

## A study of Jesus Christ

Our study continues with the degrees of glorification of Christ. The second degree is his ascension into heaven, which we will look at today.

The question that we want to pursue today is, 'what do we understand by the words, "He ascended into heaven."'

The short answer is, that Christ, while his disciples watched, was lifted up from the earth to heaven and will be in heaven for our good until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.

There are three elements that are very important in this answer.

First, there is the fact that He ascended into heaven.

Second, He will be in heaven, not separated from us, but be there for our good.

And, finally, He will return to judge the living and the dead.

Firstly, He did actually ascend into heaven.

Luk 24:50, 51 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup>While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

Act 1:9 - 11 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Second, He will be in heaven for our good.

Rom 8:34 ... Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Eph 4:8 - 10 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." <sup>9</sup>(Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the

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earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

Heb 7:23 - 25 The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, <sup>24</sup>but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. <sup>25</sup>Therefore, He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Heb 9:24 ... Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Finally, He will return to judge the living and the dead.

Act 1:11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

The ascension of Christ into heaven is a visible, local and real transfer of his body and soul from earth into heaven, which is above all visible heavens at the right hand of God, in that light which is inaccessible, where He now is, and remains, and from which He will come to judgment.

In this, as with the resurrection of Christ, there are two things which mainly claim our attention, namely, its history and fruits.

In speaking of the history of the ascension of Christ, the following things are to be considered:

- a) Who ascended? The very same Person that suffered, and rose again.
- b) According to what did He ascend? According to his human nature.
- c) Where did He ascend to? Up into heaven, above these visible heavens.
- d) By what help, or means? By the specific power of His Godhead.

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- e) For what purpose did He ascend? That he might be our Head and High-Priest in heaven.
- f) How did He ascend? Visibly, and while his disciples were watching him, by a true, and local elevation or gradual ascent of His body from earth into heaven.
- g) When did He ascend? The fortieth day after His resurrection.
- h) From what place did He ascend? From Bethany, at the Mount of Olives.

By Christ's ascension we now have someone who has impeccable credentials to appear before the Father from where He pleads our cause in heaven in the presence of His Father.

Rom 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

1Jn 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

We also now have our own flesh in heaven – a guarantee that Christ our head will take us, His members, to Himself in heaven.

Joh 14:2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

Joh 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Eph 2:4 - 6 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

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Christ's ascension caused his Spirit to be sent to us to comfort and help us and serve as a further guarantee, a pledge.

2Co 1:21, 22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, <sup>22</sup>who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Joh 14:16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

2Co 5:5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

By the Spirit's power we make the things above where Christ is at the right hand of the Father, the goal of our lives, not earthly things.

Col 3:1 - 4 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

The following seven points illustrate the benefit of Christ's ascension.

1. His intercession with the Father on our behalf. This embraces, as we have already shown, the perpetual force and virtue of the sacrifice of Christ; the divine and human will of Christ which is favorable to us, by which He desires that we may be received by the Father for the sake of his sacrifice, and the consent of the Father, falling in with the will of His Son, and approving of His satisfaction as a sufficient atonement for our sins.

In short, it is the will of the Father and the Son that the sacrifice of Christ may forever avail on our behalf.

Even if the price was paid before the ascension of Christ, his intercession is still a benefit of His ascension. It depended upon that which would be made after His ascension, that is, it was made with reference to that intercession which was yet to

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come, just as it was with everything that pertained to the reception of the fathers, into the favor of God from the beginning of the world.

The intercession which was made before the ascension of Christ was not same as that which is now made. The Mediator, under the Old Testament, made intercession with reference to the value of His sacrifice yet to be accomplished, and the Father received the saints of old into favor, by the virtue of that sacrifice which was yet to be offered. Now he receives us for the sake of the satisfaction which Christ has already made.

In the church of old sins were remitted, and the Holy Spirit was given on account of a future sacrifice, but now, in view of this sacrifice already offered. The value of the one sacrifice of Christ has infinite value and continues forever, because **"Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."** (Heb 10:14).

The fact that Christ no longer offers sacrifices is proof of His perfect character, for if He were to frequently offer sacrifices after the manner of the Levitical priests, this would be evidence that He could not make those perfect who would come to God by one sacrifice.

He now performs his priestly office, not by offering sacrifices frequently, nor by meriting favors for us in the same way, but by applying unto us, through the perpetual and infinite worth and dignity of His one sacrifice, grace, righteousness, and the Holy Spirit, which is certainly something vastly greater, than if He would repeat His sacrifice.

2. Our glorification results from Christ's ascension into heaven, for if He who is our Head has ascended, we also, who are his members, shall certainly ascend, especially if He promised it: **"I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."** (John 14:2, 3)

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Other saints ascended into heaven before Christ, but they ascended on the strength and virtue of Christ, and not by themselves. The ascension and glorification of Christ are not only the type but also the cause of our ascension and glorification, for had He not been glorified, we could not be glorified. The Father has decreed to give us all things through the Messiah, and has placed all things in his hands.

The ascension of Elijah and Enoch was through the work and virtue of Christ, in the future.

3. The third fruit of the ascension of Christ is the mission of the Holy Ghost, by whom he gathers, comforts, and defends His church, even to the end of the world. The Holy Ghost was indeed given also under the law, before the advent and ascension of Christ, but, as has been remarked, it was in respect to His ascension and glorification, which were then still in the future, and was not only a fruit of it, but also a part of it.

And again, since the glorification of Christ, the Holy Ghost has been given more copiously, as on the day of Pentecost, which had been foretold by the prophet Joel "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." (Joel 2:28, 29)

It is by the efficacy and influence of this Spirit that we seek those things which are above, because it is there that our treasure is, and there our goods, and that because Christ has ascended for the purpose of making those good things ours, which were there long before.

Col 3:1 - 12 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

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When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

4. The ascension of Christ is a proof that remission of sins is fully guaranteed to all those that believe, in as much as He could not have sat down upon the throne of God, if He had not endured the punishment which our sins required. Where sin is, there is death also, and where Christ is now, there is no death, so sin must have been removed. "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; In regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;" (John 16:8 – 10)
5. It is a proof that Christ is indeed conqueror of death, sin and the devil

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6. It is an evidence that we shall never be left destitute of comfort, because it was one great object of Christ's ascension, that He might send the Holy Ghost.
7. It is an assurance that Christ will forever defend us, since we know that He is our ever glorious Head, and is exalted above all principalities and powers.

What then, are we to understand by this confession, "I believe in Jesus Christ, who ascended into heaven?" It means, I believe that He did truly and not merely in show, ascend into heaven, and is now there, and will be called upon at the right hand of God, until He shall come from there to judge the world. I believe that He has ascended for my sake and your sake, and now appears in the presence of God, makes intercession for us, sends us the Holy Spirit, and will at length take us to himself, so that we may be with Him where He is, and reign with Him in glory.