

Ascension

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Colossians 3:1-4 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

THE MEANING OF HIS ASCENSION

We often forget about ascension. It isn't Christmas. It isn't Easter. Even Pentecost often gets more attention than does the Ascension. Yet scripture points to the ascension over and over again. There are at least two accounts in the Old Testament which pre-figure the ascension of Christ. There are multiple prophecies looking forward to it, including numerous Psalms. Psalm 2 which is quoted three times in the NT and alluded to many more times is at least partially about the ascension. Jesus himself refers to His ascension numerous times. "I came from the Father, again I leave the world and go to the Father."

We often talk about Christmas and the incarnation but we forget that the incarnation is important only in light of the ascension. He came down so that He could return to the Father with us. Without the Ascension Christmas is meaningless.

The Apostles, including Paul, understood this. They understood the importance of the Ascension and talked about it often. Even in that first Pentecost sermon, Peter says, "you crucified Jesus . . . God Raised up . . . and exalted to the right hand."

The Apostles stressed the Ascension because it was essential to the work and person of Jesus. But also because it was of such great comfort and meaning to us in our walk of faith. The Apostles often talked about the importance of the Ascension. In our text Paul focuses on three main aspects of the Ascension.

1. Christ is with us always
2. Our treasure is hidden in heaven
3. We will be glorified with him

Christ is with us always

The fact that the disciples saw Jesus ascend is very comforting.

We can use as an example here the account of Elijah. Elijah is one of two people in the history of the Earth who never died, instead he was taken up into heaven by the wind. But even more than that Elisha saw Elijah taken up bodily into heaven.

This was a gift to Elisha and really a very powerful gift. Elisha had a very difficult task ahead of him. Because Elisha saw Elijah taken into heaven, he saw the end of his labors. A dead body is no guarantee of anything, but to see Elijah taken into heaven, this was positive proof of the life to come. This was something that Elisha could take with him at all times. His labor wasn't useless. Heaven is real. The Lord would take him home at the end of his labor.

So to the disciples saw Jesus ascend. They saw him die, they saw him raise, now they saw Him ascend. The grave is not the end. There is someplace else waiting for them

Perhaps more important that what they did see is what they didn't see. Jesus was there and then he wasn't. A cloud hid him and he was gone.

This is something Paul picks up on in our text "your life is hidden with Christ."

A very important aspect of the ascension is that Christ is no longer visible with us. According to his human nature now he has received all the fullness of the deity. Now He is able to be with us always.

After the resurrection before the ascension the disciples were always waiting and watching. When will He appear? When will we see Him again? But now His presence is hidden so that he may be with us at all times in all places.

At the time of his ascension and not before, he says to the disciples. "I am with you always."

Before then he was here or there at least according to his human nature, but now he is present with us everywhere.

Another important aspect to his ascension that Paul calls our attention to is that he now sits at the right hand of God. What does this mean?

It does not mean that there is a literal chair in heaven and there Christ is sitting, with the Father just to his left. But rather it means that according to his human nature he has received all power and authority.

So not only is Christ by our side in all things but he is by our side with all the power of God.

Christ's ascension is not a literal one. I mean it is not as if Christ went up and up and finally when he went up high enough he got to heaven. If that were so how could he then say, "I am with you always."

Christ's ascension was rather a physical representation of his exaltation into glory. That is to say that His human nature receives what was always His according to His divine nature, full participation in the

divine. It was His status that was raised up. As if we were to say of a prince, "he ascended to the throne." He might literally go up the stairs to a throne, but more important his status goes up. He was a prince, now he is a king.

This is also what Paul is talking about in the first verse of our text. You have been raised up.

Look back at Colossians 2:12, you who were dead in your sins have been made alive, yes, but also your status has been raised. You who were peasants have now also through Christ been raised to throne of God. You are no longer peasants but sons of God.

A prince doesn't spend his time decorating a mud hut. He might have to stay in one night temporarily for night but his thoughts are always on his palace and how he might get back there. He doesn't waste his time on a temp dwelling.

Therefore Paul says "seek the things above." Why worry about the things of this earth, when heaven is waiting for us"

This means beginning the day with bible study and prayer, you will never learn to set your thoughts on the things above until you learn to begin your day with Jesus

Thirdly he ascensions assures us that he will come again, and when he does all our labors in him, all our suffering for Christ, all our waiting will be proven not to be in vain.

One of the blessings that Elisha received, was to see that Elijah did indeed receive praise for the Lord and glory and a reward for all his hard labor. Even though it seemed to Elijah that no one ever listened and nothing good ever came from his hard work, Yet the Lord showed very vividly to Elisha that His work was not in vain.

Whatever work we do for the things of this life will be in vain. Whatever work we do for the Lord will not.

And that can be the same work but with a different attitude. We can plant and reap with the goal of having the things of this world. We can sweep and cook, and clean with the goal of the things of this world. Or we can plant and sow, clean and cook because it is a task the Lord has given to us. We can do it for earthly reasons or we can do it for heavenly.

Now we suffer, then we shall be glorified.

Christ has ascended, this gives us a reason to shout for Joy. He is with us always. He is with us with power to help. Our treasure is hidden with Christ. He will return and take us with Him.