

Lesson 11 :
Knowing Christ (4) —
His Ascension

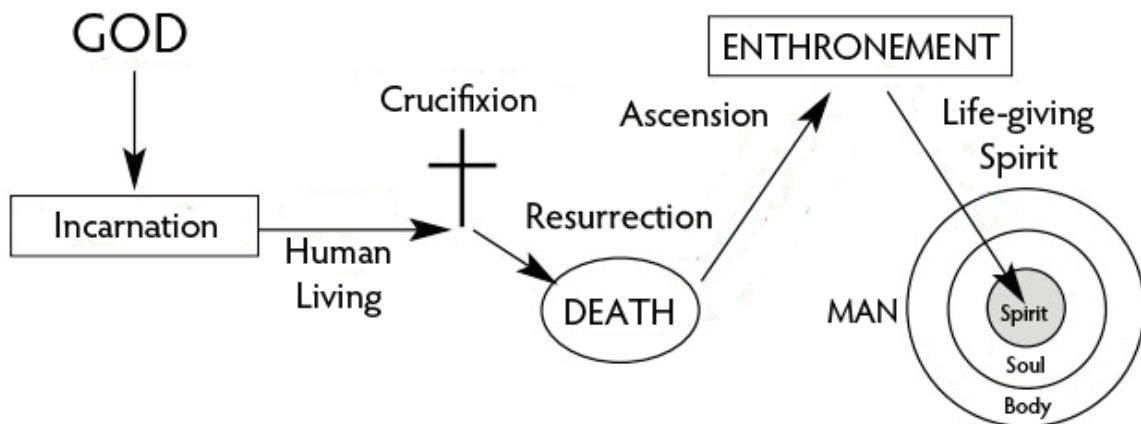


Fig. 1 - Schematic of the process Christ went through

Lesson Objective: In this lesson you can expect to learn what the Lord as a God-man attained to in His ascension and how He needs your cooperation today.

Ephesians 4:8 Therefore the Scripture says, "Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men."

Mark 16:19 So then the Lord Jesus, after speaking to them, was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.

Philippians 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

After His resurrection, Christ ascended to the heavens to God the Father. This was the last major step of the process He went through. Ephesians 4:8 says He "ascended to the height." Christ is now at the highest place in the universe. Mark 16:19 says that the Lord was "taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God." To be seated at God's right hand means that Christ is at the place of greatest honor and highest authority. There He is crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9), has been exalted far above all, and has received the name above all names (Phil. 2:9).

I. Being Made Lord and Christ

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood

Ephesians 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

In His ascension, Christ was made the Lord (Acts 2:36), the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), as well as Head over all things (Eph. 1:22). This means that He is the Ruler of the universe, the authority on the throne of God's government. He is the land-lord of the whole universe! This may not impress you that much. You might think that because Christ is God, the Creator, He already was the Lord and Ruler of the universe. But you must realize that the Christ who is Lord today is not just the Lord who created the universe. The Christ who is Lord today is God incarnated to be a man. In His resurrection and ascension He is still a man. So now, there is a man in the heavens, exalted and established as the Lord of the universe! It is easy for us to believe that the Creator God is the Lord. But can you believe that the man Jesus, the poor carpenter, is now on the throne over the entire universe? A little man from the small country village of Nazareth has been made Head over all things!

Acts 2:36 says that in His ascension Jesus was also made Christ. "Christ" means that He is God's Anointed One; He is the One appointed by God to accomplish God's plan. The Father sent the Son to do all the work of redemption and everything related to God's purpose. So, the Son is called Christ. But wasn't He the Christ before His ascension? Yes, He was, but not officially. In His ascension the Lord was officially made Christ.

II. The Lord's Inauguration

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Revelation 19:16 And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, King Of KINGS And Lord Of LORDS.

A good way to understand the Lord's ascension is to think of it as His inauguration. Whenever a new president is elected in the United States, he must be inaugurated. Before the inauguration he is the president, but not officially. There must be a public declaration, an inauguration, for him officially to become president. The ascension of Jesus is the same. He was the Christ and the Lord, but this was not official until His ascension. In fact, He was not even the official Savior until His ascension (Acts 5:31). Praise the Lord for His ascension! Jesus the little Nazarene is now the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). When the President of the United States is inaugurated, thousands of people parade through Washington, D.C. Who knows how many angels paraded in the heavens when Jesus was inaugurated to be Lord of all!

III. Christ's Heavenly Ministry

Acts 7:55-56 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

Revelation 2:1 To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

Revelation 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Hebrews 4:14-15 Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin.

Hebrews 7:25 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.

The Lord Jesus surely had a fruitful life on the earth. We call His work on the earth His earthly ministry. Through incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, the Lord fully accomplished the work of redemption. This is why we read many Bible verses which say that Christ sat down after His ascension. Because His earthly ministry was a tremendous success, He is sitting, resting at the right hand of God.

However, that is only one side of the story. Christ also has a great work to do from the heavens; He has a heavenly ministry. When Stephen was being stoned, he looked up into heaven and saw "Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56). In Revelation 2:1 John saw the Lord walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. In Revelation 5:6 he saw the Lord as the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne. Do not think that Christ is sitting in the heavens with nothing to do! He is extremely active in His heavenly ministry. After being inaugurated into office He has important duties. Of the various offices into which He was inaugurated at His ascension, the three greatest are that He is Ruler of the kings of the earth, Head over all things to the church, and our great High Priest.

A. Christ as Ruler

As Ruler of kings, Christ is administrating (controlling and arranging) all the governments and events on this earth. The purpose of this administration, no doubt, is for the spreading of the gospel. By this means God's chosen ones are being gathered in. From studying world history we can see that the course of events has been arranged for the spread of the gospel. Our calendar, which is used all over the world, is based on the birth of Christ. Even atheistic countries like Russia and China use this calendar, thus

implying that they are under Christ's sovereign ruling. According to Christ's calendar, we are in the year 2017. This date does not refer to the Roman Caesars or to the Russian Czars, but to Christ's birth. Our Christ is Ruler over the whole earth for the spread of His gospel!

B. Christ as Head

In addition to His sovereignty over the nations, Christ also exercises His headship. As Head over all things to the church, He works to gain His chosen vessels. Just consider one vessel, Saul of Tarsus. The book of Acts shows us how much the ascended Christ did to win Saul. Saul was a crucial vessel for God's move on the earth.

Do not think your salvation is a small thing. It was accomplished because the Lord Jesus exercised His rulership. He arranged that you should be born in the country in which you were born. Your place of birth was not accidental, but under His administration. You were born in the right country, the right town, the right family. At the right time He brought you to Himself. You may have been in America, China, Europe or South America. One day He arranged for you to be at a certain spot, and you repented, believed, and were saved. If you had been in Moscow, the opportunity to be saved and now to be reading this lesson might not have come to you. It was under the King's rulership that you got saved!

C. Christ as Our High Priest

The ascended Christ is also ministering to our inward need. In Old Testament times the high priest ministered to God on behalf of His people. Hebrews tells us that Christ is our great High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses (4:14-15). Because Christ became a man, He thoroughly knows our weak points and problems. But He is also God, constituted according to the power of an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). Therefore He is able to take care of us in any situation (Heb. 7:25).

Surely every hour we need Him. From hour to hour we do not know what situations will confront us. Sometimes troubles come to us and we get anxious. Before we were saved, these worries were endless. But now, when anxious thoughts arise, we soon sense a soothing comfort, saying to us, "Why don't you pray? You don't need to worry." Christ has begun to intercede for us, and this is the effect it produces. Then we respond to Him, "Thank You, Lord. You bear my worries. All my cares are in Your hand." Just a few short words and the anxiety is lifted! We can enjoy Him. This is Christ's priestly intercession for us. It is unending. We should have many experiences of being reminded, comforted, strengthened, and even carried by our great High Priest.

IV. Our Cooperation

Christ is more than qualified for the great offices He holds in His heavenly ministry. He is working day and night. He is controlling every event on the earth—from the rise and fall of nations to the teacher you get for English. All this is so that He can carry out God's great eternal purpose. Yet without our cooperation, the ascended Christ can do very little. He is our great Head but we are His Body. On earth, He can move only

through us, His members. This is a very serious matter. Christ requires our cooperation.

He desires all men to be saved but He cannot save them unless we speak to them. In this respect, the almighty God cannot do anything unless we cooperate with Him. What a responsibility, but what a privilege! We can be those who allow God to move on the earth for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose! We are the V.I.P.'s of the universe. But we must be faithful to cooperate with Him.

Study Questions

1. How is the Lord's ascension His inauguration?
2. What are the three greatest offices to which Christ was inaugurated at His ascension? How does He minister in these offices?
3. As the Lord of all, can Christ do everything by Himself? Does He need help? Who are His helpers? How can they help?

Weekly Challenge

Consider before the Lord what has been the highlight of your time with us this semester during the Bible study and come ready to share that on **November 30** (Come by the SEM building terrace, anytime between 12:30-2:00pm).

Song

(Hebrews 4:15-16)

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot
Be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses,
But One who has been tempted in all respects like us,
Yet without sin, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come forward
With boldness to the throne of grace
That we may receive mercy and find grace
For timely help.

