

An Attempt To Listen To God

Tabernacle

The Geographical Journeys

Part 4

By

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The Ascension From Psalm 24

The Messianic Psalms are Psalms which, either in part or whole, refer to the Person of our Lord. There are nineteen of them: Psalm 2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 34, 35, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 72, 89, 91, 102, 110, and 118. Our focus will be on Psalm 24 which is a series of prophetic statements when the Lord comes to the Hill and the city as the conquering Lord. I believe we can take the latter part (vv. 7-10) as an illustration of the ascent of the Lord to Heaven. It is sung by two choirs, each responding to the other in two stanzas. Historically there is uncertainty about the original setting, and although there are references to the city and the Hill, these indicate places, but do not specify the setting. One of the suggestions is that it refers to when the ark was being brought from Obed-edom to the tabernacle David had pitched for it at Jerusalem, the earthly Mt. Zion (2 Sam. 6:12-17). Obviously it is irrelevant for our understanding and focus, or else the Lord would have made it known.

In Eden a cherubim was put at the entrance to stop man from returning. Now the cry goes to the ranks of celestial beings: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in (Psa. 24:9). In Psa. 68:18 it is the thought of a great general returning from a victorious battle with the spoil, and "He leads captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8). In this line of thought it prefigures the Lord entering the "temple not made with hands" (Heb. 9:11). No demonic power could hinder his journey. It is irrelevant whether the Prince of the power of the air has every throne and principality he can muster, they must stand aside as the defeated enemy. He goes past the ranks of celestial beings, angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, principalities powers, rising as the King of glory in righteousness and perfection of right, and amid splendor and worship. Peter records the terminus of His journey and its supremacy: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Pet. 3:22). Paul writes: "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21).

The Climax Of The Journey

That journey took Him from the lowest parts of the earth (Eph. 4:9) and higher than the heavens. Tracing that journey we see:

- 1) "He was received up into Heaven." (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:24; 1 Pet. 3:22)
- 2) "Passed into the Heavens." (Heb. 4:14)
- 3) "Made higher than the Heavens." (Heb. 7:26)
- 4) "Far above all heavens." (Eph. 4:10)
- 5) He is "in Heaven". (Eph. 6:9)

His ascending journey came to an end at the right hand of God where He is exalted and made very high (Isa. 52:13). Well may we sing:

He sits upon the Throne above, He fills it without wrong
The Object of the Father's love, the Theme of angels song.

That is the place that was prophesied for Him: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psa. 110:1; Matt. 22:44; Mk. 12:36; Lk. 20:42). It was the confession the Lord made when before the chief priests when asked: "Art Thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed?" (Mk. 14:61), and the Lord answered: "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power" (Matt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62; Lk. 22:69).

Let us consider:

- 1) The Place He occupies:
 - a) "Right hand of power." (Mk. 14:62)
 - b) "Right hand of the power of God." (Lk. 22:69)
 - c) Stephen saw: "Jesus standing at the right hand of God". (Acts 7:56)
 - d) "Christ . . . who is even at the right hand of God." (Rom. 8:34)
 - e) "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1)

- f) "Endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2)
 - g) "Who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God." (1 Pet. 3:22)
- 2) The Power that placed Him there:
- a) "By the right hand of God exalted" (Acts 2:33). The question here is: Does the expression: "by the right hand exalted" indicate the power and authority that put the Lord there? Or, He is exalted by the right hand. That is, does it indicate the power or the final position?
I am quite confident that it indicates the power that places Him in that position as the following verses show:
 - i) "God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36)
 - ii) "God hath highly exalted Him." (Phil. 2:9)
 - iii) "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour." (Acts 5:31)
 - iv) God "set Him at His own right hand." (Eph. 1:20)
- 3) The Personal right by which He can sit there:
- a) "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down (set Himself down) on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. 1:3)
- 4) The Preeminence accorded to Him:
- a) "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." (Heb. 8:1)
 - b) "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." (Heb. 10:12)

The greatness of His position is beyond human comprehension and telling, but demands worship and praise.

What Has He Ascended and Been Exalted as?

John Baptist is oftentimes referred to as the Lord's forerunner, however, the scriptures never refer to him as such. Within the pages of Holy Writ there is only one forerunner and that is the Lord. It is a title that is only applied to Him once (Heb. 6:19-20); the same as "Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2); "Advocate" (1 Jn. 2:1); and many others, but the singularity of the occurrence does not minimize the glory of the office and work.

In the Old Testament the High Priest went into the Holiest once a year as a representative of the people on the great day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34). In those far off days the High Priest went in alone, and all the people waited outside the court. None could follow them in. Our blessed Lord did not go in as a representative but as our Forerunner, and blazing the trail, made it possible for us to enter now in spirit (Heb. 10:19) and eventually in our glorified bodies (Phil. 3:21).

The question then arises: Since the High Priest in the Old Testament went in, but not without blood (Heb. 9:7; Lev. 16:11-15), by what means did Christ go in? Did He go in by virtue of His Sonship? The scriptures make it clear that He went in by virtue of His own blood (Heb. 9:12).

This is the supreme guarantee for us of being there with Him. It is by that blood He vanquished his Satanic majesty, and pledged to us:

- 1) The fulness of our adoption. (Rom. 8:23)
- 2) The unquestioning of our acceptability. (Eph. 1:6)
- 3) The assuring of our entrance into the Holy Place not made with hands. (2 Cor. 5:1-8)

Because of His entrance as the "Forerunner", we can come boldly before the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16) by the virtue of His blood.

The Old Testament Foreshadowings

In the consideration of the ascension of our Lord and the prophetic picture, I am aware of four Old Testament foreshadowings:

- 1) Enoch ascended to Heaven without dying. (Gen. 5:24)
- 2) The angel of the Lord (who is Christ). (Jud. 13:20)
- 3) Elijah ascended without dying. (2 Kgs. 2:11)
 - a) The sons of the prophets mocked the truth of Elijah's ascension (2 Kgs. 2:15-18). In this way they are the forerunners of those who make light of the ascension, and deny it. (Prov. 30:4)
- 4) Moses did not ascend to Heaven but went up to where God was. Moses had been called by God up to Mount Sinai, and then God called him again, this time into the cloud (Ex. 24:15-18). It was a forty day experience, but the people had no idea how long it would be or if he would come back again. Consequently, they began to complain saying: "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Ex. 32:1). They did not know the grace that was being manifested toward them, for God was giving them the instructions for the Tabernacle and the Priesthood that he might dwell among them (Ex. 25:8). Furthermore, they did not know that Moses was interceding for them (Ex. 32:7-13). What a picture of the Lord and us. He is up there before God interceding for us despite our wickedness and waywardness.

What Did The Lord's Ascension Signify?

The ascension of the Lord was both an ending and a beginning, indicating the end of His earthly ministry and the beginning of His heavenly. That meant that His work as a Prophet was past, that of King was yet to come, but that of a Priest was now entered upon. Man needed a prophet to teach the mind of God, a priest to represent him before God, and a King to rule for God. Christ was Prophet, Priest and King. Yet, while He was here, He performed priestly duties, praying for others and offering Himself as a sacrifice. His days of His priestly apprenticeship were now over, and all He had come to do on earth was accomplished. He now began His work as a priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb. 4:14-16)

- 1) It marked the return to His full manifested glory that had been veiled while on this earth, except for the time of His transfiguration. (Matt. 17:1-9)
- 2) His ascension became a picture of a saint at the moment of death, going up as an overcomer, and in heaven immediately for the Holy Spirit informs us: "Absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord". (2 Cor. 5:8)
- 3) By His work on the cross He prepared us for the place, but in His ascension He prepared the place for us. (Jn. 14:2). How? By His being a man, He entered into the spirit world so that we can enter there. Let us never be guilty of thinking that for two thousand years the Lord has been preparing a place for us. It was prepared the moment He entered there.
- 4) It was a preview of His return to earth when He will set up His kingdom (Matt. 24:30; Rev 1:7). He left with all power and blessing in a cloud and from Olivet. (Matt. 28:18; Lk. 24:50)
- 5) In His high position He is the Head of the Christ, which is His body (Col. 1:18), the giver of gifts and the One who fills all (Eph. 4:9-10).

How glorious to realize that even while in Heaven He is not only working and interceding for the saints (Heb. 7:25), but working with them (Mk. 16:20).

It is a blessed thing to know that He has entered within the veil, and by His grace we shall enter too. May God make these truths real to us.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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