

The Ascension of Christ

Through the ascension of Jesus Christ we are restored to the presence of God.

1) The need for ascension arises from man's fall (Gen. 3; Ezek 28).

- a) Adam's fall is recapitulated in the fall of the King of Tyre (Ezek. 28)
- b) Cast down from Eden, the Mountain of God (Ezek. 28:16)
- c) Banished from God's presence (Ezek. 28:16)
- d) Blamelessness lost to appalling shame (Ezek. 28:2, 17-19)

2) Humanity's attempts to ascend from the fall end in the pit (Gen. 11:1-9; Isa. 14:12-17).

- a) Self-exaltation (Babel/Babylon)
 - i) "Let us make a name for ourselves." (Gen. 11:4)
 - ii) "I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high." (Isa. 14:13)
- b) Humanity's Attempts to Ascend from the Fall (a few examples):
 - i) Gnosticism: Ascension of the Mind—figuring out mysteries
 - ii) Moralism: Ascension of the Will—"Our common duty as men is to elevate ourselves to this ideal" (Immanuel Kant).
 - iii) Progressivism: Ascension of Being—divine self-realization through evolutionary consciousness
 - iv) Techno-utopianism: Ascension through Technological Skill—immortality and incorruption through medical technology, relief from toil through machines, release from psychological maladies through drugs
- c) The End of Human Attempts at Ascension
 - i) "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." (Gen. 11: 7)
 - ii) "But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit." (Isa. 14:15)

3) The promise of ascension was typified in the Old Covenant.

- a) The Ascension Offering translated as "Whole Burnt Offering"
 - i) Altar of Ascension Offering: Bronze Altar in Solomon's Temple (17.5' high)
 - ii) Altar of Ascension Offering in Ezekiel's New Temple Vision
 - iii) Altar is symbolic of mountain; "Mountain of God"
- b) Moses' Ascension on Sinai (Exod.19)
- c) The Elders' Ascension on Sinai (Exod. 24)
- d) The Priest's Ascension in the Tabernacle/Temple (Exod. 33; Lev.)
 - i) Heb. 9:1-10 "By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing" (v. 8).
 - ii) "cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper" (v. 9)
- e) These were types or shadows of a coming reality.

4) Humanity's ascension in the ascended Christ ends in the presence of God (Heb. 12:18-24).

- a) Christ descends to make propitiation for our sins (Heb. 2:9-17).
 - i) "for a little while was made lower than the angels" (v. 9)
 - ii) "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (v. 17)
- b) Christ ascends to represent us in the heavenly Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:11-28).
 - i) "When Christ appeared . . . through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing eternal redemption." (vv. 11-12)
 - ii) "For Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." (v. 24)
- c) We ascend with Christ through gospel-worship (Heb. 12:18-29).
 - i) "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." (vv. 22-24)
 - ii) "Thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." (vv. 28-29)

- d) Our ascension is consummated in a glorious descent (Rev. 21)
 - i) "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (v. 2)
 - ii) "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God." (v. 3)
 - iii) "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." (v. 22)

Through the ascension of Jesus Christ we are restored to the presence of God.

- 1) Praise God for this plan of reconciliation.
- 2) Praise Jesus Christ for His lowly condescension and heavenly ascension.
- 3) Forsake all Babylonish attempts at ascension.
- 4) "See that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. . . . Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:25, 28-29)