

Christ Renewed Thoughts on The Ascension - Part 1

Introduction

When there is a deeper meditative consideration of the ascension of our Lord the individual is quickly convinced that here are depths of truths in it far beyond human comprehension much less full appreciation. I recall the first time the Holy Spirit caused me to catch a glimpse of the truth that Jesus, the man, actually went through the celestial ranks of celestial beings to the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is a profound truth that a man of flesh and bone has not just ascended vertically, but has entered the sphere of the spirit world. Here on this side of the veil everything is earthy, and so it must be, but beyond the veil where God dwells all is spirit. This does not mean all are ghost like vapors floating around, but rather it is a world where all is linked to the spirit. Paul was caught up into that world (2 Cor. 12:2) and the disciples for a few moments on the mount of transfiguration saw something of that world (Matt. 17:2-5; 2 Pet. 1:16-18).

- a) Adding to the wonder of this is that this man Jesus has gone into that world and never needed to be changed as we need to be (1 Cor. 15:49; 51-52). This man entered in by virtue of His own blood and brought no defilement into the true holy of holies.
- b) When the ascension of our Lord is meditated upon the individual soon becomes aware that this truth, as with any truth concerning our Lord, is far beyond the ability of the natural mind to comprehend. We can know it as a fact but to comprehend it, even in the slightest degree, necessitates the Holy Spirit's enlightenment. A man of flesh and bone has not just ascended vertically but has entered that sphere of the spirit world.
- c) The contrast between the ascension of our Lord and His coming again to earth.

| His Ascension | Reference | His coming again | Reference |
|--|----------------|---|----------------|
| He left from Olivet | Acts 1:12 | He shall return to Olivet | Zech. 14:4 |
| He went in a cloud | Acts 1:9 | He shall return with clouds | Rev. 1:7 |
| He went unseen by the world's populace | Matt. 28:16 | He comes and every eye shall see Him | Rev. 1:7 |
| He went bodily | Jn. 6:62 | He shall come bodily | Rev. 19:11 |
| He left giving the offer of salvation | Matt. 28:19-20 | He shall return as the Executor of judgment | Rev. 6, 11, 19 |

- d) This paper is more of a clinical paper than an exposition of the divine truth.

The Ascension of Christ

There are numerous passages in the New Testament that bring to our attention the ascension of Christ. This does not take into account the references to what He has been doing since His ascension, nor the pledges it indicates.

- a) There are three historical references (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9). Other epistle references or indicators that He has ascended are Eph. 4:8-10; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:22. This does not take into account the many indicators in Hebrews.
- b) Dr. Luke wrote of the ascension in three places and with three different emphasis:
 - i) Luke 24:50 speaks of the place
 - ii) Acts 1:9 of the cloud
 - iii) Acts 1:10 of the two men.

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Prophecies concerning the ascension of Christ

When considering the prophecies concerning our Lord's ascension, they are in two subsections:

- a) Those made before He came to earth:
 - i) "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men" (Psa. 68:18) (Quoted in Eph. 4:7-8).
 - ii) "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" (Psa. 24:7).
- b) Those made by the Lord before His ascension:
 - i) "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" (Jn. 6:62).
 - ii) "Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me" (Jn. 7:33).
 - iii) "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (Jn. 14:28).
 - iv) "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?" (Jn. 16:5).
 - v) "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; 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" (Jn. 20:17).

Words used to describe the ascension

The ascension of our Lord is spoken of in a number of different ways as the following verses show:

- a) Luke 24:51 - "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up" which means to bear, to be lead up, to be brought on ones way.
- b) Acts 1:9 - "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up". This is a different word from verse 11, and indicates that He was raised up.
- c) Acts 1:9 - "received up" is "hypelaben", and indicates it was under Him, that is, He seemed to be supported by the cloud.
- d) Acts 1:10 - "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up." This word means to travel as on a journey, or to depart and go on ones way.
- e) Acts 1:11 - "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven." This Greek word means to receive up and it is used of the vessel (Acts 10:16) and (1 Tim. 3:16). It indicates the resultant action, that is, this is the end of the journey.
- f) Ephesians 4:8 - "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." This Greek word "anabaino" means to be borne up, to rise.
- g) Revelation 12:5 - "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne." The word translated "caught" indicates "To pluck away by force".
- i) In all these words not one of them is the result of His activity, that is, it was not His own doing. It was the activity of another, namely God, indicating again His delight in doing or causing to be done to Him. Peter preached, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance

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to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). Paul gave the same truths, “God also hath highly exalted Him” (Phil. 2:9).

How did he ascend?

The absence of earthly angelic celebrations:

- a) When the Lord came into this world there was an announcement by the angel (Lk. 2:9) followed by the celebration of His coming by a multitude of angels (Lk. 2:13). Again, when He was about to begin His public ministry He was announced by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11-17; Mk. 1:2-7, 11; Lk. 3:21-22); Jn. 1:6, 15, 23-28, 32-33) but there were no celestial declarations. Also, before His ascension there were no angelic announcements, which we would have thought there would have been. This is only true as far as the earth was concerned. Unseen by human eye there was a celebratory announcement among the heavenly hosts. In all these words not one of them is the result of His activity, it was what another was doing or causing to be done to Him.
 - i) Acts 5:31 - “Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”
 - ii) Phil. 2:9 - “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.” It is my understanding that this is when, in part, Psa. 24:3-10 was fulfilled.
- b) That which man saw:
 - i) Man saw him rising up and the cloud receiving Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9).
- c) That which angelic hosts saw:
 - i) The Lord disappeared out of their sight, and yet this is only true as far as the earth was concerned. there was a celebratory announcement among the heavenly hosts. As He ascended and the cloud received Him one can almost hear the celebratory praises, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory (Psa. 24:3-10).

Why the ascension?

While we oftentimes muse on the work and sufferings of our Lord at Calvary, I have seldom heard much concerning the ascension of the Lord. This divine activity can be more greatly appreciated when we consider the spiritually vital necessity for us in the works the Lord does now, in the future, and God’s reasons for it relative to Christ. The ascension is vital for:

- a) The fulfillment of prophetic scriptures.
 - i) Among the visible prototypes of the Lord’s ascension are the ascension of Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:10-11) and the Angel of the Lord ascending after speaking with the parents of Samson (Jud. 13:20).
 - ii) There were ceremonial types. Hebrews chapters 9-10 deal with the truths presented on the Day of Atonement. The major subjects the writer deals with are the contrasts between the places the High Priest entered, the earthly tabernacle and the True tabernacle, Heaven (Heb. 9:11, 24); the superiority of the blood of our Lord in comparison with the blood of animals (Heb. 9:12-15, 25); the yearly remembrance of sins contrasted with the once for all sacrifice of the Lord (Heb. 9:25, 26; 10:3).
 1. On that ancient day the priest changed his garments of glory and beauty and put on four articles of linen. They were a linen coat, breeches, girdle and mitre (Lev. 16:4). Being thus dressed indicated the holiness of the Lord in entering the true Tabernacle, that is

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Heaven, for He is a Priest who is holy (Heb. 7:26). With incense and blood the priest entered the holiest of all and made atonement for the sins of the people. Christ entered Heaven, not with the blood of calves and goats but by virtue of His own blood. Thankfully He did not enter by virtue of His sonship but by virtue of His own blood (Heb. 9:12, 25). That is vital to observe for it is how we now enter the presence of the God of glory, by virtue of His blood. What we do now spiritually we will one day do when our bodies and beings are changed.

b) A divine activity demonstrating the Father's satisfaction in all that He did.

- i) When our Lord was here there were two occasions the heavens were opened and God gave His declarations of His pleasure in the Son. It occurred at His baptism (Matt. 3:17) and on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17). Added to these the fact that in speaking to the Lord, but in the hearing of the people because of the Lord He would glorify His name again (Jn. 12:27-34). In going to Calvary where, according to the pleasure (will) of God the Lord suffered for sins, God showed His satisfaction with that work in raising Him from the dead. However, the immediate greatest manifestation of the satisfaction of God was when the Lord ascended to Heaven. This satisfaction will also be seen when He comes to reign and His enemies will be made His footstool (Heb. 1:13; 10:13). At this time God's satisfaction is seen in "giving Him a name above every name" (Phil. 2:9); in decreeing that all the angels of God should worship Him; and giving Him a place far above principalities and powers; and being made Head over all (Eph. 1:22). The ascension was the first step in manifesting the Father's satisfaction in Him.

... To be continued

**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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