

Ascension of Christ Part 1

The Ascension And Other Events Preceding It

- Matthew recorded Jesus giving The Great Commission on a mountain in Galilee. (Matt. 28:16-20).
- John recorded the Great Commission when Jesus appeared to ten of His disciples [apostles] on the day He was resurrected from the tomb. (Jn. 20:21-23).
- Neither of these gospels recorded the actual ascension of Christ into heaven, but the ascension of Christ was mentioned in them. (Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Jn. 6:62; 13:1; 20:17).
- Both Mark and Luke's gospels record Jesus giving The Great Commission again in Judea. (Mk. 16:14-19; Lk. 24:50-53).
- They also give some interesting statements and events immediately preceding Christ's ascension into heaven.

Mark's Gospel

- Mark recorded Jesus once again giving The Great Commission to the eleven disciples. (Mk. 16:15,16).
- He then recorded these words.

Mk. 16:17 "These signs will accompany [follow] those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

1. "These signs will accompany those who have believed" - "Signs" were intended to convince unbelievers of the truthfulness of the gospel message.
 - a. It is vital that the gospel message be confirmed by "signs" [miracles] that it was from God. See 2 Cor. 12:12.
 - b. The words "those have believed" [lit. the (ones) believing] primarily referred to the apostles based on a study of the New Testament.
 - c. Christians universally were not able to do all these things.
2. "in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues" - "in My name" means "by My authority."
 - a. One might assume that "those who have believed" refer to all believers then and throughout the Christian age.
 - b. A study of the New Testament reveals these gifts were not universal among believers. (1 Cor. 12:29,30).
 - c. The apostles could cast out demons and speak in languages they did not know or had not studied. (Acts 2:4-11).
 - 1) Peter cast out demons. (Acts 5:15,16).

Acts 5:15 to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.

Acts 5:16 Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

2) Paul did cast out a demon from a slave girl in Philippi. (Acts 16:16-18).

3) We have no example of Paul speaking in tongues, but he claimed to have this ability. (1 Cor. 14:6, 14, 18,19).

1 Cor. 14:6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

1 Cor. 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

1 Cor. 14:18 I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;

1 Cor. 14:19 however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

d. The gift of speaking in tongues [languages] was not given to all Christians as the New Testament reveals.

1) Some could speak in tongues. (1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 10:45,46; 19:6).

1 Cor. 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

Acts 10:45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

Acts 10:46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

2) The New Testament records Philip, one of the seven, casting out demons. (Acts 8:6,7). He had received this power by the laying on of the apostles hands. (Acts 6:6). This is how the apostles imparted miraculous power to others. (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6).

3) We have no record of any other Christians casting out demons though the fact some were given miraculous powers might have included the exorcism of demons. (1 Cor. 12:10).

Mk. 16:18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

1. "they will pick up serpents" - "ophis" [ah fis]

a. **This was not done as an act of worship or to prove one's faith.**

b. There is no record of any Christian picking up snakes in exercising his/her faith though this does not mean a Christian never picked up a snake in the course of his life.

c. Paul only is recorded having an incident with a snake when he was bitten by one in Malta. (Acts 28:1-5).

Acts 28:1 1 When they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta.

Acts 28:2 The natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all.

Acts 28:3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper [snake] came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand.

Acts 28:4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they *began* saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live."

Acts 28:5 However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm.

- 1) Paul was not engaged in snake handling, but was bitten by a snake.
 - 2) Luke clearly affirms Paul "suffered no harm." (Acts 28:5).
 - c. These words are not an endorsement for snake handling as a sign of faith or as a way of life.
 - d. Anyone who handles snakes is not under God's protection, but is taking a risk just as an unbeliever takes a risk of being harmed or killed.
2. "and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them" - There is nothing recorded in the New Testament of the apostles or any other Christian doing this.
 - a. Jesus did not say they shall drink deadly poison, but "if they shall drink it."
 - b. This was not be an act of worship or an act to prove one's faith.
 - c. This likely had reference to the accidental consumption of poison or the act of an enemy seeking to poison the apostles and maybe other Christians. The apostles had many enemies who would kill them with poison if the opportunity presented itself.
 - d. Though not explicitly stated it most likely referred exclusively to the apostles who had enemies everywhere.
 3. "they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover"
 - a. The apostles had this power. (Acts 3:6-8; 5:12-16; 9:40; 20:10-12).
 - b. They even had the power to raise the dead. (Acts 9:42; 20:10-12).
 - c. Some Christians had the power to heal. (1 Cor. 12:9).
- 1 Cor. 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
- c. It would seem that at least some elders had the power to heal, but no mention is made of the laying on of hands. (Jas. 5:14,15).
- Jas. 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;
- Jas. 5:15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.
- d. This power to heal would have come from the laying on of the apostles hands.

The Ascension Recorded In Mark

Mk. 16:19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

1. Mark gave a very brief description of the ascension of Christ.
2. Jesus “was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.”
 - a. Jesus had earlier gone to Paradise (Lk. 23:43), but now has ascended into heaven.
 - b. Mark affirmed both the resurrection of Christ and His exaltation at the right hand of God.
 - c. Christ did not ascend to heaven in shame, but in victory and was given the highest place of honor “at the right hand of God.” (Acts 2:33-36).
 - 1) Christ is now King.
 - 2) He now has “all authority in heaven and on earth.” (Matt. 28:18).

Later Activity Of The Apostles

Mk. 16:20 And they [the apostles] went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.

1. Mark described what the apostles did beginning with Pentecost some ten days later.
2. They “preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them”
 - a. See Matt. 28:20. “I am with you always”
 - b. “the Lord working with them” - ASV
 - c. Lit. “the Lord working with [them]” - “them” is in italics, but it is very likely the right word to complete the thought.
3. They “confirmed the word by the signs that followed them.” See Heb. 2:3,4.

Heb. 2:3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

Heb. 2:4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

The Ascension Recorded In Luke’s Gospel

Lk. 24:50 And He led them [the eleven apostles] out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

1. The other accounts do not mention Jesus lifting His hands or Jesus blessing His disciples, but neither do they contradict or deny these facts.
2. Jesus was very concerned about His apostles and “blessed them.”

Lk. 24:51 While He was blessing them, He parted from [left] them and was carried up into heaven.

1. Luke does not give any details about the blessing of the disciples.
2. He does state Jesus “parted from them and was carried up into heaven.”

Lk. 24:52 And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy,

1. Jerusalem was a short distance from Mt. Olivet. (Acts 1:12).

Acts 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away

2. Once again the disciples worshiped Jesus. (Matt. 14:33; 28:17).

Lk. 24:53 and were continually in the temple praising God.

1. This explains how the apostles spent some of their time between the ascension and Pentecost - 40 days. (Acts 1:3).
2. They also spent some time in the upper room praying. (Acts 1:13,14).

Acts 1:13 When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

3. The wait to Pentecost was 10 days as deducted from Acts 1:3.

Jesus Last Days On Earth

Acts 1:1 The first account I composed [made], Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,

1. Luke by the words “the first account” was speaking to the gospel of Luke. (Lk. 1:1-4).
2. He is now writing the book of Acts.

Acts 1:2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. The charge Jesus had given the apostles was “by the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

1. Jesus had been with them alive “over a period of forty days,” but not every one of those days.
2. His resurrection appearances were absolute proof of His Deity and authority.

“He Commanded Them Not To Leave Jerusalem”

Acts 1:4 Gathering them [the apostles] together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

1. John had “baptized with water.” (Matt. 3:6-16).
2. The apostles had been obedient to that commandment.
3. Those who were not baptized were rejecting the “purpose” of God. (Lk. 7:29, 30).

Lk. 7:29 When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

Lk. 7:30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

4. They would soon be baptized with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:4).

Acts 1:6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

1. They were still looking for a physical kingdom.
2. They still did not understand the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. (Lk. 17:20, 21; Jn. 18:36).

Acts 1:7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

1. They did not know the exact time of the coming of the kingdom though both John and Jesus had taught it was near. (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mk. 9:1; Acts 1:4).
2. It would come soon as Acts 2 reveals.

Would Receive Power When Baptized With The Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

1. They would know the Holy Spirit had come upon them by the power that would accompany His coming.
2. They would then be empowered to proclaim the gospel “even to the remotest part of the earth.”

The Ascension Recorded By Luke In Acts

Acts 1:9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

1. The apostles were eye witnesses of the ascension.
2. They had previously witnessed the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
3. Their witnessing of these marvelous events was not based on here-say or the testimony of others.

Acts 1:10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men [angels] in white clothing stood beside them.

1. Angels could appear as men. (Gen. 18:1, 22; 19:1; Mk. 16:5).

2. These angels assured the apostles Jesus was coming again just as Jesus had promised. (Jn. 14:3).

Angels Speak To These Men Of Galilee

Acts 1:11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

1. The eleven apostles were "all men of Galilee." (Acts 1:11; 2:7).

- a. Judas was not from Galilee.

- 1) It is believed that "Iscairiot" means "man of Kerioth."

- 2) Kerioth was a town in the tribe of Judah. (Josh. 15:25).

- b. We know, by deduction, that Matthias was also a Galilean. (Acts 1:26; 2:7).

Acts 1:26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Acts 2:7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

Transformation of Christ's Body

1. Jesus had a fleshly body before and after His resurrection. (Jn. 1:14; Lk. 24:36-43; Jn. 20:19-29).

- a. Even after His resurrection He showed the apostles the nail prints in His hands and His wounded side. (Jn. 20:19-29)

- b. He ate to confirm He was not a spirit, but was flesh and blood. (Lk. 24:36-43).

2. Paul affirmed that flesh and blood "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 15:50).

3. We must deduct from this that the body of Jesus was transformed into a spiritual body as He ascended into heaven.

4. This would be an instantaneous action. (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

1 Cor. 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

1 Cor. 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Cor. 15:53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

5. The ascension of Jesus was not a mere disappearance, but was an actual journey to heaven. (Heb. 4:14).

Heb. 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

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