

WHY DID JESUS ASCEND?

Acts 1:1-11

INTRO: Today we commemorate the ascension of Christ to heaven. God had sent the second Person of the triune God, known in the NT before He became man, as the Word, to be carried by a woman and brought into human existence. This took place through the divine instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, and the human instrumentality of the virgin Mary. She was betrothed to a man, by name of Joseph at the time. That she was expecting caused a great difficulty for Joseph, but an angel appeared to him in a dream and explained that Mary had not been unfaithful to him. God had chosen both the woman, and her husband well, for Mary was a very godly young woman and Joseph was a just man.

Jesus, being the Lamb of God, according to the OT picture, was born, as I understand it, at the place the Passover sacrificial lambs were born. He was born when they were born, and He died when they died. But between those two events, He lived for some 32 years.

When He was 30 years old, He was baptized by John the Baptist and anointed by God Almighty to become God's high priest. Well, it is my understanding that He ministered just over 2 years and then He was crucified. He was crucified, Wednesday morning. Died Wednesday afternoon, between 3 and 4 pm. He was then buried just before sunset and the Sabbath, which begins the feast of unleavened bread, began; and He was in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights.

Saturday evening, the seventh day Sabbath, He was resurrected from the dead. When Scripture says He was raised from the dead, that means the rest of the dead were not raised. He was raised, 'out from among the dead'. God had promised that His holy One would not see corruption; He would not remain in hades. The KJV says He would not remain in hell. I do not believe He went to hell, He went to hades, which I understand means the state of the dead, whether saved or lost, that is the intermediate state.

From there on we will look at His ascension. We want to look at the fact of His ascension; and several purposes of His ascension. So we begin with the fact of His ascension.

I. THE FACT OF THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

A. Luke

Well, turn, if you would, to Luke 24. In Luke 24 Jesus had been raised from the dead, and He met with the two who were on the road to Emmaus, and they were sad. He entered their discussion and asked why they were sad and they said, "Oh my. Are you the only stranger around here? Surely you have heard that the guy we thought was the Messiah has been crucified. He's dead. He can't have been who we were hoping and we had our hopes so high. He did such incredible things. But I guess we were misled." Jesus said, "Is that so. Well now, I wonder, have you never read what it says in the Scriptures about the Messiah?"

Well let's read what the Bible says. We begin in verse

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"

18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

19 And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

20 *"and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.*

21 *"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.*

22 *"Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us.*

23 *"When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive.*

24 *"And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."*

25 *Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*

26 *"Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"*

27 *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

28 *Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.*

29 *But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them.*

30 *Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.*

31 *Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.*

32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together,

34 saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"

35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you."

37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.

38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"

42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb.

43 And He took it and ate in their presence.

44 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."*

Now about forty days pass between verses 49 and 50 some of which is recorded in John 21:22-25 and some in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. Jesus then went to Galilee and later came back to Jerusalem, and Luke picks up there in verse 50:

50 *And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.*

51 *Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*

52 *And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,*

53 *and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.*

B. Acts

We go now to Acts 1 where Luke gives us a little more of what happened at the ascension, so we go there. We begin in verse 1:

1 *The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Luke, who wrote the book of Luke also wrote the book of Acts. So he speaks of the former account, which is the book of Luke, and he says that he wrote of Christ's life until the day He ascended, and we have just read that.

But between verses 49 and 50 of Luke 24, we have these 40 days he now speaks of in verse 3. Now notice that He speaks of 40 days. Pastor Joe spoke the other day of the significance of the resurrection. You will all have seen pictures of the pyramids of Egypt. One writer said that the pyramids are man's most enduring monuments of the hope of the resurrection. The resurrection is one of the most significant things about Christianity.

Well, Christ was raised, and these 40 days had the number forty for a purpose. It is the number of testing. And the 40 days, Luke says, give many infallible proofs of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection cannot justly be denied. It is a historical fact, and a very important one at that. So we continue in verse 4:

4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

5 "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 ¶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

9 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."

This then, is the fact of the ascension as recorded in Scripture, and of which we are reminded this day. Now that leaves us with our second point: Why did He ascend? Why did He not stay here? Well, we want to look at a few reasons why He didn't stay.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

A. To Close Out His Work On Earth

For our first reason why Jesus ascended to heaven turn to John 17. The setting of this passage takes place right after Jesus commemorated the Passover with His disciples. After it was finished, Judas having left earlier to betray Jesus, they headed back towards Bethany where Jesus stayed each night as they were nearing the Passover feast. But this night they will only get back as far as Gethsemene. There Judas and a band of soldiers will come and apprehend Him, and the next day He will be crucified.

But as they were making their way to Gethsemane Jesus spoke the words of John 14-17 to His disciples. The first reason we will look at is found in verse 4. Jesus is talking to God in this chapter. In verse 4 He said:

4 "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

Most Bible students think Jesus ministered for three years. I don't see that possible from the record of the Gospels. I believe He ministered just over 2 years. But whether it be two or three, in that brief time Jesus changed the whole course of human history. He never built any big buildings, He never presided over a country, and He never wrote a book. He ministered for two years, and in two years He completed the work He was given to do by God.

Last summer I went to Inuvik, Aklavik and Tsidechik, not far from the Atlantic Ocean, in the Northwest Territories. Blackstone Homes was setting up several homes there. If you ever get the opportunity to go up the Dempster Highway, I recommend that trip. The scenery is truly stunning. It is mountain after mountain; stream after stream, and numerous prairies.

We were hampered by various delays, but when our job was done, we wanted to do one thing; go home. Jesus came to earth. He completed His work, and He just wanted to go home. You see, we went to see beautiful places and wanted to go home. He came to a sinful earth, to sinful man, who rejected and crucified Him, the very Creator of the universe. He was not welcome here. It is fully understandable that He wanted to go home when His job was done.

Do you want to glorify God with your life? Find what He wants you to do, and do it; finish it. It does not matter whether it is to be a housewife or a truck driver, or a preacher. Find what He has for you and do it. Then some day, when your job is done, He will take you home.

B. To Be Glorified

So we have seen one reason why Jesus ascended. He had finished His work. Now let us read again in John 17, beginning, this time, in verse 1:

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

2 "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

Keep your finger at John 17 and turn to the book of Philippians chapter 2. You see, Jesus request after His work on earth was done, was that God would glorify Him. Jesus wanted to be glorified. We all want that. Many, many sins take place because man seeks to be glorified in ways that are not good. I just preached through Philippians 2:1-11 in Low German. It describes the price Jesus paid for coming to earth. We begin in verse 5:

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

What Paul is saying is, Let this kind of thinking be in you which was in Christ Jesus. If we want to be glorified, we must first be willing to think like Jesus thought, and He thought that going down, down, and down again was worth the glory that He would afterward receive. Verse 6 says of Christ:

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

He was Creator God, but did not think He could not give that up. He made Himself of no reputation. He took the form of a slave. He was the creator of the universe. And He, as God, came in the likeness of men. And He further humbled Himself, and became obedient to the point of death, even the most shameful death man can experience, the death of the cross. Do we want glory? The way up is down. Do you know what it is like to go down? Yes, some of you know a lot about it. But look at the end result in verse 9:

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I have not time to explain the glory of the name that was bestowed on Jesus after He finished His work. On Him was bestowed the name that is above all names, and that is the name, Jehovah God! So in John 17 Jesus said:

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

2 "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

4 "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

5 *"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.*

You see, in John 17 Jesus asked of God to be glorified with Him. Well, He has one step downward left. The death of the cross. From there on everything was upward. He was raised up out of the tomb. He was exalted in the eyes of His disciples, and then He was taken up into the skies and He ascended up to Heaven. And there He was seated at the Father's right hand, and there He was placed over all principalities and powers and authorities. He was, is and will forever be glorified. But remember, it was the cross before the crown; so it is with us.

C. To Send The Holy Spirit

We turn now to John 16 for yet another purpose why Jesus ascended to heaven. We begin in verse 7:

7 *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.*

Now it is surely a question with us, why could the Holy Spirit not come if Jesus did not return to heaven? I found one commentator who tried to answer this question, but his comment did not help me. I don't know the answer either. But let me mention something here. It was not that the Holy Spirit was not on earth before this. He is omnipresent. But His presence now came in a very special sense. Look at it in verse 8-11 and how His coming will affect the lost world:

8 *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

9 *Of sin, because they believe not on me;*

10 *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

It is this business of convicting or reproof that the Holy Spirit does. Some have called Him the Holy Hound of heaven. When He sets about convicting us of sin, we have a hard time escaping from Him. It is as if he hounds us, and I know of this first hand.

So there would be the Spirit's work towards the lost. But towards the saved, the Holy Spirit was sent so that Christ, through the Holy Spirit might baptize us into His body, and fill the believer with the Holy Spirit. Some see the expression of certain gifts as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I do not agree with that. Many will claim to have had the gifts of the Spirit, have cast out demons, and Jesus says to them, "Depart from Me you cursed..." I believe the greatest evidence there is of having been baptized with the Holy Spirit is holy living; righteous living. For those who claim to have been born again, and there is not a deep desire to live right, to deal with sin, and to desire to please God; there is no evidence of having been baptized with the Holy Spirit. They may do miracles, and if they don't live right, they are missing this key evidence.

So Jesus said, unless I leave, I cannot send Him to you. In the English language, we cannot use a double negative. When we do, it becomes a positive. For example, if we say, "She didn't see nothing" that means she saw something. But in the Greek language, when a double negative is used, it is the negative made twice as strong. When Jesus said, "...for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you..." it is a double negative. It means: "...for if I do not go away, the Helper will not in any wise at all come to you... If I do not leave, He cannot in any possible way come to you."

You see, the Holy Spirit is the HOLY Spirit. But evil spirits are called 'UNCLEAN' spirits. There was a time when demonic activity may have been overemphasized in

the Church, but today we afraid of emphasizing demons and demonic activity at all. I am here to tell you that I see demonic activity in all kinds of people who call themselves Christians. We have gone through church troubles that were not only the result of the absence of the Holy Spirit in certain lives, they were the result of the presence of demonic spirits. Listen to James 3:13-18:

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

These verses will help you see demonic activity in believers. The outstanding attribute of the Holy Spirit is holiness; separation from sin; separation to God. And Jesus ascended to heaven in order that we might have the Holy Spirit residing in us, and thus produce a holy life.

D. To Begin His Heavenly High Priestly Work

There is another reason why Jesus ascended to heaven. Not too long ago we have covered the fact that there is a tabernacle in heaven. As a matter of fact, it is the true tabernacle. It was set up by God Himself, and I think that He did so after man sinned. Turn to Hebrews

6. In that tabernacle many things happen. On the Judge's bench, I believe, is placed a record of every sin committed, and every sin recorded there must be justly dealt with.

In that tabernacle, there is a High Priest. He is Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 6:18-20 speaks of the Christians hope. So look at verses 19-20:

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Now the Jewish High Priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year, and he entered with the blood of goats and calves. But listen to Hebrews 9:12 speaking of Jesus:

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Now turn to Hebrews 4. We'll read verses 14-16:

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.

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now there is so much here that we cannot cover. But let me list for you some of the things that He now does, as He sits at the right hand of the Father in the Holy of Holies. He baptizes every new believer with the Holy

Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:33). He sanctifies every believer (Heb. 2:10-13). This is a huge area. One of the most difficult of all tasks for the Lord is to make us like Christ. Then He mediates between God and the believer (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6, 9:15). Through this He also gives the believer access to God the Father (Eph. 2:18; 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:5). He intercedes to God for the believer (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:23-25). He aids the believer (Heb. 2:17-18). When Satan accuses the believer before God, He is the believer's defence lawyer (1 John 2:1). This happens in heaven. Then He pours out grace to the believer, that is strength to live the Christian life (Heb. 4:15-16). Wherever two or three meet together as believers, there He is present with them (Matt. 18:19-20).

How much does He not do everyday? It is a huge task He performs every single day. I have no doubt that ascended believers are involved with Him in all this work. Revelation 7:15, speaking of those who enter heaven during the tribulation says, "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."

Now you see, we could preach for a long time on the ministry of the ascended Christ in His High priestly ministry, and I have covered many of these points in messages in years past on Ascension Day.

E. To Prepare A Place For Us

Now I have saved for the last, what may be one of the most encouraging points for us regarding His ascension, especially as it relates to our future hope. You see, most of the reasons why He ascended are found in the book of John. We go now to John 14. In John 13, at the last supper, the evening of the night He was apprehended, He had had the Passover meal with His disciples. He had washed their feet. Judas had left. They had sung an hymn, a Psalm no doubt, and they were heading to Gethsemene where He will be captured by Judas and a band of soldiers and Jewish priests.

John 14 is the first of the next four chapters that are spoken as they make their way through the Kidron Valley and up the slopes to Gethsemene. Let us begin in John 13:33. Jesus said,

33 *"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you.*

34 *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

35 *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

36 *Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward."*

37 *Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."*

38 *Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.*

So Jesus has told them He is going away. In the last while, about a dozen times He told them that He must die. It never really registered with them. And now He adds to that, that He is going away. He is speaking of His ascension, the day we are commemorating. Then Jesus continues in 14:1 like this:

1 *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

2 *"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.*

Why did Jesus ascend? He went to prepare a place for the believer! Well, we just don't mind that at all, do

we! If we are willing to go down, down, down here, and humble ourselves, this exaltation will be ours some day. It will, without any question, be worth all we face here. But let me quote from another message I did some years ago on the word 'mansions'.

The word translated 'mansion' is the Greek word 'monee'. It comes from the Greek verb 'meno', which simply means to abide or remain or stay. So the noun simply means an abiding place or a place to stay. It is a place to stay. In English today the word mansion speaks to us of an impressive house, usually of a wealthy person. But originally, the English word mansion came from the Latin word maneo, meaning to dwell. It spoke of any place of residence according to Webster's 1828 dictionary. Our English word 'manse' also came from this. This is a pastor's house built by the church for him to stay. So, what we are talking about is a place to stay. So our verse could read, "In My Father's House are many places to stay." Don't let this information disappoint you at all regarding the place where we are going, but such are the facts.

Now let me add this, that I gave in that message as well:

Maybe you heard of the rich man that packed his bags with bars of gold before he died. When he died, he took those bags along and when he arrived at this city, an angel said, "So, what do you have here?" So the man opened the bags, and the angel said, "Pavement! You brought pavement?" No, this place will be no disappointment. The streets are paved with gold!

Now let me recommend that it is a place to stay, like when you go somewhere, and you are coming back; but while you are gone you need a place to stay. These mansions are not meant to be lived in forever! It is a place to stay. It is temporary. So look at the next verse:

3 *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

I think this verse should be a great problem to those who believe in a post-tribulational rapture. They say Jesus comes down into the air. The believer is caught up into the air, and then they come right back down. No, He comes to receive us to Himself. This place will be a place to stay for seven years. Then we are coming back down to live and reign with Him for 1,000 years. And then, the New Jerusalem, where the Father's house is, is coming down to earth to be here forever.

So we go on in verse 4:

4 *"And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

5 *Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"*

6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

I ask, do you know the way? It begins with the forerunner, John the Baptist: Repent! Nobody is going there with sin. It is sin that cuts us out! It is sin that must be dealt with. Today the Gospel is reduced to half a Gospel, which is, "Believe in Jesus." No, it begins with repentance. Sin must be dealt with first, and then we must believe, and continue believing. The Bible does not say, "He who has once believed will be saved." It says, "He who believes..." that is one believes and goes on believing. Jesus said, "If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed."

And I understand verse 6 to say this: "I am the way to God; I am the truth about God; and I am the life from God." He then says in verse 7:

7 *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."*

Now look at verse 8:

8 (Richard Dawkins, I mean,) "*Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.'*"

Do you know what Richard Dawkins said? He said, "If I wake up after death and see God, I will say, 'Why did you go through so much trouble to hide yourself?'" Now God has gone through a lot of trouble to give evidence of Himself. You can see the evidence of Him absolutely everywhere. And evidence is also the only thing Dawkins has for evolution, only his evidence is not real evidence. But, and this is what troubled Philip and also troubles Dawkins, and troubles all atheists, "We want to see Him!" And do you know the truth of the matter. If we could see Him we would go to hell! God said so. He said, "No man can see Me and live!" Why not? Because of sin!

So what did God do about that? He chose something that the Atheist hates, but that He, God, loves. Here is what the atheist hates; it is this word 'faith.' But God loves it. But oh how that grates on the atheist, and he exercises it all the time in his view on evolution! But do you know what God says, "Without faith, you cannot", or "without faith you are not able to please Me." If you want to please Me, you must exercise faith in Me! Evidence? God gave it in superabundance. Actual sight of Him, He could not give if He wanted to redeem us, so he chose that, and I quote, "The just shall live by faith."

So Jesus said to Philip in verse 9: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

In Christ, they had seen God. We have the account of Christ, but they had seen Him. Thomas had trouble believing when He was told that Jesus was raised from the dead. And later He got to see and to touch Him. He now had evidence of the resurrection through the

senses. And then Jesus said, "Do you believe now? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed!" That is you and I.

Well, Jesus ascended to prepare a place for us. He is busy at that still today, as more and more believers are added to the kingdom.

CONCL: And so we conclude. We looked first at the fact of the ascension of Christ to heaven. It is recorded for us in Scripture. It is historical fact. Now I do not know how many saw Him ascend, but at least the 11 disciples were there. Now consider this; all these disciples but one was martyred. And that one disciple, history says, was dipped in hot oil. Now if the Gospels are not correct, these disciples are very, very foolish men. Can you imagine them giving up their lives for something they knew was not true? They saw Him after He was resurrected. They knew Him. They recognized Him. And He disappeared from their sight while they watched Him go up.

And now He sits at the right hand of God in heaven, and the work He does there on behalf of the believer is absolutely beyond comprehension.