

The Ascension of Christ

By

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The marvelous ascension of our Lord is an ignored aspect of the gospel. Its importance can be highlighted by the number of passages in the inspired Scriptures, which detail the prophecies, the types, the actuality of the event, and the benefits and meaning. Hopefully, this short treatise will help do justice to this important topic. The ascension of Christ will be examined by the following outline: I. The *Assurance* that the Ascension Would Occur, II. The *Account* of the Ascension, III. The *Assets* Achieved by the Ascension, IV. The *Advantages* the Ascension Provided.

The *Assurance* that the Ascension Would Occur

The psalmist declared, “God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet” (Ps. 47:5). Also, Psalm 68:18 clearly extols that the Lord has “ascended on high” and the Apostle Paul quotes the verse in Ephesians 4:8-10 establishing its application. Daniel’s vision asserts, “*one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him” (Dan. 7:13). Psalm 110:1 implies that Christ ascended into heaven by reporting, “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand,” which speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ’s exaltation after His resurrection and ascension. Jesus Himself spoke of His ascension when He said, “*What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” (Jn. 6:62); and “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father” (Jn. 16:28); and “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” (Jn. 20:17). If Jesus said it, that settles it. He would be “received up” (Lk. 9:51, Mk 16:19). However, there is further confirmation of the ascension in the types found in the Old Testament by Enoch and Elijah’s ascension, and in the New Testament as the two witnesses who ascended up (Gen. 5:24, 2Kgs. 2:11, Rev. 11:12). In addition, the Old Testament high priest under the law who entered into the Holy of Holies with the blood atonement on the day of atonement is a type (Heb. 9:23-24). However, the timing of this type’s fulfillment is controversial, because His return to the father after the encounter with Mary Magdalene was not witnessed (Jn. 20:17), although most theologians accept two returns to heaven.¹

The *Account* of the Ascension

The account of the ascension, witnessed by many and carefully researched by Luke (Lk 1:1-3), is found in Luke 24:51-53 and Acts 1:9-11. What is not mentioned in these New Testament passages, the shout and trumpet, but reported in Ps. 47:5, undoubtedly occurred. Surely, there were shouts of adoration by the apostles and disciples present at the ascension as He rose up, and as they fully understood the glory of His person. He rose with the sound of a trumpet, because he shall come in like manner (Acts 1:11, Mat. 24:30, 1Cor. 15:52, 1Thes. 4:16). His ascension is mentioned by John (see above), Paul (Eph. 4:8-10, 1 Tim. 3:16, Phil. 2:9), Peter (1Pe. 3:22), and the writer of Hebrews (4:14).²

The *Assets* Achieved by the Ascension

The witnessed ascent by the highly exalted Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:9) guarantees us that He will act as our mediator (1Tim. 2:5), our comforter (Jn. 14:16), our advocate (1Jn. 2:1), our gift-giver for ministry (Eph. 4:7-12), the giver of hope (Col. 3:1-4), our high priest (Heb. 4:14), the giver of power to do His will (Mat. 28:18-20), the sender of the Holy Spirit with the Father (Jn. 14:16-17, 26, 16:7), and that His presence is always with us (Mat. 28:20) as the

ascended omnipresent Lord. The ascension “guarantees the truth of His claims” (Mat. 26:63-64), His triumph over all His enemies” (Acts 2:33-35), and “that Christ is righteous,” (Jn. 16:10).³ All of these glorious facts assure us of His second coming to take us to our home in heaven (Jn. 14:2).

The *Advantages* the Ascension Provides

The result, advantage or practical value of the ascension of Christ is clearly presented by Dr. Roy Wallace. “1. It should bring joy to the Christian. (John 14:28-29) 2. It should arouse interest in heavenly things. (John 16:5-6, Col. 3:1-4) 3. It should produce steadfastness. (Heb. 4:14 “let us hold fast”) 4. It gives us great assurance. (Heb. 6:17-20) 5. It shows that heaven is a locality. Christ is there in a physical body. 6. It shows the marvelous possibilities for a glorified body.”⁴

Endnotes:

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology, (Victor Books, Wheaton, IL) 1988, 270 (cf. Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI) 1976, p. 19-20, and Jn. 20:17 and Lk. 24:39)

² Henry C. Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI) Revised Edition 1979, 249

³ Dr. Roy Wallace, Studies in Systematic Theology (Printers, LinWell, Shreveport, LA) 2001, 126

⁴ Ibid. 127