

# The Mind of Christ

## The Ascension

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. As we approach the CONCLUSION of our series of studies called The Mind of Christ, we're going to turn our attention to two very important events – the final meeting of Jesus with His disciples, and His ascension into heaven to take His place on His throne at the right hand of God as King of kings and Lord of lords.
  - A. Before Jesus left His disciples, Luke tells us Jesus took time to open their minds to understand a number of things that had been hidden from their eyes.
    1. **Luke 24:44-49** – *Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in*

*His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*

2. Why had their understanding been so clouded?
  - a. The most probable explanation is that they were trying to make the mission of Jesus fit into their own preconceived ideas.
  - b. Their concept of the Messiah was dramatically different from what Jesus actually came to BE and to DO.
    - (1). Like all Jews of that day, these disciples believed the Messiah would come to establish an earthly kingdom, much like in the days of David and Solomon.
    - (2). However, Jesus didn't come to establish THAT kind of kingdom at all – He came to establish the kind of kingdom God had ALWAYS WANTED.
  - c. In the days of the Old Testament prophet Samuel, the people of Israel demanded that he give them a king. And so the aged prophet, saddened by the demands of the people, took the matter before God.

- (1). **1 Samuel 8:4-9** – *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. 8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day — with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods — so they are doing to you also. 9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them."*
- (2). God always intended to be their KING – to reign and rule in the hearts and minds of His people. **(v. 7)**
- (3). But the people didn't want THAT kind of king, they wanted a king they could SEE, and who they could life up as their great leader before the nations around them – a

king that would make them great, and would lead them into victory over their enemies!

(4). The only problem with that kind of king is that he would be just like them – a man given to the same sins and weaknesses that all men are given to. **(see 1 Samuel**

**8:10-18)**

(5). If the people had only remembered the words of Gideon, they would have saved themselves a lot of heartache.

(a). **Judges 8:22-23** – *Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian." 23 But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."*

d. Jesus came to bring about the kind of kingdom GOD had always intended – one in which the KING would reign and rule in their HEARTS – a kingdom, as Jesus said, that would be **"WITHIN YOU!" (Luke 17:20-21)**

B. And so, when we go back to **Luke 24:44-49**, we see that Jesus began to open their minds to understand why things happened the way they did.

1. First, Jesus said that all things spoken about Him in the Law, the prophets, and the psalms had to be fulfilled. **(Luke 24:44)**
  - a. Passages like Isaiah 53, where we're told, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities."*  
**(Isaiah 53:5)**
  - b. And passages like Psalm 2, where Jesus is the Lord's ANOINTED – the CHRIST – God's SON who rules among the nations of men with a rod of iron.
2. Second, Jesus opened their minds to understand (comprehend) why it was *"necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day."* **(Luke 24:46)**
  - a. To the disciples, the death of Jesus didn't make any sense.
  - b. And so, they needed to understand that Jesus WAS IN FACT the LAMB OF GOD that takes away the sins of the world.
3. Third, Jesus told them that, as witnesses of these things, they now had a mission to preach, *"repentance and remission of sins... in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."* **(Luke 24:47)**
  - a. They were being commissioned to carry the GOOD NEWS (the GOSPEL) to a world lost in sins, and that needed to be cleansed by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.



2. And second, there are some questions as to when the ascension of Jesus actually took place.
  - a. Was it 40 days after His resurrection?
  - b. Or was there even a LONGER period of time, as some claim, between the resurrection and the ascension?
3. As we begin looking at this important event, we should be able to answer those questions, and see what the Scriptures ACTUALLY say.
4. And, as we look further at the ascension of Jesus, we're going to learn why it was NECESSARY – in other words, we're going to learn WHY it was necessary for Jesus to actually ASCEND into heaven as He did.
5. And so, let's begin.

**BODY:**

- I. Without question, the ascension of Jesus Christ is one of the very basic beliefs of every Christian.
  - A. But, when we turn to the Scriptures for information about the ascension, we wonder why isn't there more said about the ascension of Jesus by the other writers?
    1. The ascension is mentioned VERY BRIEFLY in Mark's account.

- a. **Mark 16:19** – *So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.*
  - b. However, SOME early manuscripts OMIT **Mark 16:9-20**, and certain scholars have concluded that these verses may NOT have been part of the original manuscript of Mark's gospel.
  - c. If that's TRUE, then we can't rely on THIS account as first-hand evidence of the ascension of Jesus.
2. The ascension is ALSO mentioned briefly in Luke.
    - a. **Luke 24:51** – *Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*
    - b. But the phrase, "*carried up into heaven*" is ALSO missing in some of the early manuscripts.
  3. However, the ONE TEXT which NO ONE seems to question is the account of Luke found in the first chapter of the book of Acts.
    - a. **Acts 1:9-11** – *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was*

*taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

- B. But even if we're lacking UNDISPUTED evidence of the ascension being in the original manuscripts of Mark and Luke's gospels, it's CLEAR that the ascension of Jesus was an ACCEPTED FACT among all the DISCIPLES of the Lord.
1. We know that Jesus Himself talked about His ultimate ascension.
    - a. **John 6:62** – Jesus asked His disciples, *"What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"*
    - b. **John 20:17** – Following His resurrection, Jesus told Mary Magdalene, *"Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"*
  2. The apostles ALSO wrote about the ascension of Jesus.
    - a. **Ephesians 4:10** – *He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.*
    - b. **Hebrews 4:14** – *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

- c. **1 Timothy 3:16** – A passage that later became the words of a 2nd century hymn, where Paul wrote: *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*
  - d. **1 Peter 3:21-22** – After Peter showed how Noah and his family were saved by water during the flood, he adds: *There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.*
3. There are a NUMBER of other passages that speak about Jesus being at the "right hand of God."
- a. Of course, the QUESTION is, how could Jesus be at the "right hand of God" unless He had ASCENDED to be at the "right hand of God?"
- C. But there's ANOTHER question about the records of the ascension of Jesus – namely, when did it occur?

1. According to Luke's narrative in Acts, there were 40 days between the RESURRECTION of Jesus and His final ASCENSION.
2. But some scholars have actually questioned whether this is to be taken as a LITERAL 40 days, or whether this is a Jewish figure of speech meaning, "a considerable period of time."
  - a. Personally, I believe it's reasonable to conclude the 40 days are to be taken LITERALLY. For example:
    - (1). **Genesis 7:12, 17** – We're told the rain fell for a period of 40 days during the flood.
    - (2). **Exodus 24:18** – We're ALSO told Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days receiving the Law.
    - (3). **Matthew 4:2** – We're told Jesus was tempted in the wilderness 40 days.
  - b. Therefore, why would we conclude these 40 day periods of anything MORE than just 40 LITERAL DAYS.
3. And yet, in the centuries that followed, there were a number of ideas advanced about the time span between the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension into heaven.
  - a. Eusebius mentions that some held the belief that the length of Jesus' ministry AFTER the resurrection was about the same

length of time as BEFORE the resurrection – or,  
approximately 3 years.

- b. But the fact that Acts chapter 2 begins with the events on the first Pentecost AFTER the resurrection of Jesus – which came 50 days following the Passover – we are safe in concluding that the 40 days is either to be taken LITERALLY, or that it means a time CLOSE TO 40 actual days.

II. But why was the ascension so crucial? Why is it an absolute necessity for us to know that Jesus actually DID ascend into heaven? I think there are at least FOUR reasons why the ascension of Jesus was important.

A. First, there needed to be a definite END to the appearances of Jesus following His resurrection from the dead.

- 1. It was necessary for Jesus to spend time with His disciples following the resurrection so they could be fully convinced that he was IN FACT alive, and that He actually HAD been resurrected.
- 2. The disciples also needed time to put together some of the pieces of the puzzle as to WHY Jesus had to die in the FIRST place.
  - a. That's why He opened their minds about the Old Testament Law, prophets, and Psalms and show them how all these things fit into God's plan.

3. They also needed to understand some things about the Holy Spirit Who would come as their Comforter (Para-kaleo).
    - a. Jesus knew they needed DIRECT contact with the Godhead, and the Holy Spirit would serve that purpose – guiding, enlightening and empowering them.
  4. But, Jesus couldn't stay with His disciples FOREVER.
    - a. He needed to return to the Father and take His rightful place at the Father's right hand to become the King over the Kingdom of heaven.
    - b. This could only be accomplished one of two ways: either Jesus could have FEWER AND FEWER appearances until there were no more, or He could choose a SPECIAL AND DEFINITE TIME to bring everything to an end.
    - c. The way GOD chose was a FINAL AND DEFINITE CONCLUSION to the ministry of Jesus.
- B. But, another reason why the ascension is so important, is because the ministry of Jesus needed to end in a manner that would GLORIFY HIM.
1. Rather than end with what ONCE SEEMED TO BE the defeat of the cross, Jesus ended His ministry in GLORY by His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven.

- a. He didn't simply DISAPPEAR. Rather, He ascended up into the clouds until they received Him out of sight of the awestruck disciples watching the whole event.
  2. There could certainly be no doubt in the minds of those who witnessed the ascension of Jesus that He was returning to heaven from where He had come.
- C. Third, the ascension of Jesus was necessary for Jesus to be ENTRHONED as King of kings and Lord of lords.
1. The kingdom of Jesus Christ was not of this world.
    - a. His kingdom would be SPIRITUAL – within the HEARTS of those who were His followers – and His THRONE would be in heaven.
    - b. Therefore, to take His rightful place on the throne as KING over God's spiritual kingdom, Jesus needed to ascend to that throne in heaven.
  2. The apostle Paul mentions that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven to begin His universal rule and dominion.
    - a. **Ephesians 1:15-23** – *Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my*

*prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

- D. And finally, Jesus needed to ascend into heaven to do something for US.
  - 1. First, Jesus entered heaven to offer His OWN blood as an EVERLASTING sacrifice for our sins.
    - a. **Hebrews 9:24-26** – *For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into*

*heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another — 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

2. Now that Jesus is at the right hand of God, He makes intercession for us as our mediator and advocate.
  - b. **Romans 8:31-34** – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*
  - b. **Hebrews 7:25** – *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

- c. **Hebrews 8:6** – *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*
  - d. **1 Timothy 2:5** – *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all...*
  - e. **1 John 2:1-2** – *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*
3. Finally, Jesus needed to ascend into heaven to also give US HOPE.
- a. Just as Jesus was resurrected from the dead, we ALSO know we will be resurrected from the dead someday.
  - b. And, just as Jesus ascended into heaven, we ALSO know we will someday ascend into heaven as well.
    - (1). **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** – *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so*

*God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. There was one final event that took place immediately AFTER the ascension of Jesus – angels came with a message to the disciples of Jesus.
  - A. He is coming again!
    1. **Acts 1:9-11** – *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into*

*heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

2. Are YOU ready for His coming?
    - a. Jesus will be coming again some day in the same manner as He went – completely UNANNOUNCED and completely UNEXPECTED.
  3. Jesus may come:
    - a. Today perhaps, maybe tomorrow, or next week... or MAYBE even during the next FEW MINUTES!
    - b. We don't know WHEN He will come again, but one thing is for SURE – we know he WILL come again.
- B. Are YOU ready for the return of Jesus?
1. Have YOU been baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and been added by the Lord to His body, the church?
  2. And if you ARE a Christian, are YOU ready for the Lord's return?
    - a. Has your walk with God been such that you are SURE of your home in heaven, and are ready for Jesus to come RIGHT NOW?