

Doctrine of Christ

His Ascension

1. The ascension of Christ following His resurrection is one of the most important doctrines of the church.
2. This monumental event is recorded by Luke at the end of his gospel, and again in the book of Acts.
 - *Luke 24:50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

Special Note.

When Jesus first told the disciples He was departing, there was no joy whatsoever.

John 16:16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? 18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? We cannot tell what he saith. 19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

Now, after His resurrection and ascension, there was great joy. Deep sorrow, fear, and disappointment was replaced with great joy because the disciples understood why Jesus left, and where He was going.

Affirmation of the Resurrection of Christ

- *Acts 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he shewed 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:*

A Final Gathering of Christ with His Disciples

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him,

saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And 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. 8 But 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.

The Heavenly Departure

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

The Amazed Disciples

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

The Promise of Christ's Return

11 Which 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.

A Return to Normalcy

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.

3. In Luke's account, Jesus was simply taken up into heaven. In the second account given by Luke, mention is made of a cloud, and that is significant for this was the Shekinah (shek-i'-na, residence [of God] cloud of glory).
 - *Exodus 24:16 And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.*
 - *Exodus 40:35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.*
 - *Numbers 9:16 So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. 17 And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. 18 At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents.*

- *2 Chronicles 7:1 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. 2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. 3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.*

4. Peter, who had witnessed the ascension of Christ, spoke of the Lord in glory on the Day of Pentecost.

- *Acts 2:29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*

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. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

5. To speak of the ascension of Christ is to speak of something far greater than the Lord Jesus simply going to heaven.
6. The ascension of Christ is a divine manifestation of God the Father authenticating His work of redemption at Calvary. The Father was well pleased with His Son. Therefore, the Father brought Jesus back from the dead, brought Him back home to glory.

John 8:29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

7. Because of the Lord's ascension, five great events occurred.

- Christ was glorified.
- The Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost.
- Christ received His heavenly coronation.
- The Session of Christ, or heavenly session whereby Christ was seated at the right hand of God the Father, allows Him to rule as King of kings, and Lord of lords.
- Messianic promises were fulfilled.

8. In a High Priestly prayer of Jesus, in John 17, Jesus prayed for the glory He once enjoyed to be returned. In order for His glory to be restored, Jesus had to ascend into glory.

- *John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

Special Note.

When Jesus departed on the Shekinah glory, Jesus returned to heaven to the glory He previously enjoyed. The days of humiliation were over, and the time of His exaltation increased.

9. Another reason for the ascension of Christ was so that the Holy Spirit could be given on the Day of Pentecost.
 10. In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus explained to His disciples that He was going away in order that He might send to them the Holy Ghost.
- *John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Special Note.

The Holy Spirit is not “the” Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is “Another” Paraclete. Jesus is “the” Paraclete. He is the “Consolation of Israel” for whom Simeon longed to see (Luke 2:25).

The Holy Spirit, is spoken of as “Comforter” (para, alongside of; kletos, to call). He brings consolation to those who are in pain and suffering.

However, the Holy Spirit does more. The primary work of the Paraclete is to comfort a person according to legal terms. In other words, the Holy Spirit was given “with strength” as a “power” against those who lay a charge against the elect of God. The Paraclete is the Defense Attorney.

A Defense Attorney tells us how to plead, guilty or, not guilty. A Defense Attorney tells us what to say in times of crisis.

On the Day of Pentecost, the promised power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church. The Comforter has come.

“Oh, spread the tidings ’round, wherever man is found,
Wherever human hearts and human woes abound;
Let every Christian tongue proclaim the joyful sound:
The Comforter has come!

The Comforter has come, the Comforter has come!
 The Holy Ghost from Heav'n, the Father's promise giv'n;
 Oh, spread the tidings 'round, wherever man is found—
 The Comforter has come!

The long, long night is past, the morning breaks at last,
 And hushed the dreadful wail and fury of the blast,
 As o'er the golden hills the day advances fast!
 The Comforter has come!

Lo, the great King of kings, with healing in His wings,
 To every captive soul a full deliv'rance brings;
 And through the vacant cells the song of triumph rings;
 The Comforter has come!

O boundless love divine! How shall this tongue of mine
 To wond'ring mortals tell the matchless grace divine—
 That I, a child of hell, should in His image shine!
 The Comforter has come!

Sing till the echoes fly above the vaulted sky,
 And all the saints above to all below reply,
 In strains of endless love, the song that ne'er will die:
 The Comforter has come!"

Frank Bottome

- 11.** The pouring out of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of giving the Church a mission, to go into the entire world, and a ministry, teaching all nations about Christ. In a corrupt world, the church needs a power greater than her own.

John Calvin said that the most important task of the Church was to be a visible witness of the invisible kingdom. Jesus left to send the Spirit on Pentecost to empower the church.

- 12.** Yet another reason for the ascension of Christ was for His own coronation. Jesus was going to the throne of God where He was given dominion and power over the whole earth.
- 13.** The Lamb is the Lion who reigns. The kingdom of Heaven has begun because the King has gone to His investiture.
- 14.** This is called the Session of Christ. The church confesses this belief in the Apostle's Creed.

"I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended into hell.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come to judge the living and the dead.”

15. Christ does not sit in heaven in the choir, or in the multitudes that surrounded the throne. Christ seats in the seat of power and authority. He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

16. The highest seat in the universe is occupied by Christ.

- *Revelation 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.*

17. As Christ has been exalted, and enthroned, as Christ has dispensed the Holy Spirit, so the Lord ascended into heaven in order to enter into the Heavenly Tabernacle as our High Priest.

- *Hebrews 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

18. Jesus functions as the believer’s Priest-King. The Lord’s sacrificial ministry was finished at Calvary, but His priestly work continues in heaven as Jesus prays for His own. Jesus works to preserve the elect. He does this through His intercessory work.

- *John 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

19. Jesus is our Great High Priest who understands our infirmities.

- *Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

20. Finally, in the ascension of Christ, God the Father is honoring the Messianic promise given by David.

- *Psalms 2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*

Special Note.

Jesus asked the Father for the heathen for His inheritance, and the request was granted.

- *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

21. The church must teach the Doctrine of the Ascension of Christ, and set forth the good news that Christ ascended in order to return to His glory, in order to be coronated, in order to send the Holy Spirit, in order to function as a Priest-King, and in order to receive the promises of the Father.