



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

BACK TO THE BASICS

A Study of the Essentials of the Christian Faith

Sermon Notes

The Ascension

Acts 1:6-12

March 27, 2011

“⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ ⁷He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’ ¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.”

I. The Nature of the Ascension

II. The Implications of the Resurrection

III. The Promise of the Resurrection

- Throughout the New Testament, only two explicit accounts of the Ascension of Christ occur: (1) Luke 24; and (2) Acts 1. However, it is certainly implied in other places, such as John 20:17. Further, the events of the resurrection and [ultimately] the ascension encapsulate the exaltation of Christ, a doctrine referred to in places such as Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Timothy 3:16.

1 Timothy 3:16: “¹⁶Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.”

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit;
the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

- In the first sentence in his chapter on the Ascension of Christ, Robert Culver writes, “In most Christian circles, where we discuss what teachings our denominations or theological parties have in common, the ascension receives little notice.”

I. The Nature of the Ascension

- The Scriptures speak of the Ascension in two specific places: Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:6-11.
- Simply stated, **the Ascension was the event, forty days after the Resurrection, when the Resurrected and Glorified Christ was visibly taken up into heaven.**
- One of the simplest descriptions of the Ascension is found in the *Heidelberg Catechism*:

Question 46: How do you understand these words, ‘he ascended into heaven?’

Answer: “That Christ, in sight of his disciples, was taken up from earth into heaven; (a) and that he continues there for our interest, (b) until he comes again to judge the quick and the dead. (c) (a) Acts 1:9; Matt.26:64; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51. (b) Heb.7:25; Heb.4:14; Heb.9:24; Rom.8:34; Eph.4:10; Col.3:1. (c) Acts 1:11; Matt.24:30.

- Yet, until we probe a little deeper, we will never understand how theologian B.K. Donne could write, “Theologically and empirically the Ascension of Jesus Christ is at the very heart of the New Testament.”

II. The Implications of the Ascension

1. The Ascension was historical and truly occurred – for there were witnesses!

- One of the first truths we read of the Ascension in Acts 1, is that it was accompanied by witnesses.
 - This reality is critical to understanding Luke's insistence on the reality of the event.

Deuteronomy 19:15: “¹⁵A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.”

- Throughout the New Testament, every major event in Redemption history was accompanied by witnesses (the birth of Jesus Christ, His baptism, His miracles, His arrest, His trials, His crucifixion, His burial, and His resurrection). The Ascension is no different.
- This truth demonstrates that each of these events, in accordance with the Old Testament Law, is historical. In other words, *legally*, it can be established and biblically demonstrated that every major event in the New Testament [each of which fulfills Old Testament prophecy] actually occurred. It was not merely hearsay.

The Disciples

- The first group of witnesses to the Ascension of the Resurrected Christ was the disciples.
- Luke mentions five times in Acts 1 that the disciples saw Jesus Ascend into heaven [‘looking on’; ‘their sight’; ‘they were gazing’; ‘why do you stand looking’; ‘you have watched Him go into heaven’].
- Once again, this apostolic witness to the Resurrected Christ and His Ascension is fundamental in the establishment of the Early Church.

Two Men in White Clothing

- The second group of witnesses to the Ascension was two men in white clothing.
 - It seems rather clear that these men were angelic witnesses...heavenly messengers.
 - Throughout the Scriptures, angels often accompanied miraculous events, acting as interpreters, if you will. Recall the events of the first Resurrection Sunday at the empty tomb (Luke 24:4-9) [‘...He is not here, but He has risen...’].

- Here, in Luke's account, the angelic witnesses speak, 'interpreting' this event as it unfolds before the disciples' eyes.

Acts 1:10: “¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’”

- First, they address the disciples as ‘**Men of Galilee.**’

John Gill writes, “And which was said by them [the angelic witnesses], not to reproach them with their country, but partly to let them know that they knew them, who they were, and from whence they came; and partly to observe the rich and distinguishing grace of God in choosing such mean and contemptible persons to be the apostles of Christ, and eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

- Secondly, the messengers state, ‘**why do you stand looking into the sky?**’
 - These words from the angels seem to mildly rebuke to the disciples because of their focus on the physical presence of Jesus [and His physical kingdom].
 - In other words, it is as though they are saying, “Do not look at Jesus with your physical eyes, but with your eyes of faith.”

John Calvin wrote, “[The angels’] intent was to call back the apostles from desiring the carnal presence of Christ.”

John Gill agrees, “reproving them for their curiosity in looking after Christ with their bodily eyes, who was no more in common to be seen this way, **but with an eye of faith**; and for their desire after his corporeal [physical] presence, which they were not to look for; and as if they expected he would return again immediately, whereas his return will not be till the end of the world...and besides, they were not to remain on that spot, or stand gazing there; they were to go to Jerusalem, and abide there, as Christ had ordered, till they should receive the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary way; and then they were to preach a crucified Christ, and declare that he was risen from the dead, and was gone to heaven, and was ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead.’

- The words of the angels [‘why do you stand looking into the sky?’] also serve a similar purpose to the voice of the angels at the resurrection [‘Why do you seek the living One among the dead?’]. Each of these events [the Resurrection and the Ascension] were not ‘ends’ in and of themselves in that they are once-for-all events in redemptive history that point to a ‘final’ reality – the salvation and transformation of God’s people.
 - In short, the angels are telling the disciples, “Do not just stand there!...**GO** and proclaim what you have seen and heard...what you have been witnesses to.”

- For, the ‘end’ of these events [the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ] is the salvation of God’s people through the proclamation of the Gospel.
- The angels, then, say to the disciples, ‘**This Jesus**, who has been taken up from you into heaven...’
 - In other words, the ‘Jesus’ that ascended before the disciples eyes was the historical Jesus, NOT some ethereal force or nebulous spirit that merely *appeared* to be Jesus.
 - As the angelic witnesses said, it will be ‘this Jesus.’ That is, the same Jesus with whom the disciples lived, traveled, and ate...the same Jesus they saw crucified...the same Jesus who appeared to them following His resurrection...and the same Jesus they witness, in bodily form, ascending into heaven.
 - Tragically, many today make statements like, ‘Well, *my God* would [or would not] do _____.’ Or ‘*My Jesus...*’ So often, we create a “Jesus” who more resembles Gandhi or Buddha rather than our historical Savior. However, the Scriptures clearly reveal who the true Christ is. The Gospel accounts record this for us.

And it is “This Jesus” who was “crucified, dead, buried, on the third day rose again, and ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

- Therefore, for the disciples, ‘This Jesus’ was one that they knew well. And it was This Jesus that they lived with and saw Ascend before their very eyes.”
- Consequently, the significance of the witnesses to Christ’s ascension cannot be over-emphasized. For, in accordance with the Law, the presence of these witnesses demonstrates that the event of Christ’s Ascension actually occurred.
- Again, the Ascension was very visible and very public, for God has nothing to hide and everything to reveal.

2. The Ascension marked the Crowning Work of Christ in our Salvation.

- Next, we learn from the biblical account of the Ascension that this event marked the “final step” and crowning event of Christ’s Incarnation and our subsequent salvation.
- In fact, when Christ Ascended into Heaven, **He sat down** at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Hebrews 1:3: “³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”

- The truth that Christ “sat” indicates that His work was done, for the High Priest in Jerusalem never sat in the sanctuary, for his work was never done. However, after Christ Ascended, He sat down.

1 Peter 3:22: “²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”

Ephesians 1:20-22: “²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,”

- But not only did Christ sit, indicating the completion of His Incarnational work, but He also sent the Holy Spirit (at Pentecost), some ten days later.

John 16:7: “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”

- The disciples will no longer be focused and dependent upon the physical, visible, and localized presence of Jesus Christ. [Note: The presence of Jesus Christ *with* His disciples was similar to the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.]
- When the Spirit comes at Pentecost, He will not be *with* the disciples and future believers [as the Incarnate Christ was and as the Holy Spirit was in the Old Testament]; rather, **He will abide in them.**
- The sending and indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost will indicate that salvation is accomplished and applied. **Furthermore, the presence of God will be more intimate and personal.**
- After Jesus leaves and the Holy Spirit comes [at Pentecost], this will usher in the New Covenant where salvation will encompass and spread throughout the world to both Jew and Gentile.

D.A. Carson writes, “The ‘saving reign of God cannot be fully inaugurated until Jesus has died, risen from the dead, and been exalted to His Father’s right hand...Before the triumphant in-breaking of God’s saving reign, before the inauguration of the new covenant, millions ignored the claims of the true God. Pentecost transformed that limitation, and millions have been brought to happy submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and to growing obedience by the power of the Spirit whom he bequeathed.”

- After His ascension, the Son [and the Father] sent the Holy Spirit to indwell each believer [on the basis of Christ's finished work]. Therefore, because of the finished work of Christ and the will of the Father, each believer is indwelled by God Himself, allowing Christ to rightly state, 'I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Matthew 28:20). Such a statement would not have been truthful apart from Christ's Ascension.

3. The Ascension involved the Exaltation of Jesus Christ.

- Next, the Ascension of Christ is a point of Exaltation for the Risen Lord.
- Although only Luke [in his Gospel and in Acts] explicitly speaks of the Ascension, it is referenced throughout the New Testament in places where Christ is said to be 'exalted' – such as Philippians 2:5-11 ['...For this reason also, God highly exalted Him...'].
- Furthermore, here in this account, Luke states that He was '**lifted up**.'
- In his Gospel, John often uses this same phrase to indicate the point of greatest exaltation of Christ [in John's Gospel it was the 'lifting up' of Christ in the crucifixion – the greatest demonstration of obedience to the will of the Father].

John 3:14: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be **lifted up**."

John 12:32: "And I, if I am **lifted up** from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

John 12:34: "The crowd then answered Him, 'We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be **lifted up**'? Who is this Son of Man?'"

- The Psalmist also speaks of the LORD as 'high and lifted up' or 'high and exalted' [Psalm 18, 21, 46, 47, 57, 89.]
- Therefore, the language of Luke, here demonstrates this truth as well.
- Also, Luke speaks of Christ's ascension in the **passive voice**. In other words, He **received the action** in His Ascension.
 - Luke states, 'He [Christ] was lifted up...'
 - This further demonstrates that working of the Father in the Ascension/Exaltation of Jesus Christ.
 - As the Apostle Paul states, 'For this reason also, **God highly exalted Him...**'

Ephesians 4:10: ‘He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens...’

4. The Ascension Reveals the Deity of Christ.

- Next, the Ascension of our Lord reveals the deity of Jesus Christ.
- First of all, this is revealed again in the truth that **He sat down at the right hand of God the Father Almighty**.
 - No one would dare sit in the presence of God, except God Himself.
 - Therefore, we see in Christ’s “sitting” that He is equal in His divine essence with the Father.
- Secondly, we learn of Christ’s deity through the presence of the clouds in Luke’s account of the Ascension.

Acts 1:9: “⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.”

F.F. Bruce writes, ‘The cloud...is to be understood as the cloud which envelops the glory of God (the *shekinah*) – that cloud which, resting above the Mosaic tabernacle and filling Solomon’s temple, was the visible token to Israel that the divine glory had taken up residence there (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11). So in the last moment that the apostles saw their Lord with outward vision, they were granted ‘a theophany: Jesus is enveloped in the cloud of the divine presence.’”

- One could certainly argue that throughout the Scriptures, clouds and smoke were instruments of God’s grace, veiling the full sight and presence of Deity [the divine [God] nature] (Recall Isaiah 6). For had not the divine nature been veiled, the observers would most certainly have been destroyed, for ‘no one can see God and live’ (Exodus 33:19-23; John 1:18).

Not only were the clouds an instrument of God’s grace, but they should also humble our finite minds regarding the incomparable majesty of God’s infinite glory.

John Calvin writes, “[W]e are taught by them [the angelic witnesses] that our mind is not able to ascend so high as to take a full view of the glory of Christ; therefore, let this cloud be a mean to restrain our boldness, as was the smoke which was continually before the door of the tabernacle in the time of the law.”

Robert Culver writes of the ‘rather well known Old Testament cloud as sign of the presence of deity [God]. The cloud over Sinai not only signified that God was there but also served as protection for mortals against instant death. At least six times in the twenty-two New Testament occurrences of *nephele* (cloud) it is used to indicate the presence of deity.’

Exodus 13:21: “The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way...”

Exodus 40:34, “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”

- Not only was Christ’s Ascension accompanied by a cloud, but His return will be as well.

Mark 13:26: “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”

Mark 14:62: “And Jesus said, ‘I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.’”

5. The Ascension Reveals the Kingship and Enthronement of Christ.

- As we have already seen, when Christ Ascended into heaven, **He sat down**.
- This truth revealed several things about Christ and His work.
 - First, it revealed that He was finished.
 - Secondly, it revealed that He is God, fully divine.
 - And thirdly, it revealed that He is enthroned as King.
 - This is precisely why we read that Christ sat down on His throne, for He is ruling as King of Kings.
- Luke demonstrates that not only was Christ exalted, or lifted up in the Ascension, but the event also revealed His glory.

Ephesians 1:20-22: “²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,”

- We even read in the Old Testament the Enthronement Psalms that foreshadow Christ’s reign on His throne.

Psalms 47:8-9: “*God reigns over the nations;
God sits on his holy throne.

⁹ The princes of the peoples gather
as the people of the God of Abraham.

For the shields of the earth belong to God;
he is highly exalted!”

6. The Ascension Reveals the Power and Authority of Christ.

- Next, the Ascension reveals the power and authority of Jesus Christ.
- Firstly, according to Acts 1:12, it appears that the Ascension took place near the Mount of Olives – right near Jerusalem.
 - This is significant because the powers that be in Jerusalem had plotted and schemed for perhaps years to put Christ to death.
 - They did so, working together with the most powerful government in the world at the time.
 - Furthermore, they did it in Judea – where Christ Ascended!
 - Thus, **Christ ascended visibly, publically, and bodily, in the same region where He was crucified, proving His power and authority** and the impotence of the Jews and Romans to accomplish what that set out to do.
- Secondly, when Christ Ascended, He sat down **at the right hand of God the Father Almighty**.
 - In virtually every culture, and the Ancient Near Eastern culture was no different, the right hand is a symbol of strength.
 - Therefore, when Christ sat down at the right hand of God the Father, it demonstrated His supreme and unrivaled authority.

Ephesians 1:17-22: “¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,”

7. The Ascension Marks the Inauguration of the High Priestly Work of Christ.

- Next, the Ascension of Christ inaugurated His High Priestly work.
- The first reason this was possible was because **Christ Ascended bodily**.
 - Just like His resurrection, Christ's Ascension was *bodily*, not merely spiritual.
 - In other words, Christ Ascended into heaven in His post-resurrection body. **He was fully God and fully man, yet glorified.**
 - That is, to this present-day, Christ sits in heaven and still possesses His two nature (man and God).
 - This truth is critical when we consider the nature of the High Priestly work.
- Secondly, the reason the Ascension of Christ inaugurated His High Priest work is because as the exalted God-man, Christ is able to intercede to the Father on our behalf.
 - It is essential to note that a high priest represents the people before God and therefore must come "from the people."
 - Because Christ **is** fully God and fully man, He is able to intercede for us, because, even now, He represents us before the Father in His human nature.

Hebrews 4:14-16: " ¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 7:24-26: "²⁴but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens."

Hebrews 9:24-26: "²⁴For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Hebrews 8:1-6: “¹Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’ ⁶But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.”

8. The Ascension Reveals that Heaven is a real place!

- Finally, we learn from the Incarnation that heaven is a real place!
- During His ascension, Jesus did not disappear, He ascending **into heaven** (Acts 1:11) right before the disciples.

As Wayne Grudem writes, ‘The fact that Jesus had a resurrection body that was subject to spatial limitations (it could be at only one place at one time) means that Jesus went *somewhere* when he ascended into heaven.’

Peter Toon, *The Meaning of the Ascension of Christ*, writes, “Evangelicals have traditionally believed...that heaven is **both a place and a state**...Heaven, as the dwelling place of God, the holy angels, and saints, was seen as ‘above’ the starry heavens. Thus Christ has passed through the physical heavens and has been raised ‘higher’ than them (Hebrews 4:14; 7:26; 9:11, 23, 24). In insisting that heaven is both a state and a place, Christianity has usually been careful to deny any knowledge of its particular and specific characteristics or of its precise relation to the physical universe.”

Robert Culver agrees, commenting, “Let us not forget that heaven is a created place where God dwells, with His angels, and all whom He has called to Himself. ‘Wherever and whatever this heaven is, it is the place of God’s *special manifestation* as opposed to the whole creation, where He is *generally manifest*.”

“[Heaven is] the place where God dwells, where the angels and the spirits for the just are congregated; whence Christ came, and to which he has returned. He told his disciples that he went to prepare a place for them (John 14:2). In this sense the word is used when the Bible speaks of God as our Father ‘in Heaven’; or of heaven as his throne, his temple, his dwelling place. If Christ has a true body, it must occupy a portion of space. And where Christ is, there is the Christian’s heaven.” Charles A. Hodge

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- When viewed in light of the crucifixion, the resurrection reveals something essential and unique about Christ.

- **Only Jesus Christ fully experienced hell and now dwells in Heaven.**
- In the Apostles Creed, we affirm,

“He was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.”

- It is important to remember that when we affirm Christ’s “descent into hell” we are **not** declaring that in some way Christ went to the place of Hell and dwelled there for a short while. Rather, we are affirming that **on the cross of Calvary, Christ fully experienced hell.** That is, He fully experienced the infinite wrath of God Father – which is the essence of what hell is.
- Many Christians view hell as the absence of God; however, if this were the case, then God would not be omnipresent because there would be a place in Creation where He did not dwell. Consequently, God is ever-present in hell; however, His presence is manifested in the form of His divine wrath. Consider as well that the very thing that non-believers reject the most is the presence of God – the very essence of what their eternity will be (the presence of God in His wrath).

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- Consequently, Christ has experienced the full spectrum of the human experience – the depths of hell and the heights of heaven.

III. The Promise of the Ascension

- Finally, from the account in Acts 1, we learn of the “promise of the Ascension.”
- In short, the promise of Christ’s ascension is simple: **He will return!**
- In Acts 1:9-11, Luke describes several aspects of Christ’s return, for the angelic witnesses state, ‘...[He] will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’

He will return in glory.

- The Second Advent [the Second Coming] of Jesus will NOT be like His first. During His first Advent, Jesus was born in a stable, raised as a carpenter, for ‘[there was] not beauty that we should desire him.’ However, during His Second Coming, He will return in great glory (Matthew 16:27; 25:31).
- Therefore, because He is returning visibly, personally, and with glory, it will be both a great and terrible day. **For the glory of God is nothing less than the totality of His infinite attributes.**

- For it will be unspeakable joy for all who are in Christ; yet, for those who have rejected Him it will be the moment of the terrible judgment of a holy God against their wickedness and sin.
- **Once again, the Ascension was not the ‘end’ but pointed to a future reality, a future truth.** The angelic witnesses conclude their words to the disciples by stating: “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.”
- Therefore, from these words, we can conclude several things with respect to Christ’s return [His Second Coming]:

He will return visibly

- Just as His Ascension was visible, and, hence, undeniable for those who witnessed it...so will His return be.

“BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.”

Revelation 1:7

- [This is one of the most serious problems, I believe, with a doctrine of a “secret” rapture – it contradicts the promise of the Ascension in Acts 1.

He will return in Person

- Next, just as ‘This Jesus’...the bodily-resurrected Christ ascended before the disciples’ eyes, so will ‘This Jesus’ – the Person of Christ – return.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 states, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”

- Once again, the Return of Christ will not be the return of a **force** or **impersonal spirit**; but, rather, it will be a **personal return** with a **PURPOSE**.
- **Christ HIMSELF** will return!

In his work, *The Nature of the Resurrection Body*, J.A. Schep wrote: “But all these and other changes which the ascension brought about have nothing to do with a change in Jesus’ resurrection-body. It is in his risen, incorruptible, and immortal body of flesh that Jesus Christ in heaven exercises his all-embracing authority and performs his heavenly ministry as the exalted King, Priest and Prophet of the Church. Undoubtedly, his exalted position in heaven implies the possibility that he can display supernatural glories and appear in a splendor of light. So he appeared to Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3), and so he will come at the end of the ages. But this gives us no right to regard the body of our risen and exalted Lord as being changed into

a body consisting of some light-substance or glory. Much less does the manner in which he revealed himself to John in a vision give any ground for such a conclusion.”

He will return in the company of angels

“So great will His return be that angels will herald it, just as they did in the first advent. ‘he shall come in the same flesh, in the same human nature; he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and shall be attended with his mighty angels, as he now was; he shall descend himself in person, as he now ascended in person; and as he went up with a shout, and with the sound of a trumpet, so he shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God...”

John Gill

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- And what a great place to conclude our study on the essentials of the Christian faith – the promise of Christ’s return!
 - He will return again one day, when all our hopes will be realized, and He will usher in eternity, as He comes down from heaven and establishes the new heaven and the new earth.

“¹² ‘Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.’... ¹⁶ ‘I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.’ ¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”

Revelation 22:12-13,16-21