

Christ's Twofold Estate

Lesson 18: The Ascension, Jn 20.17

Doctrine: *Christ not only rose from the dead but also ascended into heaven, to dispatch all that remained to be done for the completion of the salvation of His people.*

I. The **Place** of Christ's Ascension

A. Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives, Acts 1.9-12.

1. This was the very place where He began His final sorrowful tragedy. The place of sadness was now a place of gladness. He who, in His flesh, feared the cup of divine wrath, was now, in the flesh, victorious over it.

II. The **Time** of Christ's Ascension

A. It was 40 days after His resurrection, Acts 1.1-3. Ineffable glory awaited His return to heaven, but His care and concern for His church kept Him on earth until they were ready for His absence.

B. He used the time to confirm the truth of His resurrection and to instruct His disciples concerning the order and advance of His Kingdom on earth in the visible church. This was important because their "acts" and ministries and epistles were to be the rule for all future generations. When Christ's new house on earth was set in order, He ascended into heaven to make preparations for the church's move there, Jn 14.2-3.

III. The **Manner** of Christ's Ascension

A. Christ ascended *representatively*. He ascended as a forerunner in our names and upon our accounts, Heb 6.20; Jn 14.2.

B. He ascended *triumphantly*, Ps 46.5-7.

1. He went up in a cloud as in a royal chariot, carrying captivity captive, i.e., dragging His enemies behind Him: sin, Satan, death, and hell, Dan 7.13-14; Ps 68.17-18.
2. All the angels in heaven worshiped Him when He arrived there, Rev 5.11-14.
3. But best of all, the Father received Him with open arms, *rejoicing that* His will was so fully and gloriously accomplished in Him, Isa 53.10.

C. He ascended *generously*, pouring out priceless gifts to His church, Eph 4.8-12.

D. He ascended *lovingly*, blessing them as He parted, and parting with the assurance not only that He would come again, but that in His bodily absence He would be spiritually ever-present by His Spirit, Lk 24.50-53; Jn 14.3, 25-26; 15.26.

IV. The **Necessity** of Christ's Ascension

A. If He had not ascended, He could not have interceded for us; and if we take away Christ's intercession, we remove all hope, Heb 7.25. Without Christ as our advocate, who is there to comfort us when we sin? 1Jn 2.2.

B. If He had not ascended, we could not enter heaven when we die because He we have no way to enter without an acceptable Forerunner and Head, Heb 6.18-20; 12.1-2.

C. If He had not ascended, He could not have been installed in the glory which the Father promised Him, Ps 2.7-9; Isa 53.12; Jn 17.1-5.

D. If He had not ascended, we could not be satisfied that His payment on the cross made full satisfaction to God. His resurrection is inseparably tied to His ascension. What kind of resurrection is it to be resurrected but not able to return in glorious welcome to the Father's house? Jn 20.17; Lk 24.50-53.

E. If He had not ascended, we could not enjoy the great blessings of the Holy Spirit, Jn 16.7-11. The Holy Spirit's ministry was pent up in the confines and shadows of Israel before the work

of Christ. It was the ascension that caused His ministry to overflow its banks and burst forth on the church and throughout the world, Acts 2.33.

V. Applications

- A. If Christ, our treasure, ascended into heaven then our hearts should be in heaven too.
1. It's not good if our love and our Lord dwell in two different countries. We ascended *virtually* with Him when He ascended; and we'll ascend *physically* at the resurrection, but we ought to ascend *spiritually* in daily acts of faith, love, and desire, for an ascended heart is the best evidence of our interest in Christ's ascension. Can we say with Paul that our conversation is in heaven, that we live on earth as those with a *heavenly citizenship* (Phil 3.20)?
- B. If Christ entered heaven as a forerunner, then we should be *diligent* in following Him, *running with patience and mortifying grace* the race set before us with our eyes fixed on Him, the Author and Finisher of our faith.
1. What does it say of us if, like Lot, we *linger*; or if, worse, like his wife, we go a ways, but then *turn back*?
 2. It's shameful to have such a Lord and preach such a gospel, who set His face like a flint to Jerusalem because of the joy set before Him, and be a church whose laziness, mediocrity, and worldliness argue that for all our talk of heaven, we're really in love with earth.
 3. We're to lay aside every weight and *run*! Put on the armor and *fight*! Cut off the hand, foot, and eye, and *go on lame* if we must! Carry the cross and *die upon it* if it's His will!
- C. If Christ led all our enemies captive, dragging them like corpses behind the wheels of His chariot, then let us rejoice in the sure victory we have over them.
1. If our Great Joshua lay His foot on the necks of our enemies, then we can have absolute confidence, as Paul says in Rom 16.20, that He will very shortly tread them under our feet as well.
 2. Our enemy may yet bruise our heels as long as we're here on earth; but let us remember and rejoice that our Saviour has crushed his head, Col 2.15.
- D. If Christ ascended bountifully and gave His church many precious gifts, then we must be careful not to despise or abuse them.
1. These gifts are the ordinances and officers of His church, Eph 4.11-12. These came at the cost of His life and were given as a token of His love and presence while absent from us. How, then, should we esteem and love and look upon these things? To slight these things is a personal affront to Him.
 2. The greatest gift He gave us was His Spirit. He is our principal and primary mercy, our Comforter, Sanctifier, Paraclete, Counselor, and Helper, Jn 14.16. How it must grieve Christ when we vex Him by our disobedience, grieve Him by our unkindnesses, quench Him by our sinful neglect, or despise Him by our discontent!
 - a) It is the Spirit who takes what is Christ's—all the blessing of the new covenant—and makes them known to us. *How foolish it is to grieve the Holy Spirit!*
- E. If Christ ascended as our forerunner then the door of heaven stands open for us to follow Him.
1. By virtue of His ascension, we will surely follow Him, that where He is, we will also be. And in the meantime, as we journey here below and await our Lord's call, may the love of our ascended Saviour so warm our hearts that as often as we look toward heaven, we may say with melting affection, *Blessed be God for His inexpressible gift!*