



Acts 1:9-11

Ascension of Jesus Christ

Dr. Luke was a careful historian who verified his evidence. He and the other writers recorded for us the bodily appearances of the risen Lord to men for 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension. These are based on solid historical evidence. These bodily appearances of Jesus came to an end when Christ ascended into heaven and resumed His position He had before His becoming incarnate man.

The Ascension of Christ is the consummation and the culminating point of Christ's redemptive work (Hebrews 8:1). It took place after 40 days of resurrection appearances when Jesus ascended from the Bethany side of the ridge of Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12).

CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST

The Ascension is Christ's exaltation and glory after His saving work on earth had been accomplished (Philippians 2:9). He is the exalted Son of God at the right hand of the Father (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:21). It is the proof of His victory (Ephesians 4:8). He is now in the position of honor in heaven at the right hand of His Father (Psalm 110:1). It is the permanent place of power (Acts 2:33), happiness (Psalm 26:11), and rest.

All that Jesus began to do and teach.

Luke tells us about *all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up . . .* (Acts 1:1-2). What did Jesus do? He tells us when He read Himself into His messianic office at the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:18-21).

These same things Christ continues to do through His new Body –the church. The book of Acts tells what He continues to do and teach through His body of believers.

Jesus died and rose again from the dead.

Christianity is based on historical facts. It is impossible to separate the Christ of faith from the historical Jesus. He is one and the same. The Christ of faith is the Jesus of history. He lived a perfect life on this earth in Jerusalem and was crucified on a Roman cross, and rose from the dead. These are historical facts.

From a secular historian's point of view, Luke is an accurate, credible historian. He has been proven over and over again by scholars to be an extraordinary historian. Luke 1:1-4 tells us how he went about his gathering evidence and evaluating it.

evidence and evaluating it.

Jesus rose from the dead. He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

The resurrection of Jesus is based on historical facts. There were eyewitnesses that Jesus was alive and appeared and disappeared before people over a period of 40 days.

He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive (v. 3). He appeared to them as one who had risen from the dead. They knew He had died, saw Him dead with their own eyes on the cross and in the grave, but then Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them.

Luke says he had convincing proofs or demonstrative proofs of the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection has been demonstrated by ten convincing proofs to the five senses. It was a real documented historical event.

Essentials of the kingdom of God

The resurrected Christ taught the disciples essential things about the kingdom of God (v. 3).

The Trinity is emphasized in vv. 4, 5, 6. Each person of the Godhead is referred to in these verses. Jesus told the believers to wait for what the Father had promised . . . (v. 4). The promise of the Father will be fulfilled in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now (v. 5).

The disciples kept asking Jesus about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel (vv. 6-7). Jesus did not deny the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, but He refused to give them a time when it would happen. The heavenly Father, as sovereign God, reserves that for Himself.

Jesus gave His commission to go and make disciples in all the earth (v. 8). You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you . . . The word *dunamis* literally means, to enable them, from to be able. ” The special enabling by the Holy Spirit is to make them, My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (v. 8).

The word witness means to affirm that one has seen, or heard, or experienced something, to tell what one has learned first hand personally. A witness is one who bears testimony by his death; he is not a spectator. Our English word martyr is a transliteration of the Greek word for "witness." These witnesses died because they were already martyrs. The fires of persecution revealed them. The function of an apostle was to give witness to the resurrection.

Jesus ascended into heaven.

There were eyewitnesses to the ascension of Jesus Christ. Their eyes were fixed on Him as He ascended, so there could be no mistake about an event so supernatural. As the disciples were standing on the Mount of

there could be no mistake about an event so supernatural. As the disciples were standing on the Mount of Olives they saw Jesus suddenly ascend into a cloud, and they never saw Him again. He didn't go beyond the cloud, either; He just disappeared.

The Gospel of Luke teaches us about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up . . . (vv. 1-2a). Verses 9-11 reads, "And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? 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" (Acts 1:9-11, NASB 1995). Jesus was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Jesus was taken up (v. 9), went (v. 10), received up (v. 11). A cloud took under Him. He seems to be supported by the cloud, disappeared, but the people who were watching Him had their eyes fixed on, or gazing upon Him. It was a strained intent, denoting a continuous steadfast attention. They were stretching to look intently into the sky while He was departing. "

Luke used the word "looking" (*blepo*) meaning to see, to look, to direct the eyes and the attention upon an object. It is not as though Jesus was suddenly snatched away out of their sight. He did not vanish as He had done when leaving His disciples during the forty days after His resurrection.

The onlookers were gazing intently meaning looked intently at someone or something. "

Two men in white clothing stood beside them, and they also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? (v. 11) It does not read angels, but men. Who were these two men in white clothing standing there speaking to the disciples? D. L. Moody suggested they were Moses and Elijah (cf. the transfiguration of Jesus, Matt. 17:2-3). Most Bible scholars say these men were angelic messengers since we encounter them frequently in Acts (5:19-20; 8:26; 10:3-7, 30-32; 11:13-14; 12:7-10, 23; 27:23).

The two men told the disciples, 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 (v. 11). Observe how closely the resurrection, ascension and second coming of Christ are related. The heavenly messenger says, "This same Jesus" would indeed come back in the way in which He went, however the implication is that He would not immediately appear again.

The ascension is the abiding proof that the resurrection of Jesus was more than a temporary resuscitation. It conveyed to His followers that the appearances that had occurred over the 40-day period had come to an end. Their teaching period was over and there was now an awareness that He was with them all the time. In reality there truly was no disappearance of Christ. They just couldn't see His presence with physical sight. He was no longer perceived by physical sight or sensation, but by spiritual insight.

Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. He bade His followers good-bye, ascended visibly into heaven and disappeared from their sight.

The royal chariot was the cloud closely associated with the divine presence in other parts of the Scriptures. Christ will come again on clouds of glory (Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7). The cloud that received Jesus from their sight was no doubt the *Shekinah* cloud of glory. It was the visible symbol of God's glory that received Him and hid Him from their eyes. The cloud served only to hide Jesus.

Phillips translates: He was lifted up before their eyes till a cloud hid Him from their sight. "

This same Jesus is coming back. One day this same Jesus will return in glory and every eye shall see Him.

The essential fact of the Ascension of Christ is that He departed and disappeared from view. The distance and direction is really of no importance. Our Lord withdrew from a world of limitations to where God is. Heaven is at once a place and a state and personality necessarily implies locality.

Whatever, therefore, may be said of the Resurrection in regard to the laws of nature applies equally to the Ascension. Our Lord's resurrection and body of ascension was different from the body laid in the tomb, yet it was essentially the same. It could be seen, touched, handled, recognized; He could eat and drink, appear and disappear, etc. It was just like He just stepped off into a place where they could no longer see Him, yet He was there all the time.

THE FACT OF THE ASCENSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Ascension of Christ was anticipated in both the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus.

Anticipated in the Psalms

The Ascension of Christ is anticipated in the Royal Psalms in the Old Testament (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110, 132). They looked forward to the exaltation of David's greater Son. The apostle Peter quotes Ps. 110:1 in Acts 2:34 as part of his great Pentecost sermon. Compare also Ps. 110:1 with Hebrews 1:13; 10:12, 13; Ps. 16:8-11 with Acts 2:25-33; and Ps. 68:18 with Eph. 4:8.

Anticipated in the Gospels

The Ascension of Christ was anticipated by Christ (Lk. 9:31, 51; John 6:62; 7:33; 12:32; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 10, 17, 28; 10:17). Jesus' ascension is implied in the allusions to His coming to earth on clouds of heaven when He returns (Matt. 24:30; 26:64). To His grumbling disciples Jesus said, 'What if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?' (Jn. 6:62). Jesus said to Mary, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God' (John 20:17, NASB 1995).

Jesus said, 'It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you' (John 16:7). It is by means of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in us that Jesus makes His life available to each of us so intimately and personally.

Basis for New Testament Teaching

The New Testament writers base their teachings on the fact of the Ascension (Acts 1:6-12). Christ was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of the sight of the people who witnessed His ascension (v. 9). At His Ascension His resurrection body was uplifted till it disappeared.

Christ's session in heaven as our High Priest is a position of authority and honor at God's right hand and is based on the ascension of Christ. Jesus was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. In his Gospel Luke says, 'And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them' (24:51). The Ascension attempts to put into words what is beyond words, describes what is beyond description. In Acts 1:9 he continues with the same thought, 'And after he had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Those who had been listening to the

they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Those who had been listening to the blessing were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing . . . (v. 10).

The ascension is the culmination of Christ's glorification after His resurrection, and was necessary for His heavenly exaltation. The resurrection of Christ demanded the ascension and is the culmination of the incarnation of Christ. The ascension was the entrance into a wider work of Christ as Lord and High Priest (Jn. 7:39; 16:7).

The gift of the Holy Spirit came from the ascended Christ. He and the Father had promised the coming of the Holy Spirit to every believer.

The apostle Peter

The apostle Peter says in Acts 2:33 Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God. The epistles of Paul tell us Christ will be in heaven until He returns (1 Thess. 4:16; cf. Peter in Acts 3:21). The glorification of believers is guaranteed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been made subjected to Him (1 Pet. 3:21-22).

Stephen who lay dying by stoning as the first Christian martyr gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). Saul of Tarsus was in hearty agreement with putting him to death (8:1).

The apostle Paul

Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians on the road to Damascus when he suddenly saw a light from heaven and heard a voice. When Saul inquired the origin the voice from heaven told him, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting (Acts 9:3-5).

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:34, Christ is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. "

He places strong emphasis on the Ascension of Christ in his letters. Ephesians 1:20-21 says God raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion . . . There Christ is sovereign over all and head over all things to the church (v. 22). We believers are raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places (2:6). He who descended is Himself also who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things (Eph. 4:10).

Christ was exalted after the extreme humiliation of the crucifixion (Phil. 2:6-11). God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name. "Our citizenship (or commonwealth) is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (3:20). Christ is in heaven and He is coming for us (1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-18). Christ who was revealed in the flesh . . . was taken up in glory, writes the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:16.

Hebrews

The writer of Hebrews tells us more about the ascension than any other part of the New Testament. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3b). Christ enjoys a position of authority in heaven as the Son of God (1:4-13). All things are subjected to Him (2:8).

Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor (2:9). Our great high priest has passed through the heavens (perfect tense). He has entered within the veil for us and serves there on our behalf. He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently (7:24) since He always lives to make intercession for them (v. 25). He is exalted above the heavens (v. 26) because He is a Son, made perfect forever (v. 28).

What is the central idea in Hebrews? Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man (8:1-2). He ministers in the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation. . . . in heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (9:12, 24). Jesus, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God (10:12). In order to win the Christian race we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (12:20).

The apostle John

Our Advocate in heaven (1 John 2:1) is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him . . . (Rev. 1:7). Remember how He went up? (Acts 1:9-11). He is the Lamb standing, as if slain at the throne in heaven (Rev. 5:5-6) who took the scroll, and they sang a new song in heaven saying, Worthy is the Lamb (vv. 5-14). To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion, forever and ever (v. 13). Such exaltation of our Lord in heaven necessarily involves His prior Ascension.

OUR LORD'S PRESENT LIFE IN HEAVEN

Christ is exalted to the presence of the Father in heaven, but His activity on earth is evident.

1. Christ is seated on the right hand of the Father (Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12).
2. Christ bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 4:9, 33).
3. Christ added disciples to the church (Acts 2:47).
4. He works with disciples in evangelism (Mk. 16:20).
5. Christ healed the impotent man (Acts 3:16).
6. He stood to receive the martyr Stephen (Acts 7:56).
7. He appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5).
8. Christ makes intercession for His people (Rom. 8:26; Heb. 7:25).
9. Christ comes to the aid to those who are tempted (Heb. 2:18).
10. Christ sympathizes with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).
11. Christ is able to save to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25).
12. Christ lives forever (Heb. 7:24; Rev. 1:18).

12. Christ lives forever (Heb. 7:24; Rev. 1:18).
13. He is our Great High Priest (Heb. 7:26; 8:1; 10:21).
14. He abides forever and possesses an eternal, permanent priesthood (Heb. 7:24).
15. Christ appears in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24).
16. Christ is our Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).
17. He is waiting until all opposition to Him is overcome (Heb. 10:13).

SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are always in the presence of Christ. We are never out of His sight, and therefore out of His mind. There are no earthly limitations of space and time with our ascended Lord and Savior. We can draw near and dwell in His presence. *Ἐγώ, ἰαμ ιυυ αυυ αλυυαυυ* (Matt. 28:20). Christ is living and in His life we live and have our being (Gal. 2:20). In His life we enjoy fellowship with God and victory in the Christian life. We have free access through grace into God's presence and we can draw near and keep near to Him.
2. The ascension is the demonstration of the all-sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ on behalf of the believer. The atoning sacrifice of Christ has removed our sin and guilt, and His righteousness has provided our acceptance with the Father (2 Cor. 5:21). The atonement of Christ was a *once for all* complete and perfect atonement. Jesus Christ is a human and divine High Priest who is able to sympathize, comfort and save the sinner (Heb. 9:12; 4:15; 2:18; 7:25).
3. Because He ascended to heaven, Christ is the head and Lord of His church (Eph. 1:22; 4:10, 15; Col. 2:19).
4. Our ascended High Priest is the perfect mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6) and advocate with the Father (1 Jn. 2:1). The very presence of Christ at the right hand of the Father pleads on our behalf. He pleads by His presence on His Father's throne, and He is able to save to the uttermost through His intercession, because of His perpetual life and His inviolable, undelegated, intramissible priesthood (Heb. 7:24-25).
5. There is an essential relationship between the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:33, NASB 1995).
6. When Jesus ascended into heaven He did not go to some distant planet in space. Heaven is not several billion light-years away. Instead, Jesus simply stepped into a different dimension of existence. There is an invisible spiritual kingdom which surrounds us on every side. Jesus is not far away, and neither is the throne of God and the greatness of His power. He is right here with us right now. The invisible spiritual life is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit who came as a result of Christ's leaving this earth. Because Jesus ascended into heaven you and I can have all of Him right now.
7. And just think of it –Just as Jesus stepped into invisibility, He will step back again into visibility. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye He will suddenly appear. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Will we see Him today?

today?

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