

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

March 31 – April 4, 2008



March 31, 2008

The Ascension

“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”¹

The New Testament relates that, forty days after his resurrection, Jesus appeared again to a number of his disciples and, after teaching and blessing them, was lifted up bodily into the sky until he disappeared from their sight. The Ascension of Christ was not meant to convey that heaven is spatially ‘up there’ in outer space. Rather it was an ‘active parable’, underscoring that Jesus was being further glorified. He was being translated from existence here on earth to dwell at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

This further exaltation of Christ underscores his work as Prophet, Priest and King.

As our great High Priest, Jesus ascended to the heavenly sanctuary. His death was a sacrifice to God, which had universal significance. It was offered, not just for the Jews in Jerusalem, but for all the human race. So Christ ascended to heaven and in the heavenly sanctuary presented his work on the cross as the once-for-all sacrifice to atone for our sins.² *“When this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”³*

At the Father’s right hand he continues his work of priestly intercession, representing us as we lift up our prayers in his name and answering our prayers with his leading and providence.

¹ Luke 24:50-51 (TNIV)

² See Hebrews 9:23-28

³ Hebrews 10:12 (TNIV)

April 1, 2008

A Prophetic Ascension

“Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’”¹

The Ascension of Jesus as an ‘active parable’ also has a prophetic dimension. It points to the final exaltation of Christ in the Second Coming, when he will return to bring a final end to evil and will establish a new heaven and a new earth.

Jesus physically, visibly, tangibly rose up to heaven forty days after his resurrection. He will physically, visibly, tangibly return on that glorious Day of the Lord: *“Look, he is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him’; and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’ So shall it be! Amen.”²* With the ascension of Christ, those first disciples lost the physical presence of Christ. With the Second Coming that presence is restored. We will once again be able to see, talk with and touch the glorious risen One.

The ascension of Jesus is also prophetic of our own resurrection or rapture into the presence of God when our time on this present earth is done. *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”³* There we will provide a glorious reception group for the Triumphant King.

¹ Acts 1:11 (TNIV)

² Revelation 1:7 (TNIV)

³ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (TNIV)

April 2, 2008

Ascended to Rule

"...he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."¹

The 'right hand' is a place, not only of honour, but of designated authority and power. Upon his ascension, The Father formally gave Christ legislative control over the Church and over all the universe. This does not mean that he was not King of kings prior to that time. But it marked the inauguration of the risen Christ, the God-man who was taking up a new authority and a new mandate.

Being seated in the presence of the Father denotes his equality and exalted status. It is not an indicator of rest or inactivity. The Bible also speaks of Christ as 'being' or 'standing' at God's right hand and as walking in the courts of heaven.² Christ the King is constantly at work accomplishing his purposes and governing all things.

In this activity, our King has all the forces of heaven at his command. The angels are available as messengers to convey his blessings and protection. He exercises authority over the forces of nature and is able to order all events to accomplish his Kingdom purposes. But chiefly, he works through his Body, the Church as we are guided, empowered and transformed by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Ephesians 1:20-22 (TNIV)

² Romans 8:34; Acts 7:56

April 3, 2008

The King's Purpose

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever'....'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.'"¹

Having purchased the 'title deed' to planet Earth with his own precious blood, and having been given authority by the Father to rule over all things, Christ has an agenda. At the time of his Second Coming, he will eliminate all evil, death and suffering. He will effect a new heaven and a new earth and the full extent of his victory will be achieved everywhere.

In the meantime, he is working to transform the kingdom of this world into the 'Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ'. As Jesus said to Pilate, his Kingdom is not a matter of geographical territories, military power, government structures, institutions or the other usual accoutrements of nationhood. Though historically groups of Christians have tried to identify their party or territory with the kingdom of God, this is contrary to Christ's approach.

Jesus' Kingdom exists wherever people submit to him as King. Wherever believers look to him as Lord, the Kingdom of God is in our midst. Wherever people are seeking to accomplish his will on earth as it is accomplished in heaven, there we see the Kingdom of God. Wherever the followers of Jesus are caring for, healing or restoring the Creator's fallen world, there the borders of his Kingdom are expanding. As these things grow and flourish, Christ takes territory from the 'prince of this world' and expands his own rule and glory!

¹ Revelation 11:15b-16 (TNIV)

April 4, 2008

Conquering through Us

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”¹

From his heavenly throne, Christ the King is seen to be directing a war of conquest against evil, sin and death: *“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”²* When these enemies are finally defeated, he will present a renewed and glorified creation back to the Father, subjecting all things to *“him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”³*

While Christ has angelic and natural forces under his command and is able to providentially control the courses of peoples and nations, his primary means to grow his Kingdom is us, the Church.

The Bible pictures the assembly of the saints as the body of Christ on earth.⁴ As bodily members or parts we have various roles to fulfill. We are his hands that accomplish his works of love. We are his voices, proclaiming the good news. We are his feet, going to every people and nation. Christ is the head. He guides and directs all that we are to do in building up his Kingdom. But we are the active, designated agents of that will.

Thankfully, when he ascended to heaven, Jesus did not leave us as ‘orphans’. The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, was sent to dwell within and empower Christians to do Christ’s will. So it is to the Spirit’s ministry that we now turn our attention.

¹ Ephesians 1:22-23 (TNIV)

² 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 (TNIV)

³ 1 Corinthians 15:28 (TNIV)

⁴ See 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:11ff