 1 Kings 2. 19.

³¹ The ancient world made a careful distinction of the relative value of being at a person's right or left hand. See, for instance, Joseph's reaction when his father Jacob crossed his hands and placed his left hand on the head of Joseph's firstborn, Gen. 48. 13-19. Similarly, we note that, in our Lord's account of the coming judgement of the nations, where the goats (the 'cursed') are set at the left hand of the Son of man and the sheep (the 'blessed') are set at His right hand, Matt. 25. 31-46. Note further the words of Psalm 45. 9, addressed to the King, 'upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir', and of Psalm 80. 17, 'Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself'.

³² *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VI, Chapter XI, Section 9. Cf. 1 Sam. 20. 25.

³³ 1 Kings 2. 19.

³⁴ A.D. 62.

³⁵ 'Tiridates ... was king of Armenia, whom Nero induced by great promises to come to Rome ... The king was taken to the theatre and ... Nero gave him a seat at his right hand', Suetonius: *De Vita Caesarum*, section XIII. See Edward Champlin, *'Nero'*, page 75.

³⁶ Heb. 8. 1.

³⁷ Gen. 11. 4.

³⁸ Gen. 11. 6-9. 'Although the name Babel means in Babylonian 'Gate of god', here it has a pejorative connotation.

We must not assume the verse to mean that the city was actually given a name—especially a derisive one—on the basis of Hebrew etymology. Its intention is to say mockingly: How befitting for her is this name, which in our tongue is a designation signifying confusion!', U. Cassuto.

³⁹ It is not only that 'there's *no greater* name than Jesus' – as if another name might be *as great* – but that His is greater than any other name.

⁴⁰ In favour of this interpretation, 'Lord' was certainly the name or title most commonly used of Jesus by the early church – being used of Him about 250 times in the epistles of Paul alone. Some may question whether it is really accurate to speak of 'Lord' as a 'name', rather than as a title. I think the answer must be 'yes'. For I note that Hebrews 1. 4 says of our Lord that He is 'so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent *name* than they' – and the very next verse makes it clear that the 'name' is that of 'Son'; 'For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my *Son*, this day have I begotten thee?', v. 5. That is, the word 'name' is used to describe that which we might regard as a title rather than as a proper name.⁴⁰ I see no reason to regard the word 'Lord' any differently. In one sense, of course, as the one 'in the form of God', the Saviour had always been 'Lord'. There can be no doubt that in the New Testament the word 'Lord' is often used as the Greek counterpart of God's personal Hebrew name 'Jehovah'. And that 'name' had always been the Saviour's. But, though the Son had always shared, of course, in the nature of God, this name of Lord was given to Him – subsequent to His incarnation and humiliation – in His exaltation – that is, it was bestowed on Him – officially – who was, and is now, 'the man Christ Jesus', 1 Tim. 2. 5. At the end of John 6, Jesus spoke to His disciples in terms of them seeing 'the Son of man ascend up where he was before', v. 62. But we must remember that He returned to heaven as something more than when He left it – for He took back with Him to the Father and to heaven His glorified manhood! As one of the so-called Church Fathers, Ruffinus,⁴⁰ wrote, 'Christ ascended into the heavens *not* where the Word of God had *not been before*, ... *but where the Word made flesh had not sat before*'. And for God to 'give' the equivalent of the name 'Jehovah' to Him is enormously significant – for, of that name, God Himself said in Isaiah 42. 8, 'I am the Lord (*Jehovah*): that is *my name*: and my glory *will I not give to another*, neither my praise to graven images', and Asaph wrote in Psalm 83. 18, 'that men may know that thou, whose name *alone* is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth'. And just as 'Jehovah' is the name which outranks all others in the Old Testament, so here 'Lord' is the name which outranks all others in the New Testament – it towers 'above every name' – and it belongs to Jesus Christ!

⁴¹ Acts 2. 33, 36. 'Through the Resurrection, He becomes manifest Lord', Sydney Cave, *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, page 44. 'Lord' is 'used in the New Testament for a title of Christ, who as man has the place of Lordship over all things', J. N. Darby on page xxiii of the Revised Preface to the Second Edition of his New Translation.

⁴² Antiquities, VIII, XIII, 1.

⁴³ Against Apion, I, 18.

⁴⁴ 1 Kings 19. 10, 14.

⁴⁵ 1 Kings 19. 18; cf. Rom. 11. 4.

⁴⁶ Matt. 17. 14-15.

⁴⁷ Mark 1. 40.

⁴⁸ Mark 10. 17.

⁴⁹ 'Of heavenly beings, and earthly beings, and beings under the earth' – which I take to encompass 'all rational and intelligent beings', as does the similar language of Revelation 5, where John says, not only that 'no one *in* heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the scroll', Rev. 5. 3, but that 'every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth' helps swell the great tide of praise which surges outward from the throne, Rev. 5. 13.

⁵⁰ "Emperor worship had begun as spontaneous demonstration of gratitude to Rome; but toward the end of the first century, in the days of Domitian, the final step was taken and Caesar worship became compulsory. Once a year the Roman citizen must burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar; and having done so, he was given a certificate to guarantee that he had performed his religious duty ... All that the Christians had to do was to burn that pinch of incense, say, 'Caesar is Lord,' receive their certificate, and go away and worship as they pleased.

But that is precisely what the Christians would not do. They would give no man the name of Lord; that name they would keep for Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. They would not even formally conform." (William Barclay) Domitian reigned from September AD 81 to September AD 96. Suetonius (AD 75-ca. 140), in his Lives of the Caesars, wrote: "With no less arrogance he began as follows in issuing a circular letter in the name of his procurators, 'Our Master and our God bids that this be done'" [Dominus et deus noster hoc fieri iubet] (Rolfe; 1992: 367). See Gordon Franz ... <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/01/18/The-King-and-I-The-Apostle-John-and-Emperor-Domitian-Part-1.aspx>. 'When he dictated the form of a letter to be used by his procurators, he began it thus: "Our Lord and God commands so and so;" whence it became a rule that no one should style him otherwise either in writing or speaking', Suetonius, Lives of the Twelve Caesars, Titus Flavius Domitianus (Domitian), section XIII. 'Domitian, who demanded worship while he was alive. In the eastern part of the Empire, worshipping the image of the emperor in his temple could be a test of loyalty to the state', IVP Background.

⁵¹ 'Within North Korea, those perceived disloyal include anyone who worships someone other than Kim Jong-un. Nettleton explains, "It's treason. It undermines the very legitimacy of the North Korean government. That's why Christians are persecuted so severely ... believers must hide their decision to follow Christ. Being caught with a Bible is grounds for execution or a life-long political prison sentence". 2014. <http://www.mnnonline.org/news/real-story-north-korea/>

⁵² Literally – not 'my lord'.

⁵³ Acts 25. 25-26. This is backed up by the detailed evidence set out by Adolf Deissmann in his 'Light from the Ancient East', pages 353-354.

⁵⁴ Not 'procurator'; see Paul L. Maier, 'Pontius Pilate', note to chapter 7 on page 358.

⁵⁵ Commencing, 'Gazing on the Lord in glory'.