

## Newsletter June 2020

It is apparent that the history of the past two thousand years would have been far different if Jesus had remained upon the earth, for He could never have died again, but would have remained forever alive even to this very day. In this Newsletter we shall discuss the ascension of Jesus Christ, regarding its necessity as well as its great benefit to men.

Jesus was offered up as the perfect sacrifice — the unblemished Lamb of God who died for our sins (cf. Ep.5:2; Jn.1:29). This was symbolized by the Jewish priest entering the Holiest of Holies, with the blood sacrifice of the bull, in the Old Testament picture of Christ (cf. He.9:7; Le.16:30). Jesus is called a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (i.e. eternal and above the Levitical priesthood); thus signifying that Jesus entered into the presence of God as our High Priest and offered his own blood for our salvation (cf. He.9:12). Christ, having entered once into the presence of God, has offered a perfect sacrifice once and forever (cf. He.9:14; 9:25,26)! The proof of the acceptance of that sacrifice is in the resurrection of Jesus (cf. He.9:12; 1Pe.1:3).

After his resurrection, Christ appeared to his disciples and many others for a period of forty days upon the earth (cf. Ac.1:3). Nevertheless, He was not to remain with them in human form. Having appeared to many to fully establish the fact of his resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven before his astonished apostles: “**And when He had finished speaking with them “while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight”** (Ac.1:9). While the apostles stared toward heaven, two men in gleaming white clothing stood next to them (cf. Ac.1:10) and said, “**Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”** (Ac.1:11). One day, Jesus will return in the clouds of heaven as he ascended (cf. Mt.24:30), but for the present He reigns on high in heaven.

It was imperative that Jesus should return to the Father, and not remain on Earth, in order to receive again the prerogatives of his deity that He had temporarily set aside in his incarnation. God had sacrificed his only begotten Son for the sins of the world, and in doing so, a tremendous breach had taken place in the Godhead as God, the Father, had poured out his wrath upon Him for the judgment of human sin. Even the resurrection had not fully restored that breach. His ascension achieved a reunion that restored full integrity to the Godhead. No mortal can understand the deep loss stemming from the separation of God the Father from his beloved Son. Likewise, none could comprehend the restoration of that fellowship.

The return of the Son to Heaven was unlike his departure to earth. When He came to earth, a human body was prepared for Him in the womb of a human woman. The incarnation forever joined God to man. “**The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”** (Jn.1:14). Just as Jesus’ resurrection was complete in Spirit, soul, and flesh, He likewise ascended to heaven complete in human flesh. That means that there is now a man within the glory of the Godhead: the man, Jesus Christ. The flesh in which Jesus ascended to heaven became a glorified flesh; it is still human flesh to be sure, but glorified as is befitting the Son of God.

At the time of the incarnation, the Son of God set aside all of his prerogatives of deity in the Godhead that He might be made “...a little lower than the angels...” (He.2:7,9). Those nearest to Him viewed glimpses of his deity in the performance of his many miracles. Yet, his full glory was masked and hidden within mortal human flesh. The flesh in which Jesus walked the Earth was not glorified, but was human flesh prepared as an offering to atone for man’s sin (cf. Jn.1:29). Even after Jesus’ resurrection, his flesh was not glorified here on Earth (cf. Jn.20:17). However, upon his return to Heaven to sit at the right hand of God, it was impossible for his flesh not to be glorified. The Glory that Christ had set aside had to be restored, and a new glory: the glory of his suffering, the glory of his resurrection, the glory of fallen man’s redemption crowned Him anew.

Thus, it is recorded in many passages of Scripture that Jesus is a King (cf. Is.9:7; Je.23:5; Da.7:14; Jn.1:49; 18:37); but, more than that, He is referred to as “King of kings, and Lord of Lords” (cf. 1Ti.6:15; Re.1:5; 17:14; 19:16). That means that no ruler of this earth ranks above Him; rather, Jesus reigns above all nations. The Kingdom that belongs to Jesus is not presently of this world in any physical sense (cf. Jn.18:36). However, his

subjects are those who have been given the life of this world (cf. Jn.17:14–18). All of the believers (referred to as “saints” in the new testament) are the subjects of Christ. Therefore, Jesus is to receive the honor of the Great King — much more honor than the position of any king on this earth. It is therefore appropriate that Jesus receive the place of highest honor. Jesus this day rules his Kingdom from a position of honor and power at the right hand of God the Father (cf. Ac.7:55,56). Christ is as a king that has made a long journey, leaving his kingdom in the stewardship of his subjects and servants (cf. Mk.13:34). We, therefore, serve a King who is above all kings. He must have the preeminence.

Moreover, as a result of Jesus’ ascension, many benefits were to be received by those who are numbered among his many followers to this day. In the Old Testament, we read of men being filled with the Spirit for specific purposes, having the Spirit put upon them, being led by the Holy Spirit, and still more often receiving messages from angels. However, Christ was the first to be fully indwelt by the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn.3:34). His disciples were guided externally by their association with Jesus; although, there were occasional flashes of revelation or insight as with Peter (cf. Mt.16:17). However, Jesus had told his disciples that they soon would be “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (cf. Ac.1:5), and that the Holy Spirit would come upon them (cf. Ac.1:8). None of that was to occur until after Jesus’ ascension. **“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you”** (Jn.16:7). On the day of Pentecost, his disciples were “...filled with the Holy Ghost...” (cf. Ac.2:4). This was more than the Holy Spirit merely affecting them externally. As the Apostle Paul said, **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you”** (1Co.3:16)?

It was only after humanity was glorified in the person of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit could live within mortal men in order to guide them. That infusion constitutes a spiritual rebirth of the one whom the Holy Spirit indwells. It is made possible by the man, Christ Jesus, who resides at the throne of God. Jesus would no longer be with his disciples to guide them and to teach them in the flesh. They would no longer be able to seek out his advice in the human sense. Nevertheless, what Jesus and his Father together sent them in the person of the Holy Spirit was far better. They now had God Himself living within them! They had the mind of Christ as a part of their very being. The relationship of the believer to God is now complete and eternal through the Spirit of Christ who indwells them.

Before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples there were many things He had to say to them, but that they would not be able to grasp the meaning of them while He was still with them in the flesh (cf. Jn.16:12). **“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come”** (Jn.16:13). Jesus taught his disciples when they were present with Him, but it is apparent that Jesus could not be omnipresent while contained in human flesh. Therefore, it was only because of Jesus’ ascension, that the indwelling Holy Spirit could be always present to guide each individual believer into all Truth. The disciples were able to fully grasp spiritual things only after the Holy Spirit had come to indwell them.

All that was in the mind of Christ is now available to each believer through the indwelling Holy Spirit: **“...he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you”** (Jn.16:14,15). The Apostle Paul said, **“... the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But, we have the mind of Christ”** (1Co.2:14,16). The natural man is guided only by his five senses, while the believer has the mind of Christ as his guide and teacher into all things concerning Christ, and into understanding the Word of God as well. The receiving of Truth through the Holy Spirit is possible only because Jesus has ascended.

When the Holy Spirit filled the disciples on the day of Pentecost, they were uniquely separated from the rest of the world, and just as uniquely joined together in the spiritual bond of the indwelling Holy Spirit. They were identified with Christ as an extension of his being. A new group of men and women was created that had never existed before. Those Spirit-filled men and women made up an assembly or congregation of people set aside to

serve God here on earth. That was the beginning of what through the ages has been called the new covenant Church. What made them the Church were not flames of fire or the speaking in foreign tongues, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who united them in the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit living within believers still holds the Church together. The Holy Spirit directs the activities of the Church through the efforts of individuals that make up the Church. It is the Holy Spirit that continually points to Christ as the head in all matters, and sanctifies its members as the physical extensions of the mind of Christ to accomplish all things according to his will and purpose. That is the Church and nothing else is the Church. It is not created with human hands nor can it be directed by human thought. The Church would not have been possible without the ascension of Christ, which made the sending of the Holy Spirit possible.

The Church was not created full-grown. It began with a small core of believers consisting of about one hundred twenty disciples in all (cf. Ac.1:15). If that small number had gone forth in their own strength to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus, they would no doubt have been ignored or silenced, and Christianity would have come to naught. Jesus “...**commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me**” (Ac.1:4). “**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth**” (Ac.1:8). The Holy Spirit enabled them to reach lost souls with the Gospel of Christ. The Holy Spirit equipped them with everything they needed to propagate the Gospel to the nations about them through the many Jews who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost (cf. Ac.2:5–12).

We read the first recorded sermon as Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit pricked the hearts of those who had crucified their awaited Messiah (cf. Ac.2:14–40). Through the power of the Holy Spirit three-thousand souls were added to the Church in a single day (cf. Ac.2:41). The hearts of the lost are not changed by some clever words that we have devised. It is the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us to speak his Words as He also brings them home into the heart of the unbeliever. It is the Holy Spirit that truly evangelizes the world through the Church thus bringing lost souls to salvation in Christ.

Believers often wish that they could have been living at the time that Jesus walked the earth in order that they could have known Him, conversed with Him, and heard Him speak as did his early disciples. Yet, we should know that we have something far better. Wherever we go and whatever we do, He is not only with us, but also within us! Jesus said, “**At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you**” (Jn.14:20). On the day of Pentecost, that realization came to the disciples as the Holy Spirit indwelt them. What a comfort to know that as Christ is inseparable from the Father, so we being indwelt by the Holy Spirit are inseparable from Christ. He is not only in us, but we are within Him, thus insuring our salvation. Hidden in the “cleft of the rock” we are protected from the effects of the trials of this life. Much more than that, we being “in Christ” need never fear that the wrath of God will be directed toward us. Christ lives in us and we in Him.

Therefore, Jesus in ascending to the Father is our high Priest who has made perfect atonement for our sins. Accordingly, Christ is our mediator before the Father (cf. 1Ti.2:5; He.9:15,24). Not only has Jesus paid the full price for us, but He also continues to intervene for us (cf. 1Jn.2:1). The Levitical high priest of the old covenant repeatedly entered the Holy of Holies once each year for a short time to make temporary atonement, but our High Priest entered once and remains in the very presence of God that the atonement may be continuous and eternal. Since we saints are not perfect before God, we must depend upon continuous intercession on our behalf by Christ Jesus (1Jn.1:8,10). Therefore, when we in our imperfection stumble and fall into sin, we may confess our fault before God calling upon the name of Jesus (cf. 1Jn.1:9).

None should think that we should deliberately sin in order to exercise the power of Jesus in our behalf (cf. Ro.3:8)! Rather, it is because our fallen nature still attacks us from without that we stumble into sin. We may lose the battle at times, but the final victory for us is assured through the mediation of Christ on our behalf. A mediator is not ordinarily a mediator of one (cf. Ga.3:20). That is, a mediator is normally separate of the two parties requiring mediation that he may be impartial. However, Christ and God are one, and Christ is also the son of

man! Our great mediator has fully reconciled the difference between sinful man and a Holy God by uniting the two in his own person. Therefore, we who are now in Christ Jesus are forever justified to God (cf. Ga.3:26).

It is well that Christ intercedes for us every day since we stumble and fall so often. So much so that we may become discouraged and fail to fulfill the commission, that is ours. The early disciples had Jesus Himself at their sides to encourage and comfort them. When Christ ascended, their comforter had departed from their side. However, Jesus said, **“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever... for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you”** (Jn.14:16–18). What Jesus was actually saying is that He would not leave them as orphans to fend for themselves after his ascension, but would send the Holy Spirit (his other self) to comfort them from within their hearts and minds. The Holy Spirit, who at that time indwelt Christ (“dwelleth with you”), would dwell inside them soon after Jesus’ ascension.

When Jesus died, we died with Him that our sin-nature would be destroyed in his death. When Jesus arose from the grave, we also arose in Him that we may be justified to God. However, we should likewise understand that when Jesus ascended to the throne of God, we also ascended in Him. Now, it is apparent that we are still upon the earth in our fleshly bodies. Yet, when Jesus ascended in human flesh, He also took the flesh of all that was his within Him. Even as we have yet to die physically, so we are not yet ascended into Heaven. Nevertheless, those of us who are in Christ have already attained that position in Heaven, which is yet unrealized. We are even now positionally sanctified by the ascension of Christ.

Just as we should reckon ourselves dead and raised again to newness of life (cf. Ro.6:11), so should we reckon ourselves to be sanctified in the ascension of Christ. Day-to-day living in this world would seem to postpone the reality of physical sanctification to the future just as physical death and resurrection is in the future. Yet, as Paul said to the Corinthians, **“...but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”** (1Co.6:11). We are sanctified both *in* the “name of the Lord Jesus”, and we are sanctified *by* “the Spirit of God.” While total purification of the believer is yet future, because we are far from perfect, sanctification is something that the Holy Spirit works out in us in the present. It is by means of the indwelling Spirit of God that we are increasingly sanctified in this life as we live each day. We need not give in to sinful living, because the Holy Spirit who lives within us washes us daily.

Jesus said that in his Father’s house there were many “dwelling places.” **“I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”** (Jn.14:2,3). It was necessary that Jesus ascend to Heaven in order that He might both pave the way for us and prepare a place for us to live with Him in the presence of God the Father. Not only are we saved from our sins, justified, and sanctified, but we are also given the authority to live as sons of God in God’s very presence. **“As many as received [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God...”** (Jn.1:12). We are not to merely see Heaven with our eyes, nor are we to be mere guests there, but we are to fully live there as family members in the place that Jesus has prepared for us.

We who remain on this earth are not only to give Jesus honor, but are to serve Him as loyal subjects in anticipation of his return to the earth (cf. Mt.25:14). In as much as we are not told of the time of his return, we must daily expect his return and act accordingly by being fully prepared. For **“ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh”** (Mt..25:13 ;cf. Mk.13:35). We are not to stand gazing into the heavens, while we await his appearance, but we should work diligently so that we may be ready at his return.

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