

The Ascension of the Son of Man

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

Introduction:

A. Acts 1:3-14

1. The last 40 days had been traumatic for the Lord's disciples.
2. Jesus died on the cross; their hopes were dashed
3. In fear, they abandoned Him to His fate; they were ashamed
4. The Lord rose from the dead. There was hope; but they were up and down cyclically.
5. Jesus continued to teach them, and their hope for a kingdom grew.
6. Then while they are watching Him, He begins to ascend into the heavens. He is gone, and they are left in bewilderment on the Mount of Olives, never to see Him again in this world.
7. While they stand there looking up, messengers from God appear to them and say, "What are you looking at?"

B. Historical reality - The ascension of Christ presents a problem for the opponents of Christianity. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, or if he somehow survived the ordeal of Calvary and died later (as Hugh Schonfield speculated in his infamous book, *The Passover Plot*), surely the Lord's enemies would have vigorously sought to reclaim his body, thus nullifying the "resurrection" story. With such a "trophy," Christianity could have been crushed in its infancy. That lack of evidence indirectly supports the record of the ascension; there was no earthly corpse.

C. It is significant that Luke's account of the ascension consumes only 63 words in the New Testament. This brevity demonstrates:

1. The restraining influence of the Holy Spirit; strictly human journalistic impulses would have expanded the narrative considerably
2. It suggests as well that the ascension was never a point of controversy among the early disciples, requiring elaborate argumentation.

I. AN INEVITABLE DEPARTURE

- A. Prophetically announced 1000 years before the Savior's birth - Psalm 110:1
- B. Jesus said it would happen - John 6:62, 16:28, 20:17
- C. Nevertheless, the apostles were alternately saddened & bewildered- Acts 1:10
 1. Men need guidance - Psalm 37:23; Prov. 16:9; Deut. 29:29; Jer. 10:23
- D. There are least four reasons why Jesus had to go to Heaven while His apostles stayed in this world.
 1. If Jesus had not gone away, the Holy Spirit would not have come - John 16:7
 - a. They had been walking by sight; now they would walk by faith
 2. Jesus went to Heaven to make intercession - Heb. 1:3, 7:25; 1John 2:1
 3. Jesus went to heaven to be glorified - Heb. 10:12, 12:2
 4. Jesus went to Heaven so that He could return for His people one day.
 - a. John 14:3; Acts 1:9-11; 1Thes. 4:16-18; 1Cor. 15:51-52

II. A CHALLENGING TASK

- A. Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19

- B. For three years, the disciples watched the Lord Jesus do what He was sending them out to do.
 - 1. Now He is going away, and they are left behind to do the work without His physical presence.
 - 2. But they will not be alone - Matt. 28:20
 - a. Acts 1:5, 8; John 14:16-18
 - 3. Neither are we alone - 2Cor. 3:2-3 - We wear His mark
 - 4. Eph. 2:10 - We represent His will being done

III. A COMFORTING PROMISE

- A. Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:30; John 14:3; 1Thes. 1:10, 4:16; 2Thes. 1:10; Rev. 1:7
- B. No matter what today holds, or what tomorrow brings, rest in the knowledge that Jesus is coming.
 - 1. And while you wait for Him, get busy with His work; take others with you

IV. A POWERFUL DECLARATION

- A. Of all of the great works of Jesus Christ in this world, the ascension is second only to the resurrection with regard to the foundation of our faith.
- B. The resurrection made Him Savior; the ascension made Him Lord and King
 - 1. Eph. 1:19-23; Acts 2:36.
- C. The resurrection empowered Him to give us eternal life; the ascension empowered Him to give us all spiritual blessings - Eph. 4:7-11
- D. The resurrection demonstrated the manner of our resurrection; the ascension demonstrated the manner of Christ's return.
 - 1. Acts 1:11 - The verb theaomai is employed 24 times in the New Testament, and never is it used in a figurative sense. They literally saw Christ ascend; we will literally see Him return
 - 2. This eliminates the spurious notion of a representative "coming" which answers "realized eschatology"
 - 3. It will not be an invisible "rapture-coming," answering dispensationalism
 - 4. Answers the proposition that our eternal destiny will be upon a "glorified earth." Jesus entered heaven as a forerunner - 1Cor. 15:22
 - a. Earth is not heaven - Matt. 6:19-20
- E. The ascension of Christ underscores the fact that Christians are charged with the responsibility of implementing His will on earth, as He reigns from heaven.
 - 1. The Savior's parting words - Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47