



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 2 – THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

LESSON 59 – THE TRINITY: JESUS THE SON – THE ASCENDED CHRIST
BIBLICAL DOCTRINE (JOHN MACARTHUR), PGS. 315-331

Ascended and Seated

- ▶ Scripture teaches that Christ ascended back to heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father (having finished His work), and this teaching is essential because it is associated with the superiority of the Son of God.
- ▶ Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? 6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." 7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." 8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

Ascended

- ▶ In order to ascend, He first had to descend.
- ▶ Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)
- ▶ Apostles Creed: He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
- ▶ John Calvin comments, "After explaining what Christ endured in the sight of man, the Creed appropriately adds the invisible and incomprehensible judgment which he endured before God, to teach us that not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of redemption, but that there was a greater and more excellent price — that he bore in his soul the tortures of a condemned and ruined man" (Institutes 2.16.10).

Descended

- ▶ Faithfulness to all of Scripture, however, requires us to deny that Jesus' spirit went to hell after He died. First, Jesus told the repentant thief on the cross that he would be with Christ in Paradise on the same day of their crucifixion (Luke 23:39–43). Second, nothing in Ephesians 4:8–10 says Jesus descended into hell; Paul means only that Christ descended into the grave. Third, 1 Peter 3:18–20 likely refers to the Son of God preaching by the Holy Spirit through Noah to the people of Noah's day. Finally, Jesus finished His atoning work on the cross. The New Testament speaks of propitiation, the turning away of the Lord's wrath, only in relation to Jesus shedding His blood on the cross (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 9:1–10:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; 5:6–11). Moreover, our Savior's last words on the cross were "It is finished" (John 19:30). He saw His work as completed when He died. - Ligonier Ministries
- ▶ Jesus' last words were, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46)

Ascended

- ▶ John 16:16 “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.” 17 Then some of His disciples said among themselves, “What is this that He says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father’?”
- ▶ John 14:28 You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I. 29 “And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.
- ▶ Acts 1:9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Ascended and Seated

- ▶ Jesus fulfilled His declarations, physically departing from the earth and ascending to heaven from the Mount of Olives. The Father received Him into His glory (1 Timothy 3:16), and Christ is now seated (ruling and reigning) on the Throne of the Father (Rev. 3:21), at His right hand (Acts 5:31; Eph. 1:19-20), the Throne of the universal and eternal kingdom of God (Mark 16:19).
- ▶ Christ's ascension was confirmed by the visions of Stephen (Acts 7:55-56), Paul (Acts 9:3-5; 22:6-8; 26:13-15), and John (Rev. 4:1; 5:6).
- ▶ In sitting at the right hand of God, Jesus sits on the "throne of his father David" (Luke 1:26-33). He is the Messiah of Israel, "the highest of the kings of the earth" and the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to keep the offspring of David on the throne forever. (Ps. 89:19-37). We are not waiting for Jesus to enter into His messianic reign, He enjoys it now. All of His enemies are being put under His feet as His gospel is preached and His kingdom expands (1 Cor. 15:20-28). – Ligonier Ministries

Seated

- ▶ Our study of Christ's ascension to heaven has thus far emphasized the critical nature of this event to our Savior coming into His kingdom. In line with the prophecy of Daniel 7:13–14, Jesus predicted that He would return to the immediate presence of His Father and receive the kingdom that was appointed for Him upon the completion of His earthly ministry (Matt. 24:29–30). Christ's reception of His kingdom is closely connected to several other events besides His ascension, one of which is the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The fall of the temple and priesthood was a visible, historical confirmation that the Messiah had come and, as the final High Priest, inaugurated a new covenant through the shedding of His blood (Heb. 9:1–10:18). In addition to Jesus' ascension and Jerusalem's destruction, the session, or seating, of Christ at the Father's right hand is also a part of His coming into His kingdom. Since the gospel tells us about the kingdom of God, we must understand the enthronement of our King. Consequently, in the Apostles' Creed we confess that Jesus is "seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty." – Ligonier Ministries

Interceding as Our Advocate

- ▶ Christ's present ministry in glory on behalf of His people occurs in His heavenly intercession on their behalf.
- ▶ Romans 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.
- ▶ Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
- ▶ Hebrews 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
- ▶ 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The Great Commission

- ▶ Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.
- ▶ Acts 1:4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”