

WHAT DOES CHRIST'S ASCENSION MEAN?

Scripture reading: Acts 1:1-11.

Intro: Again, as in looking at the death of Christ, and in looking at the resurrection of Christ, when we look at the ascension of Christ is one message, we are able to look at only a part of a great, great subject!

Out of all that has been written about the work of Christ, this truth has suffered more from neglect than any other aspect of our Lord's work. But it really is one of the most important.

It is really a part of the resurrection in that it was the second step in His glorification. Notice how Paul links together all three of the subjects we have taken up, up to and including tonight:

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34).

We might even say that there were three steps in the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1) His resurrection.
- 2) His ascension back to heaven.
- 3) When He was seated at the right hand of the Father.

Many who have studied Isaiah's prophecy feel that Isaiah had these three things in mind when he wrote,

"Behold, my servant" (speaking of Christ, the Messiah)
"shall deal prudently; he shall be
--exalted
--and extolled,
--and be very high."

Paul says in Phil. 2:9,

"Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

So tonight, as we think of the ascension of Christ, let us think of both His ascension and the fact that He is seated at the Father's right hand.

What does it all mean--according to the Word of God?

- I. IT MEANS THAT THE WORK THAT HE CAME TO DO THE FIRST TIME WAS FINISHED.

To prove this let me direct your attention to two verses in the book of Hebrews:

- 1) Heb. 1:3, speaking of Christ,
"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 on the right hand of the Majesty on high."
- 2) Heb. 10:12, again speaking of Christ,
"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God."

He offered the sacrifice by Himself. He offered only one sacrifice. That is the only sacrifice that will ever be necessary to save any man who wants to be saved.

II. IT MEANS THAT HIS WORK HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE FATHER.

I spoke about this this morning in connection with the resurrection of Christ, and so this is adding proof to the proof that we already have. IF GOD HAD NOT BEEN PERFECTLY SATISFIED WITH THE WORK OF HIS SON, HE NEVER WOULD HAVE BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, NOR WOULD HE EVER HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BACK INTO HEAVEN.

This is involved in His being seated. (See Heb. 1:3 above.) This is mentioned three other times in Hebrews: 8:1; 10:12; 12:2.

Cf. also 1 Tim. 3:16,

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

III. IT MEANS THAT SATAN AND SATANIC FORCES HAVE BEEN FOREVER DEFEATED.

This was so certain that the Lord spoke of it as an accomplished fact even before the crucifixion. When the Lord was talking about the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the third and last thing which He mentioned was this:

"Of judgment, because the price of this world is judged" (John 16:11).

The NASB makes it even stronger: "The ruler of this world has been judged."

But the verses that tell us about it are in Eph. 4:8 and Col. 2:15. And Eph. 4:8 is really a quotation of Psa. 68:18.

- 1) Eph. 4:8,
"Wherefore, he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."
- 2) Psa. 68:18,

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

3) Col. 2:13-15,

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

The work of Christ for us on the cross would have been incomplete if the overthrow of Satan and Satanic forces had not been a part of that work. But thank God it was. Satan is a defeated foe. His doom was sealed at the Cross. The victory was evident at the resurrection, but especially so at the ascension.

The writer of Hebrews was probably referring to this in Heb. 4:14,

"Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into" (lit., through) "the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

IV. IT MEANS THAT WE NOW HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER.

(Re-read Heb. 4:14 above.) Cf. Heb. 4:15, 16,

"For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Cf. Heb. 7:25,

"Wherefore, he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Also, cf. Rom. 8:34, where the NSRB makes the verse into 2 questions,

"Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"

You can see that the ascension is a very vital part of our salvation. We are "kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5) through the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need only remember our Lord's words to Mary Magdalene to see how very important the ascension was:

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not (lit., do not hold me back); for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20:17).

- V. IT MEANS THAT THE LORD JESUS IS THE SOURCE OF OUR FAITH AND OUR ENCOURAGEMENT.

Cf. Heb. 12:1-3,

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

We are on the victory side. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

Neither men, nor Satan, nor demons, nor anything else could keep our Lord from claiming the victory which was obviously His! And it is ours, too!

- VI. IT MEANS THAT OUR LORD HAS GONE TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR US.

Cf. John 14:2, "I go to prepare a place for you."

I am not able to say just what this means, but that does not keep me from being amazed by it.

Does it mean that, before the Lord will come after us, He has to get a place in heaven ready for US--sinners saved by grace?

That is what it seems to mean!

Let me arouse your curiosity a little.

I believe that the Lord created this universe in which we live in just 6 twenty-four hour days--and it did not take Him all of any one of those 6 days! What must He be doing that after almost 2,000 years the "place" is not ready yet? Of course, it may be! We cannot say positively. But perhaps this is one thing that delays His coming. "I go to pre-

pare a place for you."

From our sixth point, we could almost guess the seventh.

VII. THE ASCENSION MEANS THAT HE IS COMING AGAIN.

Cf. John 14:3,

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Since He went up, He is coming back. We can be sure of that. And we will deal more in detail with that next Sunday night, the Lord willing.

Concl: I have not exhausted the subject tonight. There is even more, much more, that could be said about any one of these 7 points. But we can certainly agree that some of the most wonderful truth in the Word of God is directly related to the ascension of Christ. Therefore, as we think of our Lord's death, of His resurrection, and of His coming again, let us not be guilty of neglecting this wonderful truth. It has to do with the present and only as we know this will we be able to enter into all of the joy and peace that the Lord intended that this truth should bring to the hearts of all of His children.