

CHAPTER 16

The Ascension Of Christ

"Who (Jesus Christ) is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter 3:22).

Following His resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ was seen by certain men and women for _____ days (Acts 1:3). He was then taken up into heaven to await the day of His triumphal return when His _____ shall be made His footstool (Psalm 110:1). What was the purpose of this forty-day period? Actually the Bible reveals a fourfold purpose:

1. To Convince Men Of His Resurrection

The first purpose of this forty-day period was to convince the disciples of the reality of the resurrection. Their Lord was risen indeed! How did they know this? For forty days Jesus "showed Himself _____ after His passion (His suffering and death on the cross) by many infallible _____" (Acts 1:3).

The need for such verification was great. After the resurrection many of the disciples did not believe that Jesus was actually alive. In fact, every gospel account makes mention of those who doubted. In the following passages, find the verses which tell us about those who doubted or disbelieved the resurrection:

1. Matthew 28:16-18

Verse(s) showing doubt or disbelief: _____

2. Mark 16:9-14

Verse(s) showing doubt or disbelief: _____

3. Luke 24:6-12, 18-27

Verse(s) showing doubt or disbelief: _____

4. John 20:24-29

Verse(s) showing doubt or disbelief: _____

Thomas was but one among many who doubted. The moment Thomas saw the risen Lord, all doubts vanished! Instantly "doubting Thomas" became "convinced Thomas"! Others who saw

the risen Saviour were fully persuaded as well. Yes, this forty-day period served its purpose well!

2. To Communicate Truth About His Kingdom

A second purpose for this forty-day period was to provide the apostles with a comprehensive course on the Kingdom, taught by the King Himself! The Lord was "seen of (by) them forty days...speaking of the things pertaining to the _____" (Acts 1:3). Israel's promised kingdom was foremost on the minds of the disciples, as indicated by their question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the _____ to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) Their Master and Teacher supplied them with needed information concerning this vast subject of God's reign on earth.

3. To Confirm The Promise of His Presence

Before our Lord returned to heaven, He promised His disciples that He would not leave them alone. Though He was received up into heaven, there was a sense in which He was still present "working with" His chosen apostles (see Mark 16:19-20).

Actually, for a period of forty days Jesus was playing a game of "peek-a-boo" with His disciples. He would appear and then disappear. They would see Him, but then He would be gone. A week later He would be seen again (John 20:19-26). When parents play "peek-a-boo" with a baby, they are teaching the child an important truth. Even though you cannot see Mommy and Daddy, they are still there!

Our Lord, therefore, by His frequent resurrection appearances, was skillfully instructing His beloved disciples concerning His abiding presence. They were then better prepared to understand His promise, "Lo, I am with you _____ (though you will not see Me), even unto the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Their Lord would not leave them, but He would come in the Person of the Holy Spirit to be present with them forever (John 14:16-18)!

4. To Command His Chosen Apostles

During the forty-day period immediately following the resurrection, the Lord Jesus gave His marching orders to His faithful disciples. Luke records that before Christ was taken up to heaven He gave "_____ unto the apostles whom He had chosen" (Acts 1:2). These solemn commandments comprise what is generally known as "The Great Commission."

In the Great Commission, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His farewell address, His parting words, His final instructions to the men who would soon become the first members of His church. What really is the mission of the church today? What is our God-given task and responsibility? Why does the Church of Jesus Christ exist? What exactly has our sovereign Lord and Head told us to do? These crucial questions can only be answered by a careful study of the Great Commission passages. See our study entitled, What the Great Commission Is Not.

All four of the gospel writers contribute significantly to our understanding of what the Great Commission really entails. They each accurately record the words and commands of Christ

which were given after His resurrection and before He returned to heaven. Study the following passages which comprise our Lord's Great Commission and ask yourself this important question: **WHAT IS THE GOD-GIVEN TASK AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH OF WHICH I AM A MEMBER?**

1. **The Great Commission According to Matthew:**

Matthew 28:16-20

Note: The word "teach" in verse 19 means "make disciples of."

2. **The Great Commission According to Mark:**

Mark 16:14-20

3. **The Great Commission According to Luke:**

Luke 24:44-53 and Acts 1:1-8

Note: The book of Acts was also written by Luke.

4. **The Great Commission According to John:**

John 20:19-23 (compare John 17:18)

The Lord has ascended and gone back to heaven, but He has left us here on the earth. May God enable us by His grace to understand exactly what He has told us to do and to be obedient to those commandments which the Saviour has given. As He represents us in heaven, may we represent Him faithfully and consistently on earth.

The ascension of Christ marks the division between the earthly and heavenly ministry of Christ. It is the great historical event which separates the Gospel of Luke from the book of Acts. Whereas Luke's Gospel ends with the account of the ascension (can you find the verse? _____), the book of Acts begins by mentioning this same event (can you find the verses? _____).

Several different Greek words are used in the New Testament to describe this important event:

1. **anambano** which means "to be taken up, to be received up"

See Mark 16:19, Acts 1:2,11,22; 1 Timothy 3:16.

2. **anabaino** which means "to go up"

See John 3:13; 6:62; 20:17; Ephesians 4:8-10.

3. **anaphero** which means "to be carried up"

See Luke 24:51.

4. **harpazo** which means "to be snatched up, to be caught up"

See Revelation 12:5

Note: This is the same word that is used to describe the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 ("caught up"). Just as Christ was "caught up" into heaven (Revelation 12:5), so will born-again believers be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. This word was also used to describe Paul's unique trip to heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2,4.

5. **aperchomai** which means "to go away"
See John 16:7
6. **hupago** which means "to go away"
See John 8:14, 21-22; in John chapters 13, 14 and 16 this word is often used.
7. **poreuomai** which means "to go"
See 1 Peter 3:22 ("is gone"). This word is also used several times in John chapters 14 and 16.

Read through John chapters 13, 14 and 16 and make a list of every verse that speaks about Christ going to the Father (and going away from this earth).

List the verses here:

It was of tremendous importance that our Lord's final departure from the earth should not be a mere vanishing out of sight, as He did at Emmaus (see Luke 24:31). This would have resulted in uncertainty as to whether or not He might again appear. Our Lord's ascension took place in broad daylight in the presence of many witnesses. The disciples knew that they could not expect to see the Lord until His second coming (Acts 1:11; compare Psalm 110:1); even as Jesus had told them, "I _____ to my _____, and ye _____ Me _____" (John 16:10).

Thought question: What about people living today who claim that they have seen Christ or have seen a vision of Christ? As you think about this, compare 1 Peter 1:8; John 20:29 (they have missed the blessing!) and 2 Corinthians 5:7.

Because Christ went up, it became possible for Someone else to come down and to begin a wonderful and unique ministry in the hearts of church-age believers. Who was this Person Whom Christ sent into the world after He had departed from the world (see John 16:7-16; 7:37-39; Acts 2:33)? _____

Was the ascension of Christ an event that was predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures (see Psalm 16:10-11 and compare Acts 2:25-36; Psalm 68:18 and compare Ephesians 4:8; and see especially Psalm 110:1)? _____

The Session (Act Of Sitting) of Christ

The last verse cited above, Psalm 110:1, is a very significant prophecy concerning Christ because it is directly quoted in seven New Testament passages (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13; Hebrews 10:12-13). It is also mentioned indirectly in several other passages (see for example Matthew 26:64). After the Saviour had FINISHED the ONCE-FOR-ALL sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:10-12) and following His victorious resurrection, He ASCENDED into heaven and _____ on the right hand of the _____ (God the Father) on high (Hebrews 1:3, and compare Mark 16:19; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 8:1;12:2). That the God-Man should be seated in such an exalted place is no surprise, but we are quite amazed when we discover who is sitting there with Him! Who is seated in heaven with the Saviour (Ephesians 2:6; Revelation 3:21)?

_____ "Believest thou this?" Do you really believe that this is true about you? How great is God's grace!

There is not a more exalted position in all of the universe and beyond than that of being at the right hand of God the Father. This brings us to our next point:

The Exaltation Of Christ

To help you catch a glimpse of Christ's present glorified position in heaven, complete the following matching problem:

- | | | | |
|----|-------|--|--------------------|
| 1. | _____ | exalted as Lord and Christ at the right hand of God | |
| 2. | _____ | highly exalted | A. John 7:39 |
| 3. | _____ | glorified | B. Philippians 2:9 |
| 4. | _____ | crowned with glory and honour | C. Ephesians 1:21 |
| 5. | _____ | far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named | D. Acts 2:33,36 |
| 6. | _____ | given a name which is above every name | E. Hebrews 2:9 |

Have you bent and bowed your knee before the risen and exalted LORD? If you have not, YOU WILL (see Philippians 2:10)! Blessed is the person who does this NOW!

**His Name above all names shall stand,
Exalted more and more,
At God the Father's own right hand,
Where angel hosts adore. --W. H. Clark**

Very often we think about all that Christ **HAS DONE** for us (in the past), but we sometimes forget all that the ascended and exalted Saviour **IS DOING** for us in heaven **RIGHT NOW!** Consider the following facts which are true **if** you are a true believer in Christ:

1. Right now Christ is acting as **YOUR HIGH PRIEST** (Hebrews 4:14-16).
What does this mean to you?
2. Right now Christ is acting as **YOUR MEDIATOR** (1 Timothy 2:5).
What does this mean to you?
3. Right now Christ is acting as **YOUR INTERCESSOR** (Romans 8:34; Heb. 7:25; compare Luke 22:32).
What does this mean to you?
4. Right now Christ is acting as **YOUR ADVOCATE** (1 John 2:1).
What does this mean to you?

How important it is for the believer to get his mind on the right thing (Col. 3:1) and to get his eyes on the right thing (Heb. 12:2)! The One that we love and serve is not the earthly Jesus as He was in the days of His humiliation (see Phil. 2:7-8). No, our hope is in the risen, ascended, exalted, glorified King of Kings and Lord of Lords who is now preparing for us a home in heaven (John 14:1-3) and who has promised to come again and receive us unto Himself! Then we too shall be received up into glory (compare 1 Tim. 3:16)! And so shall we ever be _____ (1 Thess. 4:17)! Unto Him be glory both now and forever!

