

Jesus' Ascension and Intercession

Why did Jesus Ascend into Heaven? What is the meaning of His Ascension?

Texts:

- “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, also believe 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” (John 14:1, 2 NKJV).
- “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” (Hebrews 7:25 NKJV).
- “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 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” (Romans 8:33, 34 NKJV).
- “But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes, I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O, righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You, and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare

it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:13-26 NKJV).

Why did Jesus Ascend into Heaven? What is the meaning of His Ascension?

1. Jesus went to heaven to prepare a place for His disciples.

"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" (John 14:1, 2 NKJV)

In 1 Corinthians 2:9 it is written: "no eye has seen, no ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love Him." We cannot image the things that God has prepared for His children.

--Jesus' ascension is about authority. He went to be seated at God's right hand. Jesus' ascension prophesied in Psalm 110, "The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power" (Psalms 110:1-3 NKJV). To be seated at God's right means that Jesus has the most powerful position in the Universe. Jesus is now the Sovereign Ruler of the heavens and the earth. Nothing happens without Him permission. No inch of heaven and earth does not belong to Him. No earthquake occurs, no natural disaster happens, no bird falls to the ground without Him knowing about it and Him allowing it to happen!

-- All authority has been given to Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:18 states: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18 NKJV).

1 Peter 3:22 reads: "...Jesus....who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him" (I Peter 3:22 NKJV).

- Jesus Christ has the most powerful position in the Universe. "...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 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. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church"

(Ephesians 1:20-22 NKJV). We shouldn't be troubled when we look at circumstances and when things don't go our way. One day every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Philippians 2:9-11 states: " Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11 NKJV). The whole world will be judged by Jesus. All atheists, all secular humanist, all dictators and corrupt government officials, all Islamic Jihadists will bow before Jesus... For many it will be a bow in defeat without any salvation to look forward to..

Psalms 2:6-9 reads "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion." "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel'" (Psalms 2:6-9 NKJV).

-- Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Ruler of not only the earth but of the Universe. Nothing happens without His permission. The devil is on a leash. He can only do what God permits. The same applies to human beings, born again and not born again. Jesus is on His throne guiding the nations, governing the nations, upholding everything by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3). His ascension is about authority.

And because Jesus Christ is in heaven, He prepares eternal dwelling places for His disciples, for His own people that cannot be destroyed! Jesus Christ is preparing eternal dwelling places for His people.

Isaiah states: "The work of righteousness will be peace, And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:17-18 NKJV).

2. How does Jesus prepare a place for His disciples?

Does Jesus build houses and palaces with gold and silver and precious stones? Revelation tells us something about heaven. Revelation 21,

"And he (John) carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also, she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light." (Revelation 21:10-14, 18-23 NKJV).

But what is the main attraction in heaven? The streets of gold and the pearly gates or God, Jesus Christ? Jesus is preparing a place for His disciples in heaven, but the question arises. Isn't it prepared already? Or is Jesus perhaps more concerned about preparing us for that place? Some people are obsessed about how heaven is going to look like. There are some people who claim to have seen heaven and who have gone there with angels or even with Jesus Himself. Many of these stories are frauds... Paul the apostle, who was taken to heaven wasn't allowed to speak of the things he saw there! We read of that in 2 Corinthians 11:1-7.

-- **Jesus is preparing us for heaven by praying for us.** He is doing intercession for us. The word intercession means to plead for us, to pray for us, to plead in favor for our case! What an advocate is doing in a court of law, is what Jesus is doing in heaven specifically for His

chosen ones! Romans 8:33 reveals: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 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" (Romans 8:33, 34 NKJV). And Hebrews 7:25 reads: "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." Jesus is pleading for all believers! Jesus is our Advocate in heaven. He pleads for us. John writes: "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. And Jesus is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (I John 2:1-2 NKJV). Jesus prays on the basis of His work on the cross. The wrath of God has been removed (propitiation) for those who believe. Because of His finished work, His Advocacy and intercession has power and will have its desired effect.

--**When is he praying?** Hebrews 7:25 says He is ALWAYS praying! 24/7. The Bible says God never sleeps. Psalm 121 states: "He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul" (Psalms 121:3-5, 7 NKJV). Do you have that vision of Jesus, believer in Christ? Jesus who never stops praying for those who come to Him! This of course doesn't mean believers should stop praying! In fact, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ intercede within us and compels us to pray (Romans 8:26). But what an encouragement to know that Jesus prays for all believers and the world!

-- **For whom is Jesus praying?** He is praying for those the Father is giving Him. "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours." "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:9, 20 NKJV).

-- Jesus is praying for those the Father gives Him (John 6:37).

--Jesus is praying for those who come to the Father through Him. "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37 NKJV).

Both the words referring to "come" in the Greek in Hebrews 7:25 and John 6:37 is in the participial tense. That means it is not a once off act, but a continuous act... It can be translated as... "Those continually coming to God will be saved...and those who continue to come will be saved to the uttermost...Jesus said: "those who endure to the end will be saved.." (Mark 13:13). Jesus is praying for the elect, for those who would believe in the preaching of the gospel unto salvation.

--"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." (Hebrews 7:25 NKJV). Jesus is praying for all the elect of God, who will repent of their sins and trust in Him as their only Savior and Lord! Jesus said: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20). If you worry that you are not one of God's chosen ones, as some people worry about, then come to Jesus in faith and repentance! If you come to Him, you are one of the elect! Not only because you come to Him, but because the Father gave you to Jesus!

3. What does Jesus pray?

Firstly I must say that I don't know if we as humans are capable of knowing all the things that Jesus is praying for the church and the world, but what we do know is what is revealed in Scripture. What will follow is not an exhaustive list, just a few things that Jesus prayed while He was on earth and which we can assume He is praying in heaven as well! It is more like broad categories which He prays for, for those who come to Him.

-- He is praying for believers' **total salvation**. Salvation to the uttermost. Hebrews 7:25. "Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost (completely: Greek) those who come to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them." I take this to mean: total sanctification and for eventual glorification for all the believers.

-- He is praying for the believers' **sanctification or holiness**. Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17 NKJV). Believers' sanctification takes place through the

truth and through the word. We are saved to the uttermost by sanctification through the Spirit, through the truth, through the word of God. Jesus prays that we meditate on the word of God (Psalm 1:1-4) and that we implant the word of God in our hearts. He prays that we hide the word of God in our hearts that we may not sin against Him (Psalm 119:9). We are sanctified and purified by the word of God. He prays that the word of God would sanctify us and transform us into His image! We cannot bypass Bible Study and meditation and think we are going to be sanctified! God ordained means by which we will be sanctified and that means is the word of God, the word of truth.

-- Jesus is praying for the preachers of the gospel, that people would believe through the preaching of the word. Jesus said: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20). Salvation and sanctification happen through means, through gospel preachers preaching the word of God across the globe! Jesus is praying that His word would have God-glorifying and God-exalting effects!

--He is praying for believers' **protection and keeping against the evil one**. Jesus prayed: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15 NKJV) Jesus is not praying that we shouldn't get persecuted or that we shouldn't suffer because of temptation, tribulation or suffering because of Christ. He is praying that the temptation, tribulation and persecution we experience won't destroy our faith. He is praying that the devil doesn't deceive us in believing that God is against us, because of the suffering and tribulation we are experiencing! Remember what Jesus said to Peter: "And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31-32 NKJV).

-- Jesus is praying **for believers' unity (oneness) amongst one another IN HIM**. Jesus prayed: "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:21, 23 NKJV). Wherein does this unity lie? This question I

have asked myself over the years. Does it lie in doctrine? For sure we would say that no Christian can be a Christian that holds not to the Apostles' Creed? But what about Reformed doctrine? I am sure that we in this church feel much closer to believers of the Reformed faith, but even in the Reformed faith, there are dispensationalists, cessationists, continuationists, Reformed believers who believe in believers baptism, others in infant baptism etc. etc. But can we with all honesty say that we of a Reformed understanding of the Bible can only be one with Reformed believers? Even that would be difficult!! Is it possible to be one with an Arminian believer? Wesley and Whitfield seemed to get along, didn't they? Is it possible to get along with a Pentecostal believer that believes that you must speak in tongues to have the Holy Spirit? These are difficult questions! I believe, although every believer in Christ must have a certain understanding of God (doctrine) to be a believer, believers in Christ are one in Spirit and truth. We are one because of Jesus Christ. Unity should be in Jesus, in the Holy Spirit! What makes us one? Is it not the love that we have for one another and the Holy Spirit God has given to all believers? When Jesus prayed for unity among believers should we not work for unity in love and truth? The world will believe if they see the love that we have for one another regardless of the finer points of theological differences. Don't get me wrong! Theology is important! A correct understanding of God is important, but it is not more important than love! Love bears all things, and endures all things. Love even endures bad theology! I'm sure the leaders of the APC's (Africa Pastors Conferences) in Africa are aware of all the bad theology in Africa, yet many of the pastors in these churches are still Christians! Jesus prayed that we should be one, so should we! We are all growing in our understanding of God and the Bible and shouldn't despise people, who are Christians, who don't see everything as we see it.

-- Jesus prays **that believers may know His love**. The love the Father has for Him. Jesus prayed: "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26 NKJV). Jesus is praying that the love that exists between the Father and the Son be in the believers!! Infinite love between Father and the Son within the believer!! Amazing stuff!

Paul prayed by the Holy Spirit that believers would know the love of God that surpasses all understanding! (Ephesians 3:14-21).

-- Jesus prays that **believers may know and see his glory**. "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24 NKJV). In other words, Jesus is praying two things here: 1) that believers would be with Jesus where He will be, and that is in heaven. In other words, Jesus is praying for the glorification of believers. And secondly, He is praying that they may behold His glory. If we are not glorified, we won't be able to behold Jesus' glory!

-- And the reasons why Jesus is praying these things is so that the world (the unbelievers who would believe) may believe in Him. So that all the elect of God may be gathered in through the ages.

4. How do the prayers of Jesus have an effect in believers' lives?

-- When Jesus was on earth He said the following: Acts 1:4 "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; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4, 5 NKJV).

-- If Jesus did not go to heaven the Holy Spirit would not have been given as an abiding reality! Jesus prayed that the Holy Spirit should stay with all believers! The prayers of Jesus only has a saving, sanctifying, protecting and unifying effect through the Holy Spirit!

Jesus said: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:16-18 NKJV).

It is told that a man and his little boy was standing in the kitchen one day. And the father was explaining to the boy that he should never touch the plate when it is hot and glowing red. The father told him he would surely burn himself horrible if he did so. He asked his son: "do

you understand, my son?" And his son said: "yes dad." Then the father left the kitchen to do something else, and the plate was still on. And the little boy went to it and stared at it. And he stared and stared. And what did he do? He touched it off course! What was his reaction when he touched the hot plate? He was screaming!! What is the difference between what the boy knew before he touched the hot plate and after he touched it? After he had touched it he KNEW it was hot by experience. Before he only knew it in his head.

It is the same with us. We can know all these wonderful things about Jesus' ascension and that He is praying for His church, and not be touched by it. It will make no difference in our lives. But when we come to Jesus with our sins and confess it in truth, repent of our sins, and surrender our lives to His authority and touch the hot plate of His forgiveness, love and saving power, then we will KNOW that Jesus saves. Then we will experience His Holy Spirit. Then we will experience salvation.

Do you experience the saving power of Jesus Christ?

Do you experience the fact that He is sanctifying you?

Sanctifying you through the truth?

Sanctifying you through the word of God?

Protecting your faith?

Making you one with other believers?

Imparting His love and glory into your soul?

Is He Saving you from the power of sin?

Hebrews 7:25 states: "And unto Him who is able to save you to the uttermost, to those who come to God through Jesus Christ, because He ALWAYS intercedes for them!"