

Bible  
4/58  
G.M.

"The Ascension"

M.W.  
1/17/54  
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Scripture Lesson - Acts 1: 1-10.

Text:- Acts 1: 9. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight".

Introduction:- St. Luke gives this account of the ascension. The ascension is a part of the belief of the New T. Is is an important event that has become a part of the creed of Christendom. Yet, I am persuaded to believe that to a vast number of professing Christians it means very little or nothing at all.

What do we mean by the Ascension?

I.

In answering this question we should remember that, according to the N.T., there were three periods in the ministry of Jesus. 1. There is that period that took place before the eyes of men. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us". For a few brief years Jesus walked the roadways of men. He was seen by those who were friendly and by those who were his enemies. During this period he went about doing good before the eyes of men. In the sight of all he gathered little children into his arms and bent in pity over the outcasts. This he continued to do until his earthly visible ministry was ended by the tragedy of the cross.

2. But though death gripped him it could not hold him. He rose again from the dead. Then followed a ministry of forty days. At times he was visible as in the first period of his ministry. At times he was invisible. Two disciples after feeling their hearts burn within them as he talked with them along the way, at last recognized him as he asked the blessing and broke bread at the simple evening meal. Then they hurried to tell the amazing news. They were sure that the crucified Lord had risen from the dead.

3. "He was parted from them" or "He was taken

up. Though he was taken up to heaven, he has not gone away from this needy world. In entering heaven, Jesus has not gone away but has rather entered into the unseen. He has ceased to be realized by any of our physical senses. We need to keep this in mind. When he ascended he only ceased to be recognized by our physical senses. How do we recognize Him now? Is it not by faith?

## II.

How did the disciples react to his going away? With great tenderness Jesus had told them about his coming departure. Yet he said, "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." We need not be surprised at their sorrow. Some of the bitterest heartaches are born of our separation from those we love. I mean here on earth. But when they pass into the "unseen" or heaven, their going is more painful still. It is but natural that the disciples of Jesus were broken hearted when he told them of his going away out of sight.

But though they were heart broken when they looked at the ascension, after it has become a reality, their sorrow was changed to joy. Instead of returning to Jerusalem with sobs, they returned with songs. Instead of going back in great sorrow, they went back in great joy.

## III.

What was the secret of their joy? 1. They rejoiced because their Lord had ascended to the right hand of his Father. They rejoiced because he had received his answer to his prayer that he offered the last night of his life on earth before the cross, "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was". I think they rejoiced because their Lord had gone to receive his crown. He could now say, "All power is given me in heaven and in earth". I think they rejoiced because they realized that the experiences of conflict and seeming defeat had re-

ally been a triumph.

2. I believe they rejoiced because he had entered into glory, but he had entered on their behalf. When they had sat together under the black shadow of the cross he had comforted them with the words, "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." They rejoiced that their Master was preparing a place for them. —

3. They rejoiced because they were sure that Jesus was coming again. They had received that assurance again and again from his own lips. Any candid reading of the N. T. will indicate that the saints of the early church lived in daily expectation of the return of the Lord. Any day, they felt that their Lord might come back, visibly and physically, to walk with them once more.

#### IV.

Conclusion:- Not only is our Lord with us as a group, but he is with us individually. To this fact he declared out of his own experience that is Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If we are willing to receive him, he will be within our hearts, today, enabling us to become and to do what only Christ-possessed men and women can become and do. We are to rejoice therefore, in the ascension of our Lord because by his going he has drawn us closer to him. By his going he has made it possible for us to have him with us to the very end of the age.

I think it very significant too that it was as Jesus lifted up his hands in blessing as he parted from them. Thus the last time these devoted friends saw their Lord his hands were stretched out in blessing above them. Therefore we may be sure that those same almighty hands are stretched out in blessing over our heads this very minute. He is saying to us what he said to a faithful servant of long

ago, " I will bāess thee and keep thee and  
thou shalt be a blessing". If we receive our  
ascended Lord, not only will he meet our in-  
dividual needs, but he will cause out of our  
lives to flow rivers of living water.

The Ascension was for the disciples no imaginary or fantastic elevation, but a real passing of the risen Savior out of the risen and the natural into the region and order of the unseen and supernatural. Just as really, as they believed Christ to have risen from the dead, just as really did they believe Him to have ascended into the heavens.

Now, the book of Acts of the Apostles does not describe our SAVIOR as thus ascending through infinite space. It simply describes Him as removed from this earthly ball, and then, "a cloud received Him," shutting Him from view. Thus Christ passed into that inner and unseen universe wherein He now dwells. The existence of that inner and unseen universe, asserted clearly enough in Scripture, has of late years been curiously affirmed by scientific speculation. The unseen world is not at some vast distance, but, as the Ascension would seem to imply, close at hand, shut out from us by that thin veil of matter which angelic hands will one day rend forever.

#### Their Secret of Joy

His life and work were ~~xxx~~marked all through by miracle. His death and resurrection were likewise marked by a miracle. And it was considered

that His departure from earth should be by thru  
another miraculous door. The Ascension was a  
natural and fitting end to his activities of the  
Eternal Son, manifest in the flesh, it was a necess  
sary completion: "It is expedient" said Christ  
himself, "that I go away." "For if I go not away the  
Comforter will not come unto you!"

Now, the book of Acts of the Apostles does not  
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