

INSIGHTS INTO THE LIFE OF CHRIST (Paul E. Engle 4/23)

Session #12 Ascension of Christ

Puritan John Owen said, *“This assumption [ascension] of our Lord Jesus Christ into glory, or his reception into heaven...is a principal article of the faith of the church—the great foundation of its hope and consolation in this world.”*

I. WHERE IS THE ASCENSION FOUND IN SCRIPTURE? _____

Alexander McLaren: “one is at the end of a book, and the other is at the beginning of a book; and so, naturally, the one regards the Ascension as the end of the earthly life, and the other as the beginning of the heavenly. The one is all suffused with evening light; the other is radiant with the promise of a new day. The one is the record of a tender farewell, in the other the sense of parting has almost been absorbed in the forward look to the new phase of relationship which is to begin.”

II. THE CONTEXT OF THE ASCENSION

A. When did the ascension occur?

1. _____ (cf. Acts 1:3) What day of the week? _____

2. It occurs generations after a related ascension: 2 Kings 2:11-12 “Behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven... and he saw him no more.” The verb in 2:11 for “went up” in the LXX is *anelemphte*. Acts 1:2, 1:11

B. Where did the ascension occur? Luke 24:50 refers to Bethany and Acts 1:12 calls it “*the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem.*” How do you fit these together?

Background information on Mount of Olives: _____

C. Why do you think this was chosen as ascension location?

- a. Perhaps because of _____. cf. Acts 1:12
- b. Perhaps because this had often been a favorite place for Jesus to visit. (cf. Luke 22:39)
- c. Perhaps because this was where the crowds _____ (cf. Mt. 21:1; Mk. 11:1)
- d. Perhaps because this was also the location of the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed in willingness to submit to the will of the Father the night of his betrayal.
- e. Perhaps because of the enigmatic prophecy of **Zechariah** that seems to suggest _____ - cf. 14:4

D. How did this event unfold?

- 1. Jesus lifted his hands and blessed his disciples who were with him.
- 2. Jesus parted from them and was carried up into heaven. Cf. Derek Thomas, Heaven on Earth: “His body passed through what we might call a ‘fold’ in space, into another realm of the created universe.” The body doesn’t drop off after he gets above the clouds.
- 3. Jesus was surrounded by a cloud: What was this cloud? Fulfilled Daniel 7:13?
- 4. As they looked up angels appeared and announced his return. Acts 1:11

* What makes the ascension hard to understand is that this involves mysterious dimensions beyond our present understanding of space & time. C. S Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* describes another world that is not our world but which intersects with our world. Curtain illustration: _____

II. THE ASCENSION MARKED A STRATEGIC PIVOT POINT IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY. —(7 touch points for us)

1. The ascension marked the _____ (“Session” of Christ)

Parallel to high priest in tabernacle: _____

Eph. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:3

OT priests at tabernacle entering Most Holy Place	Christ's ascension to heavenly throne
Priest comes before God with blood sacrifice	Jesus ascends before God through his own sacrificial blood
Priest comes through a cloud of incense	Jesus ascends through clouds of heaven
Priest comes before God bearing jewels representing names of God's people	Jesus ascends before God on our behalf and in our names.

So our worship now can be Christo-centric.

2. The ascension marked Christ receiving _____: His exaltation as King who now reigns. Since he's on the throne it means all present rulers and powers on earth are only temporary! -Jn. 17:5; -Phil. 2:9; -Stephen -Acts 7:55

3. The ascension guarantees that Christ is able to _____ John 14:3

4. The ascension marked the transition to the coming of the Holy Spirit. Christ continues to be present with us. How? _____

-Matt. 28:20 “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

-Calvin: “Christ left us in such a way that his presence might be more useful to us—a presence that had been confined in a humble abode of flesh so long as he sojourned on earth.”

5. The ascension guarantees _____ — since we are united with Christ his going up into heaven foreshadows our future ascension into heaven with him. Meanwhile by faith (not physically) we are seated in the heavenlies now.

-Col. 3:1.4 -1 Thess. 4:17

6. The ascension means we have an advocate _____.

-Rom. 8:34 -Heb. 7:25 Do you know anyone this could encourage?

7. The ascension causes us to anticipate _____ so he can bring heaven down to earth. cf. Acts 1:11

CONCLUSION: So what should we do with all this good news? It should motivate us to _____

Swindoll - “Luke’s concluding summary statement uses the imperfect tense, showing ongoing action. The followers of Jesus ‘were continually in the temple praising God.’ The heart of darkness had been taken back. Soon the Holy Spirit would fall like lightning on the followers of Christ, and the light of the gospel would emanate from God’s holy hill.”