

The Importance of Jesus' Ascension

By

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In the Christian Church, seasons of the year are divided into liturgical seasons based on the life and ministry of Jesus. Each liturgical season is grounded in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life. There is so much emphasis on the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus and far less attention on his ascension or his return to the Father in heaven. Why?

The question must be asked, "Why did the ascension have such a minor role in the season of the Christian calendar?" The seasons of the Christian calendar are: Advent, starting four weeks before Christmas, tells of the coming or advent of Jesus Christ. Advent is a Latin word meaning toward and coming. So Advent refers to the days approaching the coming of Jesus Christ to earth. Christmas or Christmas Tide tells of Jesus Christ's birth. This is a time of the twelve days of Christmas. Epiphany starts with the manifestation to the Gentiles, when the wise men from the Orient came to see the baby Jesus and proceeds through key moments in Jesus' life. Lent is noted for forty days in Jesus' life. Lent may bring to mind the Hebrews' forty years of wilderness wandering and Jesus' forty days of testing in the wilderness. This is a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for baptism or renewal of your baptism. Holy Week is the time when Jesus entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with the crowd honoring

Him, but later the crowd would call for Jesus' death. Easter tells of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and his appearance to certain disciples. Ascension is the passing of Jesus Christ from earth to heaven. The ascension clearly marked the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. What began in a manger in Bethlehem ended with His return to Heaven! Pentecost begins with the day of Pentecost, concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit and is basically a teaching season.

It is interesting that the Malta's Five Flags stand for the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The ascension flag represents Jesus Christ leaving his followers to themselves, as he ascends into Heaven. Jesus Christ has given them and us the ability to be accountable in our journey in life. The eight points of the Maltese cross equate to the eight beatitudes in the *Bible*.

Two themes attend the Ascension of Jesus Christ. One is the enthronement of Christ and his power. The other is his command to spread the gospel throughout the world.

The Ascension was a vital link in a chain of fulfilled prophecy, promised both in the *Old and New Testaments*, as revealed in Psalms 110:1 and Acts 2:32-36. Jesus Christ also indicated his ascension in Matthew 26:64, John 6:62, John 7:33, and John 14:28. Jesus' ascension was forty days after the resurrection according to Acts 1:3 and at the Mount of

Olives, as indicated by Luke 24:50, compared with Mark 11:1 and Acts 1:12.

After Jesus' resurrection, he realized that he would have to leave his disciples, so they could be on their own. In Acts 1:3-14, Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses . . . to end of the earth." So Jesus, during his resurrection time, is offering his followers the "3Ps." The three things they would be offered were: a promise, a purpose, and a preparation. Jesus promises his followers the power of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in Acts. 1:8. We can expect to receive power when the promised Holy Spirit arrives. The presence of the Holy Spirit will bring us comfort as indicated in Acts 9:31 to the believers. Too many people today do not want to give up their old ways of sin and turn their lives over to the Lord. The social life and style today is not compatible with the *Bible*. The power of the Holy Spirit is for the purpose of witnessing to others and sharing God's love and gift of salvation. Jesus offered us the time and means of preparation. "All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer." (v .4) We should be ready for his sudden return, as illustrated in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, not by standing around looking into the "sky."

Why was the ascension of Jesus important? We may answer this question in the following three points.

1. His ascension marked the success of his earthly mission. Jesus completed all that the Father had designed for him to accomplish. His "Holy Birth," miracles, teaching, death, resurrection, and appearances had proven His divine nature and had fulfilled the *Old Testament* prophecies of

the Messiah's first advent.

2. His ascension marked the time when Jesus once again enjoyed His heavenly glory. During His time on earth, with the exception of the transfiguration on the mountain in Mathew 17:1-9, Jesus limited any expression of the heavenly glory that He enjoyed prior to his earthly birth.
3. His ascension marked the beginning of the time when Jesus was preparing a place for his followers, as John 14:2-3 reveals to us "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" His ascension established the path for Christ's second coming as the angels in Acts 1 told his disciples. Jesus will return just as he left, as illustrated in Daniel 7:13-14.

Jesus is in heaven with his Father, waiting for us. His ascension marks the beginning of the time for us to communicate the message of Jesus' love and salvation for all. We need to work to be God's eyes, mouth, ears, and hands in witnessing of his gift of salvation. How are you preparing yourselves to accept the "Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20?

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