

The
Ascension
Of
Christ

Study Book For The Ascension Of Christ

John 20:17 (KJV) ¹⁷ 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."

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Introduction

A study of the life of Christ is a very interesting and a very important study. If you claim to be a Christian you should spend a lot of time studying the life of Christ because by doing so you will learn how Christ lived his life and you will be equipped to live more like him. I would hesitate to say what is the most important point of his life. His birth is certainly a point of interest: *(Matthew 1:18) "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."* Never before and never since has a child been born like Jesus Christ. When he performed his first miracle is also of interest: *(John 2:1-2) "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: ²And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage."* When they wanted wine and his mother told him there was no wine; it was at this time that Jesus performed his first miracle by turning water to wine. *(John 2:11) "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."* This miracle had the exact results that Jesus was seeking; that is "his disciple believed on him. Even a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus came to believe that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God: *(John 3:1-2) "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: ²The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."* You and I are very fortunate that we have a record of all of Jesus' miracles.

Jesus taught us a very good lesson when he was tempted in the wilderness by Satan. Every time Satan presented Jesus he gave answer to the temptation with words that even Satan understood and overcame Satan with what he said: *(Matthew 4:3-4) "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. ⁴But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* The tempter was unable to overcome Jesus because he knew what God and he left Jesus: *(Matthew 4:11) "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."* By this demonstrated how important it is for us to know the word of God; the apostle Paul was well aware of this also: *(2 Timothy 2:15) "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth*

not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” If you know God’s word and use it the tempter will depart from you and at the same time you will show yourself “approved unto God”.

Perhaps you find the crucifixion of Christ to be interesting. (*Matthew 27:35*) “*And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*” Before this could be accomplished they had to hold a mock trial. Those who did not believe he was the Son of God shouted “crucify him, crucify him!” Maybe you like to consider the suffering that Jesus endured. After being shamefully beaten he was forced to carry his cross. Can you even imagine having a crown of thorns placed upon your head? I wouldn’t think that they place this crown upon his head gently; rather I believe it was roughly shoved and push down so that the thorns dug into his flesh. How often does Christ’s suffering come to your mind? How often do you remember that he died for your sins?

While reflecting upon the life of Christ we cannot overlook his resurrection. When Peter stood up with the eleven he spoke a very powerful sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Notice what he accused them of crucifying Jesus by wicked hands: (*Acts 2:23*) “*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*” In my opinion Peter was accusing them of murdering Jesus. Peter also informed them that it was not possible that Jesus could be held by death because God raised him from the grave alive: (*Acts 2:24*) “*Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*” Jesus knew that God would raise him from the grave: (*Matthew 27:62-63*) “*Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,* ⁶³*Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.* An angel informed two women both having the name Mary that Jesus was not in the tomb, but that he was risen: (*Matthew 28:5-6*) “*And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.* ⁶*He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*” He even invited them to look into the tomb and see where he had been laid. I do not have any doubt that God did not raise Jesus from the dead.

I would now like to turn our attention to another fact that we don't hear too much about; I want to direct your attention to the ascension of Jesus. For me this is another very important subject that we should consider.

Introduction questions

1. True or false; studying the life of Christ will equip you to be a better Christian. How?

2. How was the birth of Christ unusual? [Matt. 1:18].

3. Where and what was the occasion of Jesus' first miracle? [Jn. 2:11].

4. What effect did this miracle have upon the disciples of Jesus? [Jn. 2:11].

5. What was the name of the Pharisee who said "we know that thou art a teacher come from God? [Jn. 3:1, 2].

6. What did Jesus say when he was tempted by the tempter? [Matt. 4:3, 4].

7. If we study our Bibles will we be able to answer temptation the same as Jesus did?

8. Do you think that Jesus had a fair trial before he was crucified?

9. Who accused his listeners that they by wicked hands had crucified Jesus? [Acts 2:23].

10. Who Jesus raised from the dead? [Acts 2:24].

11. What are the names of the two women who found Jesus tomb empty? [Matt. 28:1].

12. What did the angel tell them? [Matt. 28:6].

Notes

Paul wrote that Jesus had ascended

Not only did Paul give testimony that Christ ascended he also told what Jesus said when “he ascended on high”: (*Ephesians 4:6-8*) “*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. ⁷But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ⁸Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*” The phrase he ascended has been misunderstood by some. The Jews think of it as when Moses ascended up to the firmament at the giving of the law; actually Moses ascended to the top of Mount Sinai. Moses never ascended to the firmament of heaven. Other Jewish writers state that it was like when David went up to going up to the high fortresses of his enemies. The ascension of Jesus is not to be understood in a figurative sense but in a literal sense when he ascended from Mount Olivet, where he was being attended to by angels and his ascension was in plain view of his apostles. David foretold that Christ would ascend to heaven: (*Psalms 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.*” Christ descended to earth when he came down from heaven and he descended into the earth when he was buried. Therefore it is important that we be made aware that he ascended back to heaven. No doubt Paul had the words of David in mind when he wrote Ephesians 4:8 because he goes on to mention gifts just like David did. We should also understand that when Christ ascended back to heaven was the time that our Lord was highly exalted by his Father: (*Psalms 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.*” Christ having been raised from the dead was highly exalted when he ascended to the highest heavens where he is now seated at the right hand of God: (*Hebrews 1:3*) “*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;*” Having been raised from the grave and ascending to heaven to be at God’s right hand proved that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

Ephesians 4:8 stated that Jesus led “captivity captive” which is a phrase used in the Old Testament to indicate a conquest over enemies: (*Judges 5:12*) “*Awake,*

awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.” Paul is telling us that Christ conquered those who had conquered us [i.e. the devil]. Christ certainly triumphed over those on the cross by overcoming death; furthermore, he was buried in the earth even as Jonas was in the belly of the great fish: *(Ephesians 4:10) “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”* But his triumph was completed when he ascended to heaven. After the ascension he says that Jesus first descended: *(Ephesians 4:9) “(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?”* It makes sense that he would say this because before Christ could ascend he first had to descend into the lower parts of the earth [i.e. a grave]. Our Lord first humbled himself and then he was exalted.

In this context Paul wrote that when Jesus ascended he “gave gifts to men”. Needless to say we all like to receive gifts; but the gifts that Jesus gave were special gifts that were given to the apostles: *(Ephesians 4:11) “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”* These men received a special gift of the Holy Spirit. This benefitted those who had the privilege of hearing them but through their inspired writings you and me are also benefitted as Paul explains in the very next verse: *(Ephesians 4:12) “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”* Through the teaching of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers resulting in their listeners being perfected and Christ’s body [i.e. church] were edified. When you read the written word you too can be perfected and edified. The ministry of our evangelist and teachers can have the same effect today. This is why it is so important that we give book, chapter and verse so that our preaching and teaching can have the same effect that it had nearly two thousand years ago. I will readily admit that without the word of God I would not be capable of teaching anyone what they must do to obtain salvation.

What Paul wrote about Jesus’ ascension questions

1. Do all men understand the words “he ascended” alike?

2. What do you believe the words “he ascended” mean? [Eph. 4:8].

3. What did Jesus do when he ascended? [Eph. 4:8]. Explain your answer.

4. Before Christ could ascend to heaven what must he first do? [Eph. 4:10].

5. Compare the words of Ephesians 4:8 to Psalms 68:18; do they agree with each other?

6. What did Paul mean when he wrote that Jesus led captivity captive?

7. How was Christ highly exalted? [Heb. 1:3].

8. When did Jesus descend to the lower parts of the earth? [Eph. 4:9].

9. What gifts did Jesus give when he ascended to heaven? [Eph. 4:11].

10. Did anyone other than the recipients benefit from these gifts? [Eph. 4:12].

11. Of what benefit are these gifts to us?

Notes

Jesus foretold his ascension

In the gospel account of John he recorded Jesus' foretelling his ascension. The first reference may be found in *John 6:62* "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" In this chapter John records several interesting facts that occurred; he tell how Jesus fed 5,000 with 5 loaves and two fishes [Vs. 5-13]. He tells how those who had seen the miracle believed that he was that prophet that was to come into the world: (*John 6:14*) "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." They then professed a desire to be instructed: (*John 6:28*) "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Several did not understand his teaching: (*John 6:60*) "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" It was when Jesus knew that there were those present who were murmuring that he foretold his ascension: (*John 6:61-62*) "When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? ⁶²What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" From that time many of his disciples followed him no more: (*John 6:66*) "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Jesus then asked his apostles a very important question and Peter gave the answer that Jesus longs to hear from each of us: (*John 6:67-68*) "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? ⁶⁸Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." This event in the life of Christ took place in the synagogue at Capernaum: (*John 6:59*) "These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum."

Jesus told the Pharisees and the chief priests that he was going to return to his Father: (*John 7:33*) "Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. The little while that Jesus spoke of was the next Passover; which was only about one half of a year. He spoke these words to the Pharisee, chief priests and the officers that were sent to take him. He even told them where he was going. He was telling them that he was aware that they were seeking to kill him. If they had only sought his favor while he was still alive they could have found it. He would only be with them for a short time but until that time

came he must continue his work in spite of them. Perhaps Jesus found comfort in these words; realizing that in a short time he would return to his Father in heaven.

On another occasion Jesus sought to comfort his disciples: (*John 14:28*) *“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.”* Christ had already told his disciples that he would soon depart from them; but in an effort to comfort them he now tells them that he would return and receive them unto himself and receive them to himself and they could be with in his Father’s house for ever. Look to the first part of this chapter: (*John 14:1-3*) *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And 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.”* In foretelling this Jesus also makes a promise to them and you and me. Christ promised that he has gone to prepare a place for us and he will come again and receive us unto himself. Can you imagine being in heaven with God and Jesus forever? I along with the ones to whom these words were first spoken find comfort in Jesus’ promise. (*John 16:5*) *“But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?”*

In John the sixteenth chapter Jesus warns his disciples and foretells them of the persecution that they would receive from the Jews [Jn. 16:1-4]. Then in verse five he tells them that he was going back to “him that sent me”: (*John 16:5*) *“But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?”* In John 13:3 Peter asked “lord thither goes thou”? And Thomas asked much the same in *John 14:5* *“Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?”* It seems as though in John 16:4 that Jesus found it strange that no one asks him where he was going. It might have been that they did not ask at this time because their hearts were filled with sorrow: (*John 16:6*) *“But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.”* We would have been sorrowful also if our teacher and friend whom we had been with for three years suddenly told he was going away. If you have been faithful to God’s will when we die we too will go to our Father who sent us to this earth; although we were not sent in the same manner as Jesus was sent. Knowing that we

will be with God throughout all eternity should be enough motivation to be faithful to death: (*Revelation 2:10*) “*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*”

After his death, burial and resurrection Jesus once again foretells of his ascension to heaven: (*John 20:17*) “*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.*” Christ’s body was not a phantom that could not be touched because as we know Thomas later was granted permission to touch Jesus: (*John 20:27*) “*Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*” Thomas has been given a nickname [i.e. Doubting Tom] that he may have at one time deserved but as the next verse states he became a believer and not a doubter: (*John 20:28*) “*And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*” What a statement, what a confession and what a testimony Thomas made! Our Lord’s next statement to Thomas should be of interest to us: (*John 20:29*) “*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*” Jesus was assured that because Thomas had seen he had become a believer and Thomas now understood that Jesus was his Lord and God. May I suggest that Thomas is like you and me; that is he was slow to believe! There were many who came to believe who had never seen Jesus’ resurrected body; they had only heard the testimony of the apostles: (*Acts 6:7*) “*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*” Jesus says such are “blessed”! They are happy because they are worthy of God’s spiritual blessings. I might also add that their faith was stronger than Thomas’ faith; isn’t this the situation that you and I are found?

Jesus foretells his ascension questions

1. Where did Jesus say he would ascend to? [Jn. 6:62].

2. Was anyone ever offended at Jesus' teaching? [Jn. 6:61].

3. Was Jesus ever deserted by some of his disciples? [Jn. 6:66].

4. What important question did Peter ask Jesus at this time? [Jn. 6:68].

5. Where did this event in the life of Christ take place? [Jn. 6:59].

7. Where did Jesus tell the Pharisees he would go when he ascended? [Jn. 7:33].

8. What was the "little while" that Jesus referred to?

9. In the fourteenth chapter of the gospel of John with what did Jesus try to comfort his disciples? [Jn. 14:1-3].

10. Can't we not only consider this to be a prophecy but also a promise?

11. Who did Jesus forbid to touch his resurrected body? [Jn. 20:16].

12. Why did Jesus forbid her to touch him? [Jn. 20:17].

13. Did he ever grant anyone to touch his resurrected body? [Jn. 20:29]. If so, who?

14. Have very many come to believe on Jesus without ever seeing him? [Acts 6:7].

15. Have you ever seen Jesus? _____ If you answered "no" by what have you become a believer?

16. Why are some believers "blessed" or happy? [Jn. 6:29].

17. Is it possible for us to have a stronger faith than Thomas had?

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From where and when did Jesus ascend?

God wanted us to be certain that Jesus did ascend back to heaven; therefore he has provided us with both the time and place from whence Jesus ascended. When did Jesus ascend? Luke in his book that is titled Acts gives us the time in his opening chapter: (*Acts 1:3*) *“To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:”* We know that Jesus suffered and died; that he was buried and that he was resurrected from the grave; Luke wanted us to know that Jesus did not go and hide in shame [death by crucifixion was considered a very shameful death]; instead Jesus showed himself alive for forty days after his resurrection. These forty days were indeed a remarkable time of the scriptures because this is when he proved to many that he was alive and had become victorious over death; it was important for the people of Jesus’ day to know that he was not dead and it is a fact that we too must be aware of and Paul tells us why it is important: (*Romans 6:3-7*) *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷For he that is dead is freed from sin.”* Paul assures us that because Christ was resurrected so will we be resurrected if we have died to sin in baptism. During this forty day period Jesus proved to many people that he was alive: (*1 Corinthians 15:3-8*) *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: ⁵And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: ⁶After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. ⁷After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. ⁸And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”* This statement was made in front of many who had seen Jesus alive and they could not deny that Christ had been resurrected from the grave. Now that Jesus during this forty day period had proven that he was alive it was time for him to ascend back to heaven to be with his Father. Therefore, we must conclude that Jesus’ ascension was forty days after his resurrection.

If we return to the first chapter of the book of Acts we can learn where it was that Jesus ascended: (Acts 1:6-11) *“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? ⁷And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. ⁸But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. ⁹And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”* Those who were present at this time were still looking for an earthly kingdom to be restored to the Jews. Immediately after telling them it was not for them to know the times or the seasons and informing them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them Jesus ascended and a cloud received him out of their sight. But we have not answered the question of where this event took place; but we can answer by looking at the next verse: (Acts 1:12) *“Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey.”* So from the scriptures we have shown when and where Jesus’ ascension took place.

Before going on there is one more statement I wish to make. The only thing that we know about the time of Jesus’ return is that it will be a cloudy day: (Acts 1:10-11) *“And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”.* Here we have the testimony of an angel sent from heaven that Jesus will return on a cloudy day. Since we have many cloudy days should we not be ready at all times?

The place and time of Jesus’ ascension questions

1. Has God provided us with an accurate time and place of Jesus’ ascension?

2. How long after his resurrection did Jesus ascend back to heaven? [Acts 1:3].

3. Can we be sure that Jesus was seen alive after his burial?

4. Were there many witnesses to his resurrection? [1 Cor. 15:3-8].

5. Can we prove that these words spoken by Paul were true? How does 1 Cor. 15:6 prove that Paul was speaking the truth?

6. Did Paul ever see the resurrected Jesus? [1 Cor. 15:8].

7. What did those who saw Jesus' ascension do as he was ascending back to his Father in heaven? [Acts 1:10].

8. What were these witnesses told about Jesus' return? [Acts 1:11].

9. Who gave them this information?

10. Where were they when Jesus ascended? [Acts 1:12].

11. How far away from Jerusalem were they at the time of the ascension?

Notes

God's purpose in Christ's ascension

I think most everyone will agree that everything that God does he does so with a plan and a purpose. It is up to us to find out and learn what God's purpose is. Why did God want Christ to ascend back to heaven? I feel most certain that Jesus had accomplished everything on earth that Jehovah God sent him here to do; in fact Jesus said, "it is finished": (*John 19:30*) "*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*" Jesus knew at this time that he had accomplished the whole will of God. He had been exposed to shame and reproach, he had suffered much, and he had performed the whole work his Father gave him to do which was to preach the gospel, worked miracles and obtain eternal salvation for his people. By the shedding of his blood this had been accomplished and the whole righteousness of the law had been fulfilled. Jesus knew that he had accomplished all that he was sent to do so he then said, "it is finished". Even though Jesus had not given up the ghost as of yet his work was as good as done. There is nothing more that he could do that needed to be done. Let us remember that Jesus did all of this without any help from man.

Now that Jesus had completed his work on earth God wanted him back beside Him so that He could glorify Jesus (*Luke 24:26*) "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*" The glorification of Jesus began when he was raised from the dead and was fully accomplished when he ascended to heaven to be seated at God's right hand. We consider it a high honor to be another man's right hand man. (*Hebrews 2:9*) "*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*"

Along with this glory that God bestowed upon Jesus came obligations and duties to perform: (*Hebrews 2:7*) "*Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:*" We should remember when Jesus came to this earth he was made a little lower than the angels [this was so that he could suffer death]; but now that he had ascended he was restored to his original state. Jesus was restored to the glory that he formerly had with God before the world was in existence. He was given the

honor to sit at God's right hand which none of the angels were permitted to do. Do not allow the word "sit" fool you as Jesus is not just sitting and doing nothing. He is busy doing his Father's work which includes the following:

- Jesus has been given authority over angels, authorities and powers: (*1 Peter 3:22*) "*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*" Beside all of this Christ is head of the church: (*Ephesians 1:22*) "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*" Most of us have trouble keeping our own affairs in order.
- When Jesus ascended to heaven and was glorified he was made a forerunner for us: (*Hebrews 6:20*) "*Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*" As our forerunner Jesus has also been given authority: (*Ephesians 1:22*) "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*" A "forerunner" is one who goes ahead of others; in some instances a "forerunner" is a scout who goes ahead and checks things out for those who are following him. Granted we do not need anyone to go to heaven to scout it out for us because we already know that we want to go there. So when Jesus is called a "forerunner" it simply means that he went there first from earth and there will be others who will follow him. Because of his perfect life Jesus was the perfect "forerunner"; we might say that Jesus has cleared the way for us to enter heaven.
- There is another work that Christ is now performing that I think must keep him very busy; I'm referring to his work of intercession: (*Romans 8:34*) "*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.*" While Jesus was on earth he made intercession for people with vocal prayer. By the presentation of his sacrifice Jesus intercedes for us. When we conclude our prayers "in the name of Jesus" we are not only saying that we are praying by his authority we are also asking Jesus to present our prayers to God. Christ's intercession is very beneficial to you and men: (*Hebrews 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.* We

need to be aware that Jesus is able to save those who “come unto God through him”. The reason that he is able to save us is because he “ever liveth to make intercession for us”. The salvation that the Hebrews writer is writing about is an eternal salvation and a deliverance from evil. Even though Christ died as a human he is raised from the dead and he will not die again. Christ now lives forever as our mediator and redeemer. Aren't you thankful that you have such an intercessor?

- Jesus told his apostles that if he departed from them he would send the Holy Spirit: (*John 16:7*) “*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*” Christ did not have to say “nevertheless I tell you the truth” because he was the truth; Jesus said this only to get their attention. Also he knew they were overwhelmed with grief so he tells them it is good for you if I go away! When he speaks of going away he is speaking of his forth coming death as he does in other conversations with his disciples. Each time Jesus makes this statement it is expressive of his voluntarily giving his life (*John 10:15*) “*As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*” Jesus is telling his apostles when he ascends to heaven he will send the Comforter. As of yet the Comforter had not come because Jesus had not gone away: (*John 7:39*) “*(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*” Let us remember it was when Jesus ascended back to his Father that he was glorified. The coming of the Holy Spirit as a comforter and the spirit of truth was to be through the intercession and it was to be the work of Christ to send him. For this reason it was proper and expedient for them that Christ go away first. In reality Jesus' going away was expedient for all mankind. Think about this; if the Comforter or the Holy Spirit had not come the apostles would not have anyone to guide them and they would not have been inspired to write the New Testament. All the evidence that you and I would have is what was handed down from our forefathers. The only thing we would know about our Lord is what someone told us. But since the Comforter did come and inspire the writers of the New Testament we have an accurate account of the life of Christ, the establishment of Christ's church and we know what God expects of us as Christians. So we see that sending the Comforter was definitely the work of Jesus Christ.

On the Day of Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus [ten days later] Peter told them that they were seeing evidence of Jesus sending the Holy Spirit: (Acts 2:33) *“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”* What a day for rejoicing this was; the apostles began to speak in other tongues [languages] being led by the Holy Spirit as to what should be said: (Acts 2:4) *“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* When those present heard this they accused them of being drunk: (Acts 2:12-13) *“And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? ¹³Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.”* Peter assures them that they were not drunk: (Acts 2:15) *“For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.”* It was still early in the morning [9 A.M.] and no good Jew would have drunk new wine at this time of the day. So here we have the first evidence that Jesus did indeed send the Comforter [i.e. the Holy Spirit]. Every time they performed any kind of a miracle was further proof that Jesus performed the work that he promised he would do.

- When Jesus ascended to heaven there was another work that he promised he would do and that was to prepare a place for us: (John 14:1-3) *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And 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.”* I am sure that most of us have our favorite scripture passage; this happens to be mine because this is a promise that Jesus made and it is a promise that I rely on. Here again we find Jesus comforting his disciples informing them that he is going away, but when he leaves them he is doing so to prepare a place in heaven for them. Isn’t this what each of us desire and long for? No doubt this gave them courage to go on in their duties of serving Christ and his cause; knowing that Christ has gone back to heaven to prepare a place in heaven for us should also encourage us and give us strength to face each new day’s temptations. Although Jesus spoke these comforting words to all who were present I venture to say that Simon Peter needed comforting more than all the others because Jesus had just informed him that he would deny him three times: (John 13:36-38) *“Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus an-*

swered him, *Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.* ³⁷*Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.* ³⁸*Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.*” Can you imagine how low and discouraged Peter must have felt at this time? Have you ever denied knowing Jesus? What about forsaking the assembly; is this not denying Jesus? It is my opinion that you don’t have to use the name of Jesus as a form of cursing to deny Jesus.

In some copies verse one begins thus, “and he said to his disciples”; there is no doubt that these words were addressed to all of them in general. Even though it was Peter to whom Jesus had just spoken some discouraging words. There were many things that must have lain heavily upon the minds of them all and not the least heavy burden would be the loss of Jesus’ presence among them. They were also aware that they would be hated by the Jews because Jesus himself was hated by the Jews; so when they proclaimed his name and gospel it was certain that they too would be hated. So this assurance that they would once again be with Jesus in heaven were certainly comforting words that Jesus spoke to them at this time. Of course our being worthy of the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us is depending upon our believing in God and Christ alike. We can be sure that what Jesus said will be accomplished; he will do what he says. Whether or not we will be recipients of this promise depends solely on us.

When Jesus spoke of his “father’s house” he meant heaven: (*2 Corinthians 5:1*) “*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*” Since Jesus ascended to heaven we understand that it was in heaven that he has prepared a place for us. No wonder it is said that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places: (*Ephesians 1:3*) “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*” Paul wrote by inspiration God is the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. God is not father of Jesus by creation as He is of angels or Adam. God is the father of Jesus not by adoption as is the case with saints but by natural generation; Jesus is the only begotten of the Father: (*John 3:16*) “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should*

not perish, but have everlasting life.” (1 John 4:9) “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” It being a fact that Jesus was begotten by God it means that Jesus is God’s own proper Son. Can we not understand why God wanted Jesus back in heaven with him?

Notice that these “spiritual blessings” are said to be “in Christ”. It is those who are in Christ that receive “spiritual blessings” from God: (*Romans 8:1*) “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*” Since those “in Christ” receive “spiritual blessings” and will receive “no condemnation” how can we get “in Christ”? (*Galatians 3:27*) “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” Those who are in Christ have no condemnation because they have been justified and redeemed in Christ: (*Romans 3:24*) “*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*” God blesses us with many blessings every day and we thank Him for these blessings; but the greatest blessings we receive from God are “spiritual blessings”. We need to set our affections on these “spiritual blessings” that come down from heaven: (*Colossians 3:2*) “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*” Unless your affections are set “on things above you will never seek to do God’s will and you cannot be pleasing to Him. Don’t you find it interesting that those whom God blesses with some “spiritual blessings” He blesses with them “all spiritual blessings”? (*Ephesians 1:3*) There is not a “spiritual blessing” available that God does not give to us. Both Jews and Gentiles who are faithful in Christ receive these blessings from God. Paul makes a distinction between temporal and spiritual blessings by telling us which it is that he is referring to; he leaves no doubt but that he is writing of “spiritual blessings”.

God’s purpose in Christ ascension questions

1. God has a purpose for everything He does; how can we learn what God’s purpose is?

2. Did Jesus accomplish everything that he was sent to do? [Jn. 19:30].

3. After Christ had suffered on our behalf what did he receive? [Lu. 24:26].

4. When was Christ's glorification begun? When was it completed?

5. Hebrews 2:9 states that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels; why?

6. What great honor did Christ receive after he ascended back to heaven? [Acts 7:55].

7. Who saw this?

8. After Christ's ascension did God have any work for him to do? [Heb. 2:7].

9. Why was Jesus made a little lower than the angels?

10. After his resurrection and ascension was Jesus still a little lower than the angels?

11. To what has Jesus been given authority over? [1 Pet. 3:22].

12. What is Jesus the head of? [Eph. 1:22].

13. Who has been made a forerunner for us? [Heb. 6:20].

14. What does a forerunner do?

15. What does Paul say that Jesus is doing in heaven? [Rom. 8:34].

16. What is meant when we end our prayers in Jesus' name?

17. What is Jesus able to do? [Heb. 7:25].

18. When Jesus ascended to heaven who did he send to help his apostles? [Jn. 16:7].

19. What other name do we know the Comforter by?

20. When was the evidence of the Comforter first witnessed? [Acts 2:33].

21. Were the apostles drunk at this time? [Acts 2:15].

22. When Jesus ascended to heaven what did he prepare? [Jn. 14:1-3].

23. In a prophecy to Peter what did Jesus say Peter would do? [Jn. 13:28].

24. Can we deny Jesus? If we can tell how we can deny Jesus.

25. When Jesus spoke of his "Father's house" to what was he referring? [2 Cor. 5:1].

26. With what are all Christians blessed? [Eph. 1:3].

27. Where are these blessings to be found? [Eph. 1:3].

28. You and I are children of God by adoption; was Jesus also an adopted child of God? [Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:9].

29. What benefit do Christians have by being in Christ? [Rom. 8:1].

30. How can we get in Christ? [Gal. 3:27].

31. Why will those who are “in Christ” receive “no condemnation”? [Rom. 3:24].

32. Where should we set our affections? [Col. 3:2].

33. Are “spiritual blessings” available to all obedient Christians?

Conclusion

A few years ago many were seen wearing a T shirt that asked the question, "What would Jesus do?" There is no way that they could give a reply to this question without studying the life of Christ. I have always contended that a study of the life of Christ is very important; how else will we be able to live our lives as Christ lived his life without first studying how our Lord lived his life. As you study the life of Christ you will learn how to overcome the tempter; you will see how he confirmed the words he spoke by performing miracles, by his sacrifice you learn what loving your brethren means. We can learn how much God loved Jesus when He raised him from the dead. Not of little importance is the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

In this study we have studied the writings of the apostle concerning the ascension of Jesus. We have noted from where and when Jesus ascended. We noted that Jesus foretold others that he would ascend back to heaven to be with his Father. We have also studied the many purposes of God in receiving Jesus into heaven again. In this context we also saw the works that Jesus is now doing in heaven.

I hope this study has been of benefit to you and that you will want to review it time and time again.

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