

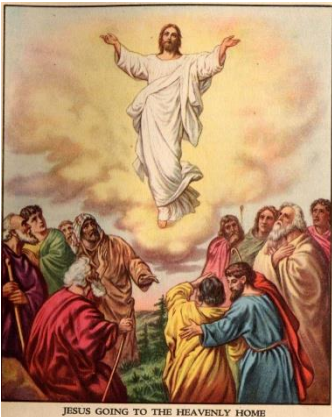
THE ASCENSION OF JESUS AND WHAT IT MEANS TO US

Many Christians suffer from A.D.D. Are you suffering from it? I'm not talking about Attention Deficit Disorder, but Ascension Deficit Disorder!

People suffer from it because not many Churches teach much about the Ascension.

If you are suffering from this disease, we'll try to remedy that today by looking at some of the many Scriptures that talk about this very significant event.

We read about it in Luke 24:50-53 ⁵⁰“When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into Heaven. ⁵²Then they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.”



This happened at Bethany, a small village on the other slope of the Mt of Olives from the centre of Jerusalem. He will return in the same way and to the same place as He left from.

Notice He lifted His hands and blessed them, and ascended to Heaven while He was blessing them. When a priest of Israel would bless an individual, he would place his hands on that person (as we do with anointing.) When blessing a group, he would naturally back up and raise his hands, so as to cover the entire group. The larger the group, the further back and higher up he would stand, to stretch his hands out to cover all for the blessing.

(All Illustrations are from Google Images)

So it could be said that when Jesus, our High Priest, extended His hands and pronounced a priestly blessing as He was ascending into Heaven, He was extending the blessing to all humanity – all creation. All are included in the blessing of Jesus!

So He was taken up into Heaven. Where is that? Is it a place up in the sky? No, it isn't a physical place. It is a spiritual place, a realm or kingdom in a different **dimension**, or a different state of being, a different **level** to ours – in the spirit realm. Heaven is the place where God's Presence is, where God dwells.

Verse 52 “Then they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

This was a cause of great joy to the disciples. Seeing Him go back to Heaven like this was a marvellous miracle and showed them how powerful and amazing He was. It showed where He had come from. (He had talked about coming from the Father in Heaven, but they hadn't understood that.) And they now understood He was going to return from there one day too. What a magnificent sight it must have been as Jesus gradually rose up into the sky while He was blessing them, so they knew He would always be with them – so they experienced great joy.

Verse 53 is the last verse of Luke, and Luke also wrote Acts, so the story continues into Acts 1. Acts 1:1-3 “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day He was taken up to Heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the

apostles He had chosen. ³ After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”

Acts 1:9 describes the Ascension once again! It adds the detail that He went up into a cloud.

“After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.”

Clouds are often associated in the Bible with the glory and Presence of God. For example, the cloud guided Israel through the wilderness; God appeared at the Mercy Seat in a cloud; the glory of the Lord left the Temple in Jerusalem in a cloud; God speaks of “riding on a cloud;” God spoke in a cloud at the glorious transfiguration of Jesus.

So again, we see that Jesus’ disappearance into Heaven, concealed by a cloud, represents His passing into the Presence of God. And He will return “with the clouds of Heaven.” (Coming back in glory).

Daniel 7:13-14 ¹³“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Revelation 1:7 “Look, He is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of Him.” So shall it be! Amen.”

Acts 1:10 “They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.”

This reminds us of when Elijah was taken up into Heaven –

2 Kings 2:9-12 ⁹“When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied. ¹⁰ “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.” ¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to Heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.”

Elisha was promised a double portion of the spirit if he saw Elijah going. This he did, and subsequently he is recorded as performing twice as many miracles as Elijah.

The disciples had been promised the Holy Spirit. They saw Jesus go into Heaven and 10 days later they received the Holy Spirit in great power.

After the book of Acts, the Ascension is mentioned a few times, and this is where we see its meaning in the life of Christians today.

Ephesians 4:7-10 ⁷ “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: “When He ascended on high, He took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” ⁹ (What does “He ascended” mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)”

This basically says that the New Testament Church was founded on the basis of the Ascension. The Ascension is described as like a victory parade, where a conquering king would bring captives with him and give gifts to his people, often doing a tour of his territory. For Jesus the captives He brought with Him were our sins defeated, and the gifts He gave were the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Verse 7).

Verse 9 He descended to the earth first, for 30 years, won the victory over sin, and then ascended in triumph to take up His Kingdom, and to tour His territory, which in fact is the whole Universe.

Verses 11-12 go on to say how the Church was established on this basis:

¹¹“So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

There are many references to the Ascension in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:3 “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven.”

He was able to sit down, having completed the work of the salvation of mankind. Now He can sit back and enjoy that victory and watch as His Saints make use of the spiritual gifts He gives them.

Hebrews 4:14 “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”

Because He has ascended to the throne of God, let’s be encouraged to hold firmly to our faith and approach that throne boldly when we are in times of need, as Verse 16 goes on to say.

Hebrews 6:19-20 ¹⁹“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

This passage shows that **our hope** is because of the Ascension. Jesus went before us, as our forerunner, but that means we are going to follow Him to the same place where He is. He said there are many mansions there and He has gone to prepare a place for us to be with Him (John 14:2-3).

Hebrews 9:11-12 ¹¹ “But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”

This explains a little about where He is now. In a spiritual place, not part of this (physical) creation, in the spiritual tabernacle or temple in Heaven, from where He acts as our High Priest.

Verse 24 “For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; He entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.”

And now He appears for us. He is there in Heaven advocating and interceding for us, in the Holy of Holies, the Presence of God.

Romans 8:34 “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

There are other verses in Hebrews on the Ascension – we don’t have time to cover them all. Let’s just look at one more:

Hebrews 12:2 “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” He has ascended to God’s right hand, and we should fix our eyes on Him there.

So it’s a great idea to study the Ascension, and to realise where Jesus is now, and focus on Him there, praying to Him in His throne in Heaven.

Another verse encouraging us to fix our eyes on Jesus is Colossians 3:1-3

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

We have been ‘raised with Christ’. What is this referring to? It means raised with Him in the resurrection. Just as we died with Him in baptism, when we come up out of the water that represents our being raised with Him in His resurrection.

But we have been raised with Him even further than that. We have been raised in His ascension. We’ll see proof of that in our next passage. But let’s read this one first. We should set our hearts and minds on spiritual things, rather than physical (earthly) things.

Because our old physical life is now over – dead – and although we are still alive on earth, the most important part of our life is our new spiritual life, which is hidden with Christ in God – in other words, it has been raised into His presence by His ascension.

Ephesians 1:19-20 ¹⁹ “and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms”

God’s massive power is shown in the Ascension!

Ephesians 2:6 “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”

We were raised up too, with Christ, into Heaven – i.e. the heavenly kingdom or spiritual dimension where God’s Presence is. Our real life is with Him there!

In His Ascension, Jesus took our humanity into Heaven. He was now changed; He was both God and man, and He crossed over from this physical world into the world of the spirit.

From there He leads His Church and calls us to follow Him and join Him in His exalted state in the spirit realm.

And so, although we still live on earth, our real citizenship is actually in Heaven, as we read in – Philippians 3:20-21 ²⁰ “But our citizenship is in Heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.”

We can know for sure that we are going to inherit eternal life in God’s Kingdom, because there is a man who has already gone there, as our forerunner, and He promises us that we can be there too.



We are already there, in that our minds and hearts should be in heavenly places because we have the earnest of His Holy Spirit with us. But in the future, our lowly bodies will be fully transformed to be like His glorified body in the spirit realm.

Let’s conclude in Hebrews 4:14 “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”

Jesus is now in Heaven as our glorious High Priest, so we can hold firmly to our faith and confidence, thanks to the marvellous miracle of the **Ascension of Jesus Christ!**