

CHRISTOLOGY

VI. Christ in Ascension

I. The Ascension

A. The Scripture

1. His departure from earth (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11; Mark 16:19; John 6:62; 14:2,12; 16:5,10,17, 20; 17:5; 20:17; Eph. 1:20; 4:8-10).
2. His arrival in heaven (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:13-18; Acts 7:55-56; 9:3-5; 22:6-8; 26:13-15; Phil. 2:9-11).

B. The Nature of the Ascension: The ascension of Christ was a visible, gradual and bodily ascent of the God-man from earth to heaven, a transition from the earthly residence to the heavenly residence, from one place to another place, not merely a transfer into a different condition.

C. The Importance of the Ascension

1. It is essential to the gospel: The Cross is the fulfillment of the redemptive purpose, the resurrection the vindication of it and the ascension goes beyond space and time to the eternal manifestation of it.

“Our thought of redemption must not stop short at the Cross, that is, at its historical moment; nor even at Resurrection, that is, its historical vindication. To do that is to tie Christ to a particular period of history and to rob the Gospel of its validity for each and every age, and as such is a sad departure from the primitive teaching. Not a dead Christ, nor even a risen Christ, but only an ascended, glorified, supra-historical Christ can be the fount of an adequate gospel.” (R.S. Dean, The Ascension, p. 10)

2. It is essential to Spiritual Experience: The ascension is the dividing line between the Jesus of history and the Christ of spiritual experience. In the Ascension the tremendous gulf between “then” and “now” is bridged, and there lies open to the eye of faith the full glory of the life of Christ with God.

The spiritual significance of the Ascension is no less important, for it introduces us to the Christ with whom we have to do. It is imperative to remember that it is not the Jesus of history but the ascended and glorified Christ, not now tied to a particular historical period, who is the contemporary of our own and every age.” (R.S. Dean, The Ascension, p. 4).

Therefore Paul could say that we do not know Christ after the flesh any longer (2 Cor. 5:16), and our fellowship is not with a memory of Christ or some kind of “hero worship”, for Christ has ascended and we are to “seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1).

D. The Time of the Ascension: The ascension recorded historically in Scripture (Acts 1:9-11) was 40 days following the resurrection, and closed the period of continuous post-resurrection ministry upon the earth.

E. The Significance of the Ascension:

1. It was the counterpart to His descent to the earth at the incarnation, and it was the next step, following the resurrection, in His exaltation; it was accompanied by

- Christ's resumption of His preincarnate glory (John 17:5). Thus, the central significance of the ascension lies not so much in the departure from the earth as in His arrival in heaven.
2. It demonstrated that His sacrifice was a sacrifice to God which had to be presented to Him in the inner sanctuary (Heb. 9:23-24).
 3. It denotes the Father's acceptance of the Son's work upon earth in admitting Him to the heavenly glory.
 4. It marks the entrance of resurrected humanity into heaven. Christ is in heaven as our Forerunner (Heb. 6:19-20; Rev. 3:20-21) guaranteeing the future ascension of believers, as well as securing their present position in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6).
 5. It enabled Christ to send the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter during the present age (John 16:17).
 6. It inaugurated the present-age ministries of Christ, including His preparing a place for believers (John 14:2-3), His functioning as our Great High Priest (Heb. 9:24; 4:14) and heavenly Advocate (1 John 2:1), and the Bestower of spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:8-13).
 7. It enabled Him to baptize believers into His Body, the Church (John 1:33; 1 Cor. 12:13).
 8. It related the pattern for and accompanies the promise of His Second Advent (Acts 1:9-11).
 9. It was associated with the Great Commission for the present age (Matt. 28:18, 20; Acts 1:8) including the promise of His continued presence, which has been fulfilled in His spiritual presence everywhere (as to His divine nature), and also His representative presence in the Holy Spirit. (This section had been quoted from Duane Lindsey, "An Outline Of Christology", P. 32).

II. The Present Ministry of Christ

- A. Christ's death was final, complete and finished forever (Heb. 7:27). He then sat down on the right hand of God through ascension (Heb. 1:3), to give eternal and present meaning to His death and resurrection. The phrase "sat down" means assured triumph and the repose that follows it, but it does not mean inactivity. Through the use of the present tense in certain verses, it is understood that Christ has a present ministry in heaven (cf. Col. 3:1; Heb. 7:24-25).
- B. Christ's present ministry in Heaven is all directly or indirectly related to His mediatorship and is revealed under seven figures.
 1. Last Adam and New Creation (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 5:17). The meaning is that the Last Adam gives life to sinners and makes them a new creation.
 2. Head and Body of Christ (Col. 1:18, 24). The meaning is direction (Eph. 1:22-23), submission (1 Cor. 11:3), nurture of the body (Eph. 5:29; Col. 2:19), cleansing of the body (Eph. 5:25-27) and the giving of spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:11-16).
 3. Shepherd and Sheep (John 10). The meaning is leading and caring of Christ for His own.
 4. Vine and Branches (John 15:1-6). The meaning is fruitbearing.
 5. Chief Cornerstone and Stones of the Building (1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-8). The meaning is life and security.
 6. High Priest and Royal Priesthood (Heb. 4:14; 1 Pet. 8:5-9). The meaning is that Christ is the perfect sacrifice for sin, can sympathize with Christians in testings, and intercedes for them. Intercession has to do with preventing the Christian from sinning (Rom. 8:34) and advocacy deals with the problem of sin in the believer's life after the sin is committed.
 7. Bridegroom and Bride (Eph. 5:25-27). The meaning is union and preparedness of the Lord's return.