



Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 18: The Exaltation of Christ

LORD'S DAY 18

Q.46. HOW DOST THOU UNDERSTAND THESE WORDS, "HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN?"

ANSWER: THAT CHRIST, IN SIGHT OF HIS DISCIPLES, WAS TAKEN UP FROM EARTH INTO HEAVEN (A); AND THAT HE CONTINUES THERE FOR OUR INTEREST (B) UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD (C).

(A) ACTS 1:9; MARK 16:19; LUKE 24:51; (B) HEBREWS 9:24, 4:14; ROMANS 8:34; COLOSSIANS 3:1; (C) ACTS 1:11; MATTHEW 24:30

The ascension of Christ

The risen Christ in His glorified human nature remained on the earth for forty days. At various times He appeared unto His disciples and others of His children to comfort them and to give them instructions for the future, when He would be with them no longer.

On the fortieth day, He ascended to His Father in heaven in His human nature. Before their eyes the disciples saw that from earth He went upwards into heaven, until a cloud received Him out of their sight.

The ascended Christ in heaven does not forget His children. He always thinks of His children and He prays for them. From heaven He cares for them (see Q & A 49-51). There He is their Prophet, High Priest and King.

Till He comes again

Christ will return once more from heaven. On the last day of this earth's existence, He shall suddenly be seen. He foretold this to His disciples, "*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*" (Matthew 24:30). Then everyone will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged by Him regarding everything they have ever done. In that judgment, Christ will grant one person to enter into heaven, everlasting bliss on the basis of Christ's own merits. And because of all the sins committed, Christ will cause the other person to go to hell, to everlasting ruin.

Q.47. IS NOT CHRIST THEN WITH US EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD AS HE HATH PROMISED (A)?

ANSWER: CHRIST IS VERY MAN AND VERY GOD; WITH RESPECT TO HIS HUMAN NATURE, HE IS NO MORE ON EARTH (B); BUT WITH RESPECT TO HIS GODHEAD, MAJESTY, GRACE, AND SPIRIT, HE IS AT NO TIME ABSENT FROM US (C).

(A)MATTHEW 28:20; (B)HEBREWS 8:4; MATTHEW 26:11; JOHN 16:28, 17:11; ACTS 3:21; (C)JOHN 14:18; MATTHEW 28:20

Christ remains with His Church

Christ's ascension raises an important objection. He Himself said to His disciples, *"And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28:20).

Didn't He? How can He then leave them?

The answer is simple, although it is beyond our comprehension. Christ is God and man in one Person. Well, as man He is no longer with us. As man He is only in heaven. But as God He is always with His children. As God He is omnipresent. By His Divine majesty He protects and helps His people. He is their Advocate and Intercessor with God the Father in heaven *and* with His majesty, but also with His grace, He is with His children. He is gracious to them, and always full of love and benevolence; always, also when they don't see and believe it, and also when they don't deserve it.

Christ lives in His Church through His Spirit

Christ is also with His Spirit with God's children. The Holy Ghost, who, with Jesus and the Father is the one only God, proceeds from the Father and the Son to work as the Comforter in the hearts of people. It is through His Spirit that Christ guides His children. In this way He keeps them in the right course, or brings them back into it again. Through His Spirit, Jesus Himself is present with believers. He has said, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5). The Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep, does not leave them, but feeds and leads them into eternal glory.

Q.48. BUT IF HIS HUMAN NATURE IS NOT PRESENT WHEREVER HIS GODHEAD IS, ARE THEN NOT THESE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST SEPARATED FROM ONE ANOTHER? ANSWER: NOT AT ALL, FOR SINCE THE GODHEAD IS ILLIMITABLE AND OMNIPRESENT (A), IT MUST NECESSARILY FOLLOW THAT THE SAME IS BEYOND THE LIMITS OF THE HUMAN NATURE HE ASSUMED (B), AND YET IS NEVERTHELESS IN THIS HUMAN NATURE, AND REMAINS PERSONALLY UNITED TO IT.

(A)JEREMIAH 23:24; ACTS 7:49; (B)JOHN 3:13, 11:15; MATTHEW 28:6

Are the divinity and the humanity of Christ separated?

There is one difficulty left. Previously we stated that Christ is God and man at the same time. If Christ is with His children in His divine nature, but not in His human nature, because His human nature is only in heaven, are these two natures then not separated? Some solve this difficulty by teaching that, at His ascension Christ also became omnipresent in His human nature, although not visible to the human eye. Some churches teach that He is also present at the Lord's Supper in His human nature and others even teach that the bread and wine change into the body and blood of Christ.

However, there is no proof in the Bible to support either opinion. There is actually no difficulty. In His human nature, Christ is bound to one place, but not in His Godhead. According to His human nature, He is in heaven, inseparably united with His Godhead in one Person. However, in His Godhead He is all-knowing, omniscient, and omnipresent. *“Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:24).*

Q.49. OF WHAT ADVANTAGE TO US IS CHRIST’S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN?

ANSWER: FIRST, THAT HE IS OUR ADVOCATE IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS FATHER IN HEAVEN (A); SECONDLY, THAT WE HAVE OUR FLESH IN HEAVEN AS A SURE PLEDGE THAT HE, AS THE HEAD, WILL ALSO TAKE UP TO HIMSELF, US, HIS MEMBERS (B); THIRDLY, THAT HE SENDS US HIS SPIRIT AS AN EARNEST (C), BY WHOSE POWER WE ‘SEEK THE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, AND NOT THINGS ON EARTH’ (D).

(A) I JOHN 2:1; ROMANS 8:34; (B) JOHN 14:2, 17:24, 20:17; EPHESIANS 2:6;

(C) JOHN 14:16, 16:7; ACTS 2:33; II CORINTHIANS 1:22, 5:5; (D) COLOSSIANS 3:1

An Advocate in heaven

What advantage to the believer is Christ’s ascension into heaven?

It is mentioned first that in heaven He is the Intercessor or Advocate for His people in the presence of His Father. A person has never had a better advocate, for that for which He pleads, He also acquires for His children. For He does not plead on the basis of their merits, but on the basis of His own merits. The apostle John said, *“And if any man sin, we have a Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous” (I John 2:1).*

A pledge in heaven

Through His ascension, He brought our flesh, that is, our human nature, into heaven. That is a pledge, a sure evidence of the heavenly glory which all believers are to receive, for with Christ they form *one* spiritual body. Paul testified, *“And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).* They are so united with Him, that it can be said, as it were, their flesh, their body, is already in heaven. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *“And (God) hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).* In Jesus’ ascension lies the promise that one day all believers will really be united with Christ in their bodies.

A pledge in the heart

Parallel to this pledge in heaven, believers also have a corresponding pledge in their hearts. Christ has given them His Holy Spirit. Through this Spirit, they have communion with Christ in heaven. The workings of the Spirit in their hearts and lives are also experienced by them in the fact that they do not seek after worldly pleasures, honour, and riches, but that their hearts and minds are busy with the things above. Through the power of this Spirit, they also long for their fatherland, that is, heaven. This

communion with Christ, and their longing for the complete communion with Him in eternal life, is the corresponding pledge in their hearts.

Seeking the things which are above

In Colossians 3 Paul points to the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, when he writes concerning the things which are above, where Christ is. Then these sinful inclinations are mortified: sinful passions, evil desires, sexual sins, and covetousness, but also bitterness, filthy language and hateful thoughts, and words about and against our fellow beings. They are replaced by compassion, humility, meekness, readiness to forgive, patience, and forbearance. This gives peace in the heart, a foretaste of the eternal peace in heaven.

Questions:

1. *Where and in what manner did Christ ascend into heaven? (Acts 1:4-12; Luke 24:50-53)*

2. *Where is Christ now in His human nature?*

3. *What threefold advantage do believers have from Christ's ascension?*

4. *What does Christ do in heaven for His children?*

Evaluator: _____

Meditation: "Prayer"

Urgency in prayer does not so much consist in vehement pleading as in vehement believing. He that believes most the love and power of Jesus, will obtain most in prayer.

Taken from "Gems of Robert Murray McCheyne"