He Ascended Up On High

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"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Ephesians 4:8

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

John 20:17

Introduction:

1. As we come to the Lord's Table tonight, let us consider Him Who died, rose again, and ascended into heaven for us!
2. This is no frivolous or minor subject matter; this is part of the mystery of our faith, vital for salvation, and glorious!
3. There is no greater scene and incredible drama than the throne room of heaven with our Lord Jesus ascending to open the everlasting covenant of God for His elect whom He had redeemed (Rev 4:1 – 5:14). Try Handel's MESSIAH!

I Timothy 3:16

A. This is part of the great mystery of our faith, which is revealed to you through the gospel (3:15).
B. You cannot know about Jesus or His ascension from nature or any document of men or angels.
C. God, who was manifest in the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, was received up in His body into glory!
D. He looked forward to this glorious event during His life, and He was ready to die (Luke 9:51).
E. This is one of the most stupendous events in all human history, and we believe it by the Bible!
F. Pagan religionists can hallucinate with the imagined deeds of their gods: we have the ascension!

Acts 1:1-3

A. Our Lord Jesus was crucified and buried as the true Passover Lamb on the 14th of Abib, or Nisan.
B. His body lay in the tomb for three days and three nights, seventy-two hours, as He prophesied.
C. This was from Wednesday at 6:00 P.M. until Saturday at 6:00 P.M., with two Sabbaths between.
D. His divine nature was always, and shall always be, omnipresent. His human spirit went to heaven.
E. He told the thief He would see him in Paradise that day, and He committed His spirit to His Father.
F. He did not descend into hell, as papists and their daughters imagine in their false "apostles' creed."

G. He came back into His body, rose from the dead, and proved His resurrection infallibly for 40 days.
H. There were other saints' bodies resurrected as well, of which we know very little (Matt 27:50-53).
I. These are all facts of the gospel, which we most surely believe, because the Bible is God's Word!

John 6:62

A. They were offended He was the bread of God come down from heaven (6:33,38,41,42,50,51,58).
B. Rather than explain that to them any deeper, He challenges them that He would also ascend!
C. He confronted Nicodemus with like language, which proved His Deity and hinted at His ascension.

John 20:11-18

A. The words "touch me not" are not because he had an ethereal body. He deferred her much hugging!
B. The women did touch Him, but He wanted them to go tell His disciples quickly (Matthew 28:9-10).
C. There were only forty days before He would ascend, and the limited time should be spent with all!
D. He told them many times He would go to His Father (John 6:62; 14:2-4,12; 16:5,10,17,28; 17:5).
E. He did not go to heaven immediately after seeing Mary, for He appeared shortly thereafter (20:19).
F. His body was changing in the way in which He could move, but it would change even further.
G. You shall never be lost, if you anxiously look for the Lord Jesus, like Mary (Heb 9:28; II Tim 4:8).
H. Jesus appeared first of all to Mary Magdalene, who told the disciples. Glorious Lover of sinners!

Luke 9:51

A. Our Jesus knew what He was in the world for, and He saw His ascension as the grand objective.
B. With that thought in His mind, He could set His face to go to Jerusalem and the cross (Heb 12:2).

Luke 24:26

A. Jesus corrected two on the road to Emmaus, for they were missing the prophecies of the ascension.
B. Jesus was crowned with glory and honor at His ascension, which He saw past the cross (Heb 12:2).

Acts 1:9-11

A. Our Lord Jesus ascended visibly before the disciples into a cloud and went up into heaven (1:2)!
B. Do not be mistaken, and reject all heretics. It is stated two times He went "into heaven" (1:11).
C. He will return the same way – visibly, bodily, and with clouds (I Thess 4:16-17; Job 19:25-27).
D. Our brother Mark states the same thing, which is discredited in many Bible versions (Mark 16:19).
E. Our brother Luke states the same; and he tells us where he left and where he went (Luke 24:50-53).

Acts 2:33-34

A. Peter, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, told us exactly where Jesus was seven days later.
B. He dispensed the gift of the Holy Spirit, which He had clearly promised before (John 7:39; 15:26).
C. Here is proof of His glorification, for it is clearly connected in the parenthesis of John 7:39.
D. Peter's argument refers to Jesus in His whole human nature, including His body; for he contrasts His

ascension with David's lack of ascension, though David's spirit was certainly in heaven (2:29).

Acts 3:21

A. Jesus was in heaven seated at the right hand of God, as we have clearly seen by plain Scriptures.
B. He had been received into heaven, which was His strong motivation to face Calvary (Luke 9:51).

Acts 7:55-56

A. Stephen saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God in heaven, where He had gone.
B. And he told those blasphemous Jews exactly what he truly saw, which provoked them all the more.

Ephesians 4:8-10

A. Quoting from David, our brother Paul shows that His ascension was prophesied (Psalm 68:18).
B. He ascended on high. How high? Far above all things (Eph 1:20-23; 4:10; I Cor 15:27; Heb 7:26).
C. He could not ascend, unless He had first descended. He came in humiliation to be raised in glory.
D. He is now of such glorified splendor, power, and glory He can be all for the church (Ep 1:23; 3:19).
E. He led captivity captive: He took the captives of Satan and made them His own captives, servants, and sons (Luke 11:21-22; II Tim 2:25-26; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Heb 2:14-15; I John 3:8).
F. He gave gifts to men, which He received from His Father, as the spoils of His victory (Is 53:12).
G. The language is that of a conquering Prince displaying his captives and giving gifts of the spoils.

Romans 8:34

A. Who can condemn the elect? Their Saviour has entered into heaven and is at the right hand of God.
B. His vocation there is to make intercession for us, who are looking forward to being received up.

Hebrews 2:5-9

A. Quoting from David, our brother Paul shows that His ascension was prophesied (Psalm 8:4-8).
B. It is an error in interpretation to think that this is speaking of man in general or of any angels.
C. He first descended, when He was a made a little lower than the angels as the man Christ Jesus.
D. He then ascended, when He was crowned with glory and honor and put absolutely over all things.
E. We do not see this fulfilled in any man or men; we see this fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.
F. The ascension of Jesus Christ is closely connected to or includes His exaltation to glory as well.

Isaiah 14:13-14

A. Satan aspired to ascend and claim honor, glory, and power over all the creatures of God.
B. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ, Who ascended to this great position of honor, power, and glory.

Isaiah 52:13

A. The prophecy of Isaiah sees our Lord Jesus exalted and extolled for His prudent work for us.
B. And the prophecy saw Him very high in the future. What is this but His ascension very high?

Daniel 7:13-14

A. Our Lord Jesus, the Son of man, ascended with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days.
B. He was brought near before Him and crowned with dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom.
C. We see in this prophecy both, the Second Coming and destruction of Antichrist (7:9-12), and the Ascension and exaltation of Jesus Christ, when He was given His kingdom (7:13-14 cp Rev 12:10).

Hebrews 1:3-4

A. When Jesus had finished purging our sins by His death and resurrection, He sat down in heaven.
B. Let it be understood once and for all, that Jesus purged our sins "by himself," contrary to some.
C. When He was brought before the Ancient of Days, He received His inheritance above the angels.

Hebrews 4:14

A. Our Lord Jesus passed into the heavens to be our great High Priest in the presence of God.
B. From this glorious fact, more true than anything you can know by your senses, let us hold fast!

Hebrews 6:19-20

A. Jesus is our forerunner, for He has run His race first and gone into heaven before us and for us!
B. Jesus is within the veil, within the very presence of God. And He is there as our High Priest.

Hebrews 8:1

A. We may conclude much of the gospel and our religion by emphasizing Jesus at God's right hand.
B. All of Paul's discussion with the Hebrews about Christ's priesthood centers on where He is now!

Hebrews 9:11-15

A. Jesus ascended into heaven before the Ancient of Days and took the offering of His own blood.
B. He entered into the holiest place in the universe, the very presence of the thrice-holy God.
C. He entered once; we cannot even think thoughts that tend toward Him repeating it (Rom 10:6-7).
D. Through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God for your eternal redemption.
E. He secured our eternal inheritance by means of death, as the Testator of the last will and covenant!

Hebrews 9:24

A. Jesus Christ entered into the great antitype of the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God.
B. He entered into heaven itself and the presence of God for us, for He entered for our redemption.
C. Have you thought about the fact that Jesus had never been in the presence of God before!

Hebrews 10:12-13

A. The Lord Jesus was so completely successful that He sat down, awaiting His enemies' final defeat.
B. He made the one sacrifice for sins forever, and there is no possibility of it being repeated again.
C. We may go boldly into the holy presence of God by the new and living way He has opened up.

D. And because of this stupendous event in our favor, we should hold fast the profession of our faith.

Hebrews 12:2-3

A. The reward and honor at His ascension is what motivated Jesus to look easily beyond His death.
B. There was much joy in His ascension and exaltation, which He knew by prophecy (Ps 16:8-11).

I Peter 3:21-22

A. Baptism takes on special significance in light of our Lord's resurrection and ascension to heaven.
B. Angels, principalities, and powers have been made subject to Him. He is their Lord and Master!

Revelation 12:5-10

A. Jesus, the man child, Ruler of all nations, was caught up unto God, and to His throne beside God.
B. And he was loudly honored with salvation, strength, power, and a kingdom, as Satan was cast out!
C. There was not room enough in heaven for both of them, perpetual antagonists with a settled Victor!

Revelation 3:21

A. Our Lord Jesus overcame all His enemies and temptations and sat down in His Father's throne.
B. He offers to those who will overcome their temptations to sit down in His throne with Him.

Revelation 4:1 – 5:14

A. Jesus gave John a vision signifying both heavenly things and future things that would come (1:1).
B. These verses easily create one of the most magnificent pictures of the drama of our salvation.
C. We know this is the everlasting covenant. See the outline for the sermon, "The Book of Life."
D. The last will and testament of Almighty God could only be opened by One worthy of doing so.
E. Angels being excluded as worthless in this transaction, there was no man found anywhere to do it.
F. No pope of Rome, or apostle in Salt Lake City, or great evangelist, or soul winner could open it.
G. There is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (I Tim 2:5; Acts 4:12).
H. John's eternal destiny stood in the balance – salvation was by this covenant only. He wept much!
I. A worthy Man was found, and one of the elders announced Him – Shiloh, the Son of David! Glory!
J. The symbolic picture of our Lord Jesus Christ at His ascension was "a Lamb as it had been slain"!
K. Our Lord Jesus, in pure righteousness, took the book out of the right hand of the Ancient of Days.
L. Jesus had never before been in this place; this is not God appearing to God; this is the man Jesus!
M. He was worthy to open the book by virtue of His substitutionary redemption on Calvary's cross.
N. The whole universe of creatures blesses and praises Jesus the Lord as the great Saviour! Amen!

Conclusion:

1. Should not the ascension (and descension) of Christ for our sins purge us from dead works to serve the living God?

2. If our conscience has been so purged and made pure and good, we should want to be baptized quickly (I Peter 3:21).
3. If we have already been baptized, we should want to live the most holy, purified lives possible for our great Lord.
4. Ah, holy brethren, what is our Lord in heaven for, but to prepare a place for us before He comes for us (John 14:1-4)!
5. How can we end such lofty thoughts any differently than the Lord closes His revelation. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!