

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Topical Bulletin, May 2022

On the church calendar, the 26th of this month of May is Ascension Day. Accordingly, the appropriate topic for consideration in this bulletin is: **Fascinating facts about the Ascension of Jesus Christ.** As usual, the Holy Bible will supply us with the truth regarding the chosen subject.

It was after Jesus' bodily resurrection that, **"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."** (Matthew 28:16-20)

Comment: Note well that although Jesus is no longer visibly present, He – the God/man, Christ – is still invisibly present with His followers, His Christians, for He promised in Matthew 28:20, "lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Yes, Jesus said "I" – that IS, CHRIST THE GOD/MAN: both SPIRIT AND BODY.

During Jesus' visible sojourn on earth, He said: **"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."** (John 3:13)

Comment: In the foregoing Bible verse Jesus clearly teaches that while He was visibly present on earth, in His state of humiliation, He was also present in heaven. Hence, it is evident that Jesus' divine attributes were communicated to His human nature— Jesus being both God and man, but one Christ: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9) Jesus IS and REMAINS true Man and true God, but one Christ.

"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. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:7-11)

"Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." (Luke 22:69)

Comment: Even before Jesus' bitter sufferings, death and resurrection, He stated He would later go to His Father, where He would sit on the right hand of the power of God. Jesus' disciples would no longer SEE Him with their eyes and enjoy His presence, in the manner to which they had grown accustomed during His state of humiliation. Thus, Jesus – the God/man – would be exalted to the right hand of God, removing His visible presence from earth, after completing His mission of mercy: our redemption.

"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the

feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. 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 20:11-17)

Comment: Note that after Jesus’ bodily resurrection He appeared to Mary and spoke of His then upcoming ascension, for although Mary saw Him near the sepulcher, He would later remove His visible presence from the earth. Mary was not to touch Jesus and thereby attempt to hold Him on earth in the manner in which she and her fellow Christians were accustomed to having Him present with them.

“Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” (Mark 16:14-20)

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 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. 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 stedfastly 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.” (Acts 1:6-11)

Comment: Observe that Jesus’ ascension was the removal of His VISIBLE presence from the earth, although the Lord Jesus continued working with His disciples, confirming His Word, which they preached, with signs – miracles – following. However, Jesus will definitely VISIBLY return to earth, when the Day of Judgment comes. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” (Revelation 1:7)

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Romans 8:34)

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:29-36)

*Comment: The ascended Jesus Christ is our great High Priest who presently intercedes for us in heaven at the throne of God! “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:5-6) “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.” (Hebrews 7:19-28) *Jesus Christ is forever our Great High Priest!**

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:1-4)

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)” (Ephesians 4:1-10)

Comment: Notice that the Holy Scriptures repeatedly reveal that the ascended Jesus Christ sits on the right hand of God. Additionally, the Lord Jesus Christ – true man and true God – fills all things! Yes, the

same Jesus Christ who died for our sins, was buried and bodily rose again, also visibly ascended into heaven; yea, far above all heavens, filling all things. Furthermore, our life-giving Lord Jesus Christ will on the Last Day raise us Christians to eternal life, at which time we shall appear with Him in glory.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” (Hebrews 1:1-4)

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” (1 Peter 3:18-22)

Comment: Jesus Christ – the God/man – is now in His state of exaltation, visibly gone into heaven, ruling ALL things, as He sits on the right hand of the power of God.

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” (Hebrews 8:1-2)

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Comment: Again and again, the Holy Bible informs us that the same Jesus who suffered and died for us in His state of humiliation, is now in His state of exaltation, sitting at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus says: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:20-21)

Comment: Our visibly ascended Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who sits with His heavenly Father in His throne, is so wonderful that He promises His true followers, His genuine Christians, that they will sit with Him in His throne— a blessing which we cannot begin to comprehend. What a wonderful future awaits all of us, who believe on Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord!

Fellow Christians, we will one day enjoy a blessed home in glory, according to soul and body, with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who visibly ascended on high. Indeed, it is true, for Jesus once promised His followers, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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." (John 14:1-3)

God grant that we keep our full trust and confidence in our ascended Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who plainly states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

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