

The Ascension of Christ – Part 1 of 3

Thank you for joining me for “It’s a Good Life.” Today, we continue our study in the life of Christ. This will be lesson number seventeen in our study, and we’re going to begin today with the ascension of Christ.

In I Peter 3:18 and 22, it says, *¹⁸For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: ²²Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

Now, we know, as we study the life of Christ, that He was born of a virgin. He had no earthly father. The Holy Spirit overshadowed the virgin and she conceived. The Bible tells us that she conceived and brought forth a Son, and that Son was Jesus Christ, a miraculous birth. He lived a sinless, perfect life. He walked on this Earth performing miracles and doing certain things that would bring men and women to Him who would receive Him as the Messiah.

But we read in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 53:3, where it says there, *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not*

Although He went about in His earthly ministry, doing good, healing the sick, and raising the dead, as such, men rejected Him. Men are still rejecting Him today, but as we get into our study today about the ascension, we know that, as He ascended back to Heaven, He’s coming once again.

Well, He was rejected, He was crucified, and He was buried. And on that third day, as we’ve studied, He rose on the third day. He is alive. And the Bible teaches us, as we are going to look in just a few moments, how that He ascended back to the Father.

Now, following His resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ was seen by certain men and women for forty days. Acts 1:3 says, *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion....* That’s after His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection... He was seen *alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

After Christ’s resurrection, He was taken up into Heaven to await the day until His triumphal return when His enemies shall be made His footstool, according to Psalm 110:1. It says there, *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

Christ was left here and He stayed here for forty days after His resurrection. Now, I want you to notice with me, if you would, a fourfold purpose of Christ’s waiting forty days to ascend to the Father.

The first purpose of the forty-day period was to convince the disciples of the reality of the resurrection. Acts 1:1-3 says this: *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ²Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: ³To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and*

speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

After the resurrection, the Bible makes mention of those who doubted. In Matthew 28:16-17... and you can compare this with Luke 24:1-11, Mark 16:9-14, and John 20:24-28... it says, ¹⁶*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.* ¹⁷*And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*

In Luke 24:1-11, it says, ¹*Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.* ²*And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.* ³*And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.* ⁴*And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:* ⁵*And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, ⁷Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. ¹¹And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.*

And once again, look at Mark 16:9-14, and you can read how that there were those who believed not. We remember one particular person who is mentioned specifically in the Word of God, and that would be Thomas. He was but one among many who doubted,

according to John 20:24-28, and as we've already read, there were many who doubted.

It says in John 20:24-28, ²⁴*But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.* Now, Jesus had appeared to the disciples, ten of the apostles, and Thomas was not present at that time, but it says there that... *Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them....* That was those apostles who were present when He came.

And, ²⁵*The other disciples therefore said unto him... that's unto Thomas.... We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* ²⁶*And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, **Peace be unto you.*** ²⁷*Then saith he to Thomas, **Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and trust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*** ²⁸*And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

Well, the moment Thomas saw the risen Lord, all doubts vanished. John 20:28: *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.* Instantly, doubting Thomas became convinced Thomas, and this forty-day period served its purpose well as Christ appeared to these people.

Now, the second purpose of the forty-day period was to communicate truth about His kingdom. The King Himself taught the apostles concerning the kingdom. Can you imagine that? The Lord Himself taught these people. In Acts 1:3, it says, *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them*

forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Israel's promised kingdom was foremost on the minds of the disciples as was indicated by their question: *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* Acts 1:6. And their Master and Teacher supplied them with needed information concerning this vast subject of God's reign on Earth. He taught them what was going to take place.

Well, the third purpose of the forty-day period was to confirm the promise of His presence. The Lord had made a promise. He said He would not leave them comfortless, and we know these verses found in John 14:18: *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*

Christ promised His disciples that He would not leave them alone. Christ said He would send another Comforter, John 14:16. He said, *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

And though He was received up into Heaven, there was a sense in which He was still present, working with His chosen apostles. Mark 16:19-20 says, *¹⁹So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

In the Lord's frequent resurrection appearances, He was skillfully instructing His beloved disciples concerning the promise of His abiding presence. Matthew 28:20 says, *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Now these disciples' Lord, their Lord, would leave the disciples physically, but He would come in the person of the Holy Spirit to be present with them forever. In John 14:16-18, we read of that.

Now, the fourth purpose of the forty-day period was to command His chosen apostles. Before Christ was taken up into Heaven, He gave commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen. Acts 1:2 says, *Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.*

The solemn commandments given to the disciples comprise what is generally known as the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20 says, *¹⁸And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Acts 1:8 says, *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

May God enable us by His grace to understand exactly what He has told us to do and to be obedient to these commandments, which the Savior has given. Not only did the Lord give these commandments to those who were present at that time, but they carry over into our lives today.

Next week, we'll continue the study in the ascension of Christ, but let me ask you, have you trusted Him as your Savior? Have you asked Him by faith to come into your heart,

that is, into your innermost being by saying, "Lord, I know I'm a sinner. I know I'm lost. I can't save myself. I believe You died for me and You rose again on that third day. Come into my heart. Come into my innermost being. Save me. I receive You as my Lord and my Savior." If you'll do that today, the Bible says whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Let me invite you to look at our website this week, www.LRWM.org, or you can write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731.

Until this time next week when you hear me say, "It is a good life," may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.