

## The Ascension Of Christ - Proof That We Are Redeemed Indeed.

Text: Rom 8:34

1) Christ Is At The Right Hand Of God

Suggested Hymns:

2) Christ Makes Intercession For Us

113, 111, 169, 109, 114

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 Romans 8:34, <sup>34</sup> ***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.*** (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

At this season of the year the Christian Church commemorates the closing event in the earthly life of our blessed Lord. This event took place on the fortieth day after His triumphant resurrection from the dead.

On that day our Lord led His disciples out toward Bethany, the place He had hallowed by frequent visits during the days of His earthly ministry, ***“Now it came to pass,”*** as stated in the Gospel narrative according to St. Luke, that ***“while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.”***<sup>1</sup>

Mysteriously His body rose from the earth, rising higher and higher until a cloud came and received Him out of the sight of His awed and amazed disciples. After they had seen the last of Him, they stood gazing heavenward, until ***two men stood by them in white apparel*** and addressed them in these astounding and yet consoling words, ***“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 closing event in the earthly life of our Lord forms one of the fundamental articles of our Christian faith, and as such it has been incorporated in the great creeds of the Christian Church.

As we say of Jesus Christ that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He suffered under Pontius Pilate, that He was crucified, that He died and was buried, that He rose again the third day from the dead, so we also say of Him that He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

This article of faith is based upon the same inspired and infallible testimony on which we rest all the articles of the Christian faith. Like the other historic events in the life of our Lord, so also His ascension into heaven bears a most vital relation to that article which is at the very heart and core of our Christian faith, the article of our fallen world's redemption through the holy life and the sacrificial death of the incarnate Son of God.

From this viewpoint, let us at this time, upon the basis of the text before us, reflect upon our Lord's ascension. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Christ Is At The Right Hand Of God**

As we read the words of our text, we are at once impressed by the fact that the language is jubilant and in a way defiant. <sup>34</sup> *Who is he who condemns?* asks the Apostle and then proceeds to answer his question with the statement: *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.*

The Apostle's question is in the nature of a challenge made by a man who felt thoroughly certain of his ground. He challenges anybody to condemn him, basing his challenge not upon his own life, or his own deeds, but basing it rather entirely upon the deeds of another, upon the things which Christ, in whom he believed as his Saviour and Lord, had done for him and was still doing on his behalf.

*"Christ who died,"* says the Apostle, *"is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us,"* and on the solid foundation of these facts he takes his stand and issues the defiant challenge: *"Who is he who condemns?"*

Paul, in other words, claimed freedom from condemnation because his redemption from sin and its consequences was established beyond a shadow of a doubt by these numerous events: Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, Christ's

sitting at the right hand of God, and Christ's intercession before the Throne of Grace.

The last two of these items are connected with the sublime event which we commemorate today, and both of them, no less than Christ's substitutionary death on Calvary, and His triumphant resurrection from the grave on Easter morning, bear eloquent and irrefutable testimony to the fundamental truth of our Christian faith that we are redeemed, redeemed indeed, and that there is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

The first of the two items connected with the Saviour's ascension into heaven and mentioned by the Apostle as establishing our redemption beyond the shadow of a doubt, is stated in these words: "*Christ ... is even at the right hand of God.*"

To be understood in a figurative sense, these words are intended to express the honour and power and glory and majesty with which Christ is now invested also according to His human nature since His ascension into heaven.

This phrase is explained in the Scriptures itself as we read in Ephesians 1:20-22, [God] *seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body.*

As the God-Man Christ ascended into heaven, and as the God-Man He now occupies the place of sovereign power and majesty, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings. All power is His in heaven and in earth.

The hymnist writes,<sup>2</sup>

The highest place that heaven affords  
Is His, is His by right,  
The King of kings and Lord of lords  
And heaven's eternal light;

The ascension of Jesus was, therefore, the day of His coronation according to His human nature as King of kings and Lord of lords, and in this sublime event

we certainly have evidence of the full accomplishment of the great mission for which He had been sent into the world.

Or would He, the lowly son of Mary, have been elevated to heaven's highest throne if His work on earth had been left unfinished? Certainly not!

Would He have been invited to occupy the seat of universal sovereignty and crowned with divine glory and honour if His mission in the world had been a failure? Certainly not!

Would He, the Captain of our Salvation, have been received into the realm of heaven with the glad shout of the adoring celestial host "*Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in,*"<sup>3</sup> if He had not gained a complete and decisive victory over all the enemies of our salvation? Certainly not!

The answer to these questions is given in the Apostle's triumphant utterance that Christ "*is even at the right hand of God.*" His presence there, His very occupancy of the place of power and glory and might and dominion is the proof, the crowning proof, of the Father's acceptance of His Son's sacrifice for the world's redemption.

It is the conclusive evidence of His acknowledgement of the completeness of the redemption which His Son wrought for our fallen race.

Just as His Son humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, so *God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,*<sup>10</sup> *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,*<sup>11</sup> *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*<sup>4</sup>

There can be no question as to the sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice and its saving efficacy in all of those who now believe in Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, since He who died to accomplish man's redemption and salvation "*is even at the right hand of God.*" We are redeemed indeed.

## 2. Christ Makes Intercession For Us

The second item connected with our Saviour's ascension into heaven mentioned in our text as constituting the firm ground of every believer's certainty

of freedom from condemnation is stated by the Apostle in these words: “*who also makes intercession for us.*”

The crowning proof of His divinity and the day of His coronation as sovereign Lord and King, our Saviour’s ascension into heaven, also marked His inauguration as our Advocate and Intercessor before the Throne of Grace.

Having in His office, as the world’s divinely appointed Priest, offered a sacrifice to atone for sin when He offered up Himself upon the altar of the cross, Jesus, as the divinely ordained Priest, entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us.

As on the great day of atonement in the days of the old dispensation Israel’s high priest first slew the victim outside and then went within the veil into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood upon the Mercy Seat and to make intercession for the people, so Christ having offered Himself a sacrifice on the cross, as our great High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies “*not made with hands,*”<sup>5</sup> there to plead His suffering on our behalf before the tribunal of Eternal Justice.

Scripture teaches us in Hebrews 7:25 that Jesus Christ *is ... able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for [us].*

Again we learn from 1 John 2:1 that *if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* But how, we rightly ask, could He discharge this office effectually and successfully if His work upon earth was not completely done?

How could He plead for sinful men upon the basis of His sacrifice for sin if that sacrifice was inadequate to satisfy the exacting demands of divine holiness and justice?

How could His pleas for us avail anything if His own life and work were lacking divine approval and acceptance?

The very fact that Jesus now lives and makes intercession for us on the basis of His work on our behalf leaves no doubt concerning the perfect character of His work and the adequacy of the sacrifice He offered, and therefore beyond doubt

establishes the full and complete accomplishment of our fallen world's redemption.

Thus the ascension of Jesus bears testimony to the certainty of our redemption. Like the resurrection of the Saviour, so also His ascension assures us that we have been redeemed indeed, for He *“was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”*<sup>6</sup> Jesus now occupies the place of universal sovereignty, as our great High Priest effectually intercedes for us before the throne of God.

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. If, like Paul, we put our trust in the merits of our Redeemer's all-sufficient sacrifice, we, too, can issue the challenge, even in the consciousness of our sinfulness: <sup>34</sup> *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.*

And when the hour shall come that we, too, must leave this world we can meet it unafraid, without dread of the coming Judgement, because for us that hour will mark our translation from this world of sin and sorrow into that heaven of peace and joy to which the Saviour has preceded us and where, according to His promise, we shall see and share His glory forevermore.

Redeemed indeed, let us, look up and lift up our heads as we make this Ascension Day prayer to Him who sits at the right hand of God and makes intercession for us:<sup>7</sup>

Draw us to Thee  
Unceasingly:  
Into Thy kingdom take us;  
Let us for e'er  
Thy glory share  
Thy saints and joint-heirs make us. Amen

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

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24:51

<sup>2</sup> Hymn 169

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 24:9

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 2:9-11

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 9:11

<sup>6</sup> Romans 4:25

<sup>7</sup> Hymn 109