

## Ascended Into Heaven.

Text: Eph 4:10

Suggested Hymns:

115, 353, 110, 111, 106

- 1) Equipped To Do His Work
- 2) A Clearer Understanding Of Christ's Kingdom
- 3) We Know Our Chief Business in Life
- 4) Life Has A Proper Goal

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 4:10, *<sup>10</sup>He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are continuing our series on the Nicene Creed. Part 7 focuses on the words, *And ascended into heaven.*

Has the thought ever come to you that it would be good for the individual Christian and for the church if Christ had not ascended into heaven so that men and women and children of today might actually see the Saviour with their own eyes?

With indifference and godlessness and wickedness increasing, has the idea struck you that it would be wonderful if Jesus would be on earth and perhaps deliver a sermon over an international TV broadcast? In that sermon He could state the truth about the many differences that exist in religious circles and thus, we might think, settle many of the problems that disturb us today.

If Christ had not ascended into heaven, we would indeed have His physical presence on this earth. If Christ had not ascended into heaven, He would be here to encourage us as He encouraged His disciples. So we may dream and dream.

But the truth is that Christ has ascended into heaven. And when we look at the account in the first chapter of Acts and consider the aftermath of Christ's ascension, we are compelled to rejoice that we can confess in the Nicene Creed: *"And Ascended into Heaven."*

This joy we see clearly as soon as we examine the consequences of Christ's ascension for our Christian faith and life. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Equipped To Do His Work**

Because Christ did ascend into heaven, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We read in Acts 1:4-5, *‘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;’* <sup>5</sup> *“for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

Again it is written in Acts 1:8, <sup>8</sup> *“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.”*

If Christ had not ascended into heaven, Pentecost with its blessed gift of the Holy Spirit would have not taken place. A reading of the Gospels and of Acts shows us that until Pentecost the followers of Jesus were not fully equipped to be workers in Christ's kingdom.

But after the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the disciples, together with the church since that day, have been equipped to carry on the work of Jesus Christ. We rejoice therefore that Christ did ascend into heaven, and in our Christian faith and life we enjoy the ability to work in the Lord's kingdom through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### **2. A Clearer Understanding Of Christ's Kingdom**

The second effect Christ's ascension has on our life is that it gives us a clearer understanding of the nature of Christ's kingdom. In spite of the many hours of instruction given by Jesus to His disciples they were still labouring under a false impression regarding His kingdom.

Even on the very day of His ascension we read of them, <sup>6</sup> *“Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”*<sup>1</sup>

The disciples were of the opinion that Christ would establish an earthly kingdom on this planet with His capital city perhaps in Jerusalem and would rule as a mighty king over all the people of this earth.

They viewed Christ's kingdom as a glorious and perfect kingdom that differed, however, from the other kingdoms on this earth only in its glory and holiness. They had interpreted the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the kingdom of the Son of David and regarding Israel in a physical and temporal way.

That Christ's kingdom is a ruling in people's hearts and lives, so that adults and children, regardless of race and nation or people, would serve Him as their Lord and Redeemer — such a concept was entirely foreign to their thinking.

But when Christ had ascended into heaven, then it came to pass what Jesus told them, *“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.”*<sup>8</sup> *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me.”*<sup>2</sup>

After the ascension, in the realisation that Jesus is at the right hand of God, they knew that the kingdom of Christ is not earthly, not material, but spiritual, a rule over people's thinking and believing, a rule over people's soul and spirit as well as body.

The wrong idea of the disciples is still prevalent today. Some people would like to reduce Christ's kingdom to another empire that differs only in its being better and holier than others. They would like to have Christ's rule be only something material.

If Christ had not ascended into heaven, human beings today would be even more intent on trying to revolutionise the world by force and to legislate people into being good. Our reaction of desiring to pass another law in order to correct an evil would be much harder to overcome if Jesus had not ascended into heaven.

But now that Christ is ascended into heaven, we know that His rule is a rule in people's lives with the Gospel and with His love and grace. We know that His kingdom is within us and comes into existence in our lives when He has freed us of our sins, and of the guilt of our sins, by bringing us to faith in Him as our Saviour.

We know that His kingdom has come to us when He has by His suffering and death thrown down the rule of sin in our lives, so that we are no longer ruled by sin. We know that His kingdom has come to us when by His Holy Spirit Christ

has enabled us to strive to live in holiness and righteousness and to serve God regardless of where we live and what nation we may be a citizen of.

### 3. We Know Our Chief Business in Life

Closely connected with this result of Christ's ascension is the third point, that we now know our chief business or purpose in life.

This is very evident in the case of the disciples. Even after Christ's resurrection from the dead, the disciples did not understand clearly that they had been called for the one purpose of spreading the story of the Saviour's love.

We find them behind locked doors, we find them going back to their trade of fishing, and we never find them speaking to others about Jesus and His Gospel. But on the day of ascension something happened. On the one hand, they heard the words of Jesus again, "*you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" They had heard the mission command of the Saviour.

On the other hand, they saw Christ ascend into heaven. Now they realised that there was nothing more important than telling others about this Jesus — this Jesus who was born of Mary in Bethlehem's stall, this Jesus who had suffered and died on the cross for the sins of all, including you and me, this Jesus who had risen from the dead, this Jesus who now had ascended into heaven and as the Lord of lords and King of kings rules in the hearts of men.

After the ascension we see the disciples ready to spread the Gospel. On Pentecost ten days after the ascension they are assembled together in Jerusalem and receive the power to be witnesses. From then on they knew that their chief business in life was the telling of the story of Jesus and His love for sinners.

Every time we confess, "*He ascended into heaven,*" the ascension should have this effect on us too, that we know that first and foremost that we are witnesses to Jesus and that everything else we do in this life must serve that purpose.

Sometimes the people of the world look at the Christian and think he is very foolish to support a congregation with his time and money and effort, that he is very foolish to pursue after the Christian virtues, that he is extremely foolish to

send people and money to foreign countries in order to bring them the message of God's love and salvation in Christ Jesus.

Because we live in the world and because our old sinful nature and heart would agree with the view of the unbeliever, and would like to adopt his sense of values, we need to keep in mind the ascension of Jesus Christ.

By means of the ascension we know that there is nothing more important and of more value than our spreading the Gospel of Christ in word and action. Missions are not foolishness but the greatest wisdom.

In our church work therefore we have the responsibility of missions, of being witnesses to the people of the world, both near and far. This is the chief business of the church.

In our daily living we have the same responsibility. We are to conduct our business, do our work, join in our recreation and social life in such manner that we further the chief task in life of being witnesses to Jesus Christ, your risen and ascended Saviour. We will be and remain missionaries all the more we keep in our minds the Saviour's ascension.

#### **4. Life Has A Proper Goal**

The final result the ascension has for our lives is that we have a proper goal. *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, <sup>11</sup> 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."*<sup>3</sup>

These words of the angels no doubt recalled to their minds what Jesus had told them not many weeks before, *I go to prepare a place for you.* <sup>3</sup> *"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."*<sup>4</sup> The ascended Christ will return to take His disciples and followers to be with Him in the bliss of heaven.

This is the goal of every child of God. He is bound for heaven through faith in the ascended Lord.

Let us illustrate what that goal means for our lives. A couple are going to Canberra by car. As they go along the highway and through the cities, they see many beautiful and interesting places. There is a very good restaurant here, a

fine picnic grounds there, a seat of learning in another place, enticing stores in another city. Here is a lake where fishing would be good, here a beautiful residential area where it would be good and pleasant to live.

As they go past all these, they do not permit themselves to be kept from reaching their goal — Canberra. If they spend too much time on these other things and places or if they decided to live at one of these places, they would never reach their goal.

So it is with the Christian life. In the ascension of Christ we have been shown the goal of the heavenly mansion to which the returning Jesus will take us. As we travel towards that goal, we must not permit the other things of this life, pleasant and beautiful as they may be, to become our goal and chief interest.

We must not let the material things of this life, the ease of this life, the pleasures of this life, and the like, detract us from our goal. We are heaven-bound; that joyous goal we must always have in mind.

Keeping this goal constantly in mind will enable us to understand better God's providence for us. God deals with us so that we will reach heaven. He wants us to keep in mind that Jesus will return and take us to heaven.

Sometimes His dealings with us hurt a little because we need to be returned to the road to heaven. Sometimes we do not understand His dealings because we have set a different goal for ourselves.

If the couple going to Canberra have different goals in mind — the one getting to Canberra and the other to take pleasure in the sights and to enjoy all the other things — there will be arguments between the two.

Likewise we will also clash with the Lord, if we fail to keep in mind that we are heaven-bound.

As we remember and recall the blessings we have in life because Jesus ascended, the blessings just mentioned, I am sure you will agree that our lives are all the happier because Jesus has ascended into heaven.

Whenever we confess in the Nicene Creed or the Apostles' Creed: "*He ascended into heaven,*" then recall to your minds the blessings we have as a result of the ascension: we know the nature of Christ's kingdom, we enjoy the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we know our chief business in life, and we know

our goal in life, we are heaven-bound. Indeed with joy we confess, “*He ascended into heaven.*” Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:6

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1:7-8

<sup>3</sup> Acts 1:10-11

<sup>4</sup> John 14:2b-3