

Ascension of Christ

Part 2

Ascension Prophesied

1. The ascension of Christ was not something new, but was prophesied in the Old Testament. (Psa. 68:18; 110:1).

Psa. 68:18 You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there.

Psa. 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

2. Jesus also foretold His resurrection and ascension. (Matt. 26:64; 22:41-45; Jn. 6:62; 13:1; 20:17).

Matt. 22:41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question:

Matt. 22:42 "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They *said to Him, "The son of David."

Matt. 22:43 He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying,

Matt. 22:44 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet"?"

Matt. 22:45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?"

Matt. 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, **hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.**"

Jn. 6:62 "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?"

Jn. 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that **He would depart out of this world to the Father**, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Jn. 20:17 Jesus said to her, "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.'**"

Jesus Only One Who Has Ascended Into Heaven

1. John brings out this fact in John 3:13.

Jn. 3:13 "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

2. Other righteous persons have gone to "Abraham's bosom." (Lk. 16:19-31).

3. Stephen witnessed Jesus in heaven. "standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55,56).

Acts 7:55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

Acts 7:56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Jesus Has A Body In Heaven

1. Jesus is co-eternal with the Father. (Jn. 1:1-3). See 1 Jn. 1:2.

- a. He was Spirit, not fleshly, before He came to this world. (1 Cor. 15:45). “the last Adam a life-giving Spirit”
 - b. Though not specifically stated He had a spiritual body in heaven before the incarnation.
 - c. During His earthly sojourn He became flesh. (Jn. 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:2)
 - d. He was “God with us.” (Matt. 1:23; Jn. 1:1;10:30; 14:9; Col. 1:15; 2:9).
2. At the ascension Jesus was transformed from a physical body to a spiritual body as He ascended into heaven.
 3. He does not now have a physical body, but He does have a body. (Phil. 3:20, 21).

Phil. 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;
 Phil. 3:21 he will transform the body of our humble state **into conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself

4. One day “we will be like Him,” in that we will have a spiritual body. (Phil. 3:21;1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Cor. 15:51-53).

Purpose of the Ascension

1. Christ ascended into heaven to be exalted as King.
 - a. He is now King. (Acts 2:32-36).
 - b. He now has “all authority.” (Matt. 28:18).
 - c. The Old Testament prophesied His coronation. (Dan. 7:13,14).

Dan. 7:13 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

Dan. 7:14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

- d. The New Testament makes reference to His coronation.

- 1) At the time of the coronation He was declared “Lord and Christ” and exalted to the right hand of God. (Acts 2:32-36).

- 2) He was exalted above everything. (Heb. 2:5-9; Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:20-23). See Psa. 8:4-6.

Heb. 2:5 For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.

Heb. 2:6 But one has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him?"

Heb. 2:7 "You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And have appointed him over the works of Your hands;

Heb. 2:8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

Phil. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Phil. 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Phil. 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Eph. 1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Eph. 1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Eph. 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

Eph. 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Rev. 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

Rev. 5:12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

Rev. 5:13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

Rev. 5:14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

Rev. 19:12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are **many diadems** [crowns]; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

- d. One can only imagine the great joy and excitement in heaven when Jesus arrived victorious having made atonement for the sins of mankind.
 - e. The angels of heaven rejoice even when one sinner repents. (Lk. 15:10).
 - f. God and the angels want all to be saved and none to be lost. (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).
 - g. Knowing all heaven desires our salvation and is working for our salvation should be a great encouragement for us to continue in the faith.
2. Christ ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us. (Jn. 14:2-3).
- a. Heaven is not new, but has always existed.
 - b. Prepared is used in sense of offering His blood for us and daily making intercession for us.
 - c. It could also refer to other undefiled preparations Christ has made in heaven for His followers.
 - d. He offered His precious blood on the cross for us, and He now in heaven makes intercession for His followers.
 - e. Heaven is ready for all who trust and obey Him.
3. Christ ascended into heaven to give gifts to men. (Eph. 4:7-12).

EPH 4:7 But to each one of us [believing Jews and Gentiles] grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

- Many Greek texts have "grace" rather than "the grace." "Grace" appears to be the best translation.
- The exact significance of the article is disputed. The article "the" does not seem to have a special meaning.

1. "But to each one of us grace was given"

- a. Paul had been given the grace of apostleship. (Eph. 3:7,8).

EPH 3:7 of which I was made a minister, **according to the gift of God's grace** which was given to me according to the working of His power.

EPH 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints, **this grace was given**, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

- 1) God had shown mercy on Paul that He might be saved through the Lord's appearance to him. (Acts 9:1-6). The Lord's appearance changed the course of Paul's life, and he received salvation in Christ and Christ's mission for him.

- 2) He was made an apostle for the sake of others - Jews and Gentiles.

- 3) He was primarily an apostle to the Gentiles, but not exclusively. (Eph. 3:8; Gal. 2:7).

- 4) Paul was given the exalted privilege of receiving and proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

- 5) He considered himself a debtor to preach to all. (Rom. 1:14,15).

- b. The ability to perform service is called "grace" given "to each."

2. "according to the measure of Christ's gift" - Eph. 4:7b.

- a. The gifts, in this passage, refer to people who served the church in a variety of ways. (Eph. 4:11-13).

Eph. 4:11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors [shepherds] and teachers,

Eph. 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Eph. 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

- b. The "gift" included the various spiritual gifts given to Christians. (Rom. 12:5,6; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-31).

- c. All "gifts" were to be used to build up the church - not for personal gain or show. (1 Cor. 12:7).

EPH 4:8 Therefore it says, "When He [Christ] ascended on high [to heaven], He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men [believers]."

- "dio" [dee ah] - "therefore, wherefore"
- "legei" [leh gay] is the 3rd person singular of "lego" [leh goh] meaning "to say or speak." The third person singular can be translated "he, she or it."

1. "Therefore it says" - The Greek can be rendered "therefore it says" or "therefore he says"

- a. The ASV has "wherefore he says." "Concerning this the Scriptures say." Wms.

- b. NIV has "This is why it says."

- c. The language refers to what is said about God in the Scriptures. (Psa. 68:18)

PSA 68:18 Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captive Thy captives; Thou hast received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell there.

d. This passage originally referred to God overcoming His enemies.

e. Paul is using it to refer to God's anointed King - Jesus Christ.

2. "When He [Christ] ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives"

a. The words "He ascended on high" refer to the ascension of Jesus into heaven. (Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9-11).

1) Christ spoke of descending to earth and His ascension into heaven. (Jn. 6:38, 62).

JOH 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

JOH 6:62 "What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?"

2) Paul speaks of Christ's resurrection, ascension and exaltation (Eph. 1:20, 21).

EPH 1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, The ascension of Christ is assumed by the words "seated Him at His right hand.."

EPH 1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

3) The Hebrew writer spoke of Christ's ascension into heaven. (Heb. 4:14).

HEB 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

4) He also spoke of His exaltation . (Heb. 7:26).

Heb. 7:26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

b. This fact about the "captives" is not revealed by Luke, but Paul, by revelation, is bringing out this event.

1) Luke mentions only the ascension of Christ in his account of Christ's ascension into heaven.

2) What Paul is recording about the "captives" may or may not have been known by Luke.

3) Luke may have known it but chose not to mention it in His brief account of the ascension. One may know something without recording it especially if it is not part of what he is emphasizing.

c. "aichmalosia" [ik mah loh see ah] - "captivity, prisoners of war."

d. The verb form is "aichmaloteuo" [ik mah loh too oh] - The verb form of this word means "to lead captive, to take captive.

e. It is also used in the sense of "to captivate." (2 Tim 3:6)

2TI 3:6 For among them [false teachers] are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

f. The meaning of these words are difficult, but here are some possible meanings.

1) The language could be used in a figurative sense denoting the fact Jesus defeated His enemies and led them in a triumphal procession. The language may mean that Jesus defeated His enemies and led them in a triumphal procession. In ancient times one who conquered often led his captives in a triumphal procession.

- The enemies would be the spiritual forces of evil and those under the influence of the devil and his evil forces. Jesus was victorious.
- None could induce Jesus to sin. None could stop the atonement, none could stop His resurrection, none could stop His ascension and exaltation.

2) **Here is a more likely meaning.**

- Christ is now reigning in heaven and multitudes are coming to Him then and now.
- The idea could be that Jesus captivated a host who had been bound in the chains of sin.
- Jesus freed those obeying Him and led them in a triumphal procession over sin by forgiving and saving them.
- He also gave those freed “gifts.”

3. “And He gave gifts to men” - “Gifts” are later defined in Ephesians 4.

a. “Men” here is generic for believers, Christians.

1) The Greek has “anthropos” [**ahn** throh pahs] which can be used generically.

2) The Greek “aner” [ah **nayr**] is the specific word for “male, man, husband.”

b. The “gifts” are those serving the church and building it up. (Eph. 4:11).

EPH 4:9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?)

- Some think verse 9 refers to the underworld and the realm of evil spirits.
- It is falsely believed the Jesus descended into the underworld at the time of His death, and preached to those living in Noah’s day giving them a second chance to obey the gospel. (1 Pet. 3:19).
- The Bible affirms Jesus went to Paradise. (Lk. 23:43-46).
- A careful examination of 1 Peter 3:19 reveals that the preaching was done through Noah who had the Spirit.
- The spirits were not in prison at the time Noah preached to them, but they were in prison at the time Peter wrote.
- The prophets of old had “the Spirit of Christ” [the Holy Spirit]. (1 Pet. 1:10, 11).
- Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” speaking the message of God through the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 2:5).
- There was no second chance for the antediluvians or anyone else. (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12; Heb. 9:27).

- Furthermore, God is not a respecter of person. (Acts 10:34, 35).
- The second chance theory makes God a respecter of persons. Why were they given a second chance and not others?

1. “Now this expression, "He ascended" - Lit. “to de” [tah (the) deh (but)] - “Now or but the”

2. “what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?”

a. The words “descended” refers to His incarnation. (Jn. 1:14: Jn. 6:38; 1 Tim. 3:16).

Jn. 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jn. 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

1 Tim. 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

b. The words “of the earth” are in apposition to “the lower parts” and they are defining “the lower parts.”

1) The words “of the earth” are a genitive of definition

2) NEB has “to the lowest level, down to the very earth.”

ISA 44:23 Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout joyfully, **you lower parts of the earth**; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the Lord has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.

c. The reference “descended into the lower parts of the earth” is to Christ coming to earth and spending some 33 years in flesh. It is a reference to His earthly ministry and the time of His humiliation. (Phil. 2:6-8).

d. Jesus is the only One who has ascended into heaven. (Jn. 3:13). These words were penned by John long after Christ’s ascension, but he still records that Jesus was the only One who had ascended into heaven.

e. Righteous departed spirits, at death, go to “Abraham’s bosom.” (Lk. 16:19-31).

f. “Abraham’s bosom” is the same place as “Paradise.” (Lk. 22:43).

g. They are other names for “the third heaven.” (2 Cor. 12:2).

2CO 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

h. In the book of Revelation “Paradise” is used of heaven itself where “the tree of life” is blessed. (Rev. 2:7).

EPH 4:10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

1. “He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens”

a. After the incarnation of Jesus, Jesus ascended to the highest heavens where God abides.

- b. "Above all the heavens" - Jesus ascended above the physical heavens to the heaven of heavens where God abides.
 - c. He reigns at God's right hand. (Acts 2:32, 33; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3).
2. "that He might fill all things" - "fill" is from "pleroo" [play **rah** oh] meaning "fill, fulfill, complete, finish."
- a. This expression is difficult, but here are some ways that translators have interpreted it. .
 - 1) "That He might be the ruler over all things everywhere" - Tay. This seems to be an excellent way of stating what Paul was affirming.
 - 2) "to fill creation with his presence" - Knox
 - 3) "in order to fill the whole universe" - NIV
 - b. Jesus fills the universe just as His Father. (Jere. 23:23, 24).

JER 23:23 "Am I a God who is near," declares the Lord, "And not a God far off?"

JER 23:24 "Can a man hide himself in hiding places, So I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the Lord.

4. Christ ascended into heaven to become our High Priest.

Heb. 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Heb. 9:11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;

Heb. 9:12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Heb. 9:13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,

Heb. 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Heb. 9:24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Heb. 9:25 nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own.

- a. Christ is not only our High Priest, but He offered His own blood for us. (Heb. 9:12).

Heb. 9:12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, **but through His own blood**, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption

- 1) The words "through His own blood" mean by virtue of His atoning blood shed on the cross.

- 2) It is not a reference to Christ offering His literal blood in heaven. (1 Cor. 15:50).

1 Cor. 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, **that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

b. He continually secures forgiveness for us through the blood He shed for us. (1 Jn. 1:7,9).

c. He is able to sympathize with us and aid us in the battle against temptation. (Heb. 2:18; 4:15).

Heb. 2:18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.

5. Christ ascended into heaven to keep watching over and blessing His followers.

6. He is constantly making intercession for believers. (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34).

Heb. 7:25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Rom. 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

7. Christ continues to be with us “always.” (Matt. 28:20; Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 13:5).

8. He continues to “uphold all things.” (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17).

Heb. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, **and upholds all things by the word of His power**. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Col. 1:17 He is before all things, **and in Him all things hold together**.

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