

100 BIBLE LESSONS

These lessons were originally given at Manila, Philippines, in 1958 and 1959 by former missionary to China, Alban Douglas. Give these lessons to people you visit, youth groups, hospital patients, church visitors and new members. Use them in Sunday School, bus ministry, jail services, nursing homes, Christian schools, small discussion groups and many other places. God's Word will answer your questions and help solve your problems.

LESSON 57 – THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

The life of Jesus Christ can be told as four great miracles: Incarnation, resurrection, ascension and second coming. Today we study the third of these miracles. The ascension is that event in which Christ departed visibly and returned to heaven. He came to earth as a humble baby. He left the earth as the exalted conqueror. When His earthly work was complete He entered into His heavenly ministry of preparing the Mansions and the High Priestly work of intercession.

I. THE STORY OF THE ASCENSION

Acts 1:9 -11, "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also 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."

The description can be summarized in two words: He ascended visibly and bodily.

II. THE ASCENSION WAS PROPHESED AND TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES

Psalm 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive."

Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." After the ascension He sat at the Father's right hand.

Luke 9:51, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." The ascension was in God's plan.

John 6:62, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?"

John 14:28, "I go away... I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I."

John 20:17, "Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go unto My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father."

The Old Testament spoke of it and Jesus taught freely of His ascension. Likely the disciples didn't understand it any more than they understood the precious truths of His death, burial and resurrection.

III. THE ASCENSION OCCURRED 40 DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION

Jesus delayed going back to His Father to remain on earth for several reasons.

1. To prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that He had actually risen from the dead. This was essential for the establishment of the faith of the believers.

2. He tarried in order to give the disciples more instructions in the Christian faith. In the post-resurrection period Jesus was able to explain much of His past teaching in light of that which occurred-His own death, burial and resurrection.

Acts 1:3, "To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

IV. THE MANNER OF THE ASCENSION

Luke 24:51, "And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

Jesus Christ is now seated at the right hand of the Father. Ephesians 1:20, "Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

Some think this expression, "God's right hand," is figurative, meaning power. However, I believe it is literally a geographical location, for Stephen saw Christ they are.

Acts 7:56, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." True, it is difficult to localize the eternal God, but it can be done. The ascension was visible, not secret. It was seen and witnessed by the apostles. Jesus Christ left personally, visibly and bodily and in like manner will He return in the Second Advent to this earth.

V. THE NECESSITY OF THE ASCENSION

Heaven was His home and it was logical that when His work was complete that He would return home again. John 14:28, "I go unto the Father."

Prophecy had to be fulfilled. He said that He would return to the Father and He did, John 16.

The Divine plan was that the Holy Spirit would not come to indwell believers until after the ascension of Christ. The ascension must precede Pentecost.

John 16:7, "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."

The ascension of Christ was a prerequisite to His further work of preparing mansions.

John 14:2,3, "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."

It would have been wonderful if Jesus could have lived on earth forever, in His post-resurrection power but that was not the plan for God for the Church.

1. Jesus ascended to complete the redemptive work that was required, John 20:16, 17.
2. Jesus' ascension enabled His followers to do the promised greater works, John 14:12.
3. Jesus ascended to enter into the ministry of intercession at God's throne.
4. Jesus ascension makes His ministry worldwide, not localized in Palestine, Matthew 28:18.
5. The ascension becomes a strong proof and explanation of the resurrection body.

VI. THE PURPOSE OF THE ASCENSION

Jesus ascended to glorify the Father. John 17:1, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."

Jesus ascended to become a Prince and a Savior. Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance."

Jesus ascended as a forerunner, opening the pathway for us. Hebrews 6:20, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

Jesus ascended to prepare our heavenly abode, John 14:2; to be our High Priest, Hebrews 9:21-24; and to take His appropriate seat, Hebrews 10:12, 13.

VII. THE RESULTS OF THE ASCENSION

He gave gifts to men. Ephesians 4:8, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." What gifts? Verse 11 says Apostles, prophets, etc. Because He ascended the Holy Spirit descended, John 16:7 and Acts 2:33.

He demonstrated that sins were purged by sitting down, showing completed action.

Hebrews 1:3, "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand."

Because of His ascension now we can come bodily to the Lord in prayer, Hebrews 4:14-16.

Because He has ascended He can now save to the uttermost, Hebrews 7:25. He can lift a sinner from the cesspool of sin to the highest heaven to be with Himself.

His presence in the heavenlies causes us to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Hebrews 10:22.

He stands now on the portals of heaven beckoning us to look "unto Jesus." Hebrews 12:2. He stands as the goal at the end of the journey

Positionally we are seated with Him today in the heavenlies. Ephesians 2:6, "And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"

He ascended that He might fill all things. Ephesians 4:10, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."

Now that He has ascended, angels, authorities and powers are subject to Him.

I Peter 3:22, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." His ascension became a

coronation. Ascension becomes one of the six articles of the mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. 3:16.

CONCLUSION

Because of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every name." Let's not wait until that day to glorify our Savior. Let's worship and serve this Christ to defied the laws of gravity and ascended bodily. Let's prepare to welcome Him soon as He returns bodily and visibly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the four great miracles in the life of Christ?
2. Where is the story of the ascension recorded?
3. What was the prophecy of Christ's ascension?
4. Give two reasons why Jesus did not ascend immediately after the resurrection.
5. Describe the ascension.
6. List five reasons why it was necessary for Jesus to ascend.
7. Give four purposes of His ascension.
8. List seven results of the ascension.
9. What information about the ascension do we learn from I Peter 3:22?
10. What lesson would you learn linking Ephesians 4:10 with Matthew 18:20?