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WHEN REDEMPTION WAS COMPLETED

“The main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man” (Heb. 8:1,2). The book of Acts begins with Luke telling Theophilus that “the first account I composed (was) about all that Jesus began to do and teach”. His earthly ministry was preparatory for his heavenly ministry, which he continues through his people as the great High Priest. His heavenly ministry began with his ascension, a little known and the most neglected doctrine of the New Testament. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* states: “The Ascension becomes the key to all the spiritual experiences of the church. There is a need to clarify the meaning of the ascension for our day”. Gerrit Scott Dawson in his book *Jesus Ascended* states “In a time when the western church is fiercely debating the uniqueness of Jesus and our people are drowning in a flood of busy, demanding lifestyles, the ascension is an absolutely crucial part of the gospel story to recover.” Our redemption was not completed with the cross and resurrection. Jesus had to “enter the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, not through the blood of goats and calves but through his own blood, he entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb.9:11,12). His ascension then, completes our redemption. He can now represent us before the Father as mediator of the better covenant (Heb. 8:6). The word mediator means “to be in the middle” or an arbitrator. He is our advocate (I Jn. 2:1,2). The Apostle Paul states “there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). There is a “man” in the holy place (heaven) representing us. This is the same as if we are there, and in fact we are there because we are “sitting with Christ in the heavenlies” (Eph. 2:6). Christ ascended in order to make this possible.

Christ had to ascend in order to fulfill prophesy. There is much debate about the meaning of Daniel 7:13-14. Most modern prophesy preachers say this is a prophesy of the end time. I take it to be an important prophesy of the ascension of Christ. Note the first part of the prophesy: “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming”. Sounds like the coming of Christ in the last days, but read on “and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him”. The fact that he “came up” and “was presented before the Ancient of Days” speaks of his ascension. In these verses it is prophesied that it would be a “son of man” who ascended. Paul states “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (II Tim. 2:5). The other fact of this prophesy is fulfilled in the New Testament: He would be presented before the Father (Heb. 9:11-14), he would be given authority (Eph. 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11) and he would give

the kingdom to the saints (Dan. 7: 18, 27; Luke 12:32)

Christ had to ascend in order to enter into his glory. “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26). When Jesus ascended “a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). His ascension was not a blast off into space, but his entering the presence of God. In Scripture the cloud represented God’s presence. At the completion of the tabernacle “the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex. 40:34,35). The same thing happened when Solomon dedicated the temple (II Chron. 7:1-3). When the ark was brought into the temple “the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord (I Kings 8:10,11). Entering into his glory meant he did not belong to this realm any longer, Had he not ascended he would have been a spectacle here on earth in his resurrected body. The proper place for a glorified body was the heavenlies, the realm of the Spirit, the presence of God. Jesus had a certain glory while upon the earth. John said “we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). The disciples understood his kingdom to be his glory: Mark 10:37: “Grant that we sit in your *glory*, one on your right and one on your left”. The parallel passage in Matthew 20:21 reads: “command that in your *kingdom* these two sons of mine may sit one on your right and one on your left”. This glory he received at his ascension. He was “taken up in glory” (I Tim. 3:16). It was then that he was “crowned with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:9). This was the final manifestation of his glory before his appearing again.

What does his entering into his glory mean to us? John 17:22 states that the glory God gave to him he has given to us. The glory given him by God was the fact that God declared him to be His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased (II Pet. 1:17). The glory he has given us is that we have become sons of God. It is his purpose to bring many sons into glory” (Heb. 2:10). The glory of the Lord is revealed in the “face of Christ” (II Cor. 4:6). The “face” represents the “likeness” (Ps. 17:15) and when we look into this glory, as if we were looking into a mirror, we are being changed into the same glory or likeness of Christ (II Cor. 3:18). His entering into his glory gives us the privilege of sharing his glory here and now.

He had to ascend in order to prepare a place for us. The classic scripture on this subject is John 14:1-3, a passage usually interpreted to refer to the second coming and mansions being built for us in heaven which we will occupy after we die. The Father’s “house” is not heaven, but the church (Heb. 3:6; Eph. 2:19; I Tim. 3:15) The “mansions”,

correctly translated “dwelling places” is the dwelling place of God among His people (“abode” ver. 23 is the same word as “mansions” [dwelling places] in verse 2). (II Cor. 6:16; Ezek. 37:26,27; Rev. 21:3). The “place” he went to prepare for us is our place before the Father (Heb. 9:11-14). “I will come again to receive you unto myself”. Note “receive you unto myself, not receive you in heaven”. Did he do this? Yes (ver. 18, 23). Verses 28-29 they are told “you heard that I said to you ‘I go away and I will come to you’ (ver.3) and now I tell you before it comes to pass, *that when it does come to pass you may believe.*” If they were going to believe when it came to pass it must have happened in their lifetime. This took place on Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). He says the purpose of this was “that where I am you may be also”. In John 12:26 he had said “If any one serves me, let him follow me, and where I am there shall my servant also be”. In Ephesians 1:20 the Apostle states that Christ was raised from the dead and “seated on His (God’s) right hand in the heavenlies. Then in chapter 2:6 he states that we have been raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenlies”. It is hard for some Christians to grasp the reality and the glory of that statement. He ascended and prepared this place for us.

Christ had to ascend in order to send the Holy Spirit. John 14:7: “I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I go not away, the Helper shall not come to you, but if go, I will send Him to you.” The Holy Spirit is simply the Spiritual presence of Christ and God in His people. That is why the Scriptures speak of “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ”. John 14:18: “I will not leave you as orphans, *I will come to you*” and verse 23: If any man loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and *we will come and make our abode with him.*”

Christ ascending and sending the Holy Spirit was the first demonstration of his reign and the first message of the Spirit was twofold: (1) the restricted, national exclusive right of God (which the Jews claimed) was over and (2) the physical structures of all that the old system stood for and stood upon was to be completely destroyed. Verses 17 and 18 of Acts 2 is the quotation from Joel 2 which Peter uses to explain Pentecost is generally understood to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit on that day, but verses 19-21 is not so generally understood. “Wonders in the sky, signs on the earth, blood, fire and vapor of smoke, the sun being darkened and the moon turning into blood” are the same terms used in the Old Testament to describe the Judgments of God upon heathen nations and the nation of Israel (Isa. 19:1; 34:5,10; Psalm 18:7-10). To understand the significance of these verses we need to note the original prophesy in Joel 2. Peter quotes it verbatim, but does not quote the last part of verse 32 which states: “For on Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.” Jesus warned the people of his day that when they saw certain things begin to happen to flee and escape out of Jerusalem (Luke 21:21-23; Matt. 24:15-22). Therefore verses 17 and 18 of Acts 2 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The coming of the Spirit brought the phenomena of the gift of tongues. The religious world argues about the purpose of this

gift. The Apostle Paul plainly states the purpose in I Corinthians 14:21-22: “In the Law it is written ‘by men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people and even so they will not listen to me’ says the Lord. So then tongues are a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers.” Who were the unbelievers to whom the tongues were a sign? Throughout the New Testament the Jews who rejected Jesus as the Christ, their Messiah, are said to be unbelievers. The miracle of tongues was a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy against unbelieving Israel (Isa. 28:11-19). The tongues of Pentecost were a sign to unbelieving Israel that the Cornerstone had come and Israel had rejected him to their own destruction and the kingdom was given to another people. The coming of the Spirit with its prophecy of indwelling all men and the prophecy of Jerusalem’s demise and the speaking in tongues ushered in the Kingdom. Christ had ascended the Holy Spirit has come and a new era has been inaugurated.

Jesus ascending and sending the Holy spirit would enable his troubled and bewildered Apostles to be the instruments through which he ushered into the world this Kingdom, and equip his followers throughout the ages to continue his work in the world. So he explains to them what the Spirit would do when He was sent. Four times in John chapters fourteen, fifteen and sixteen he promises that the Holy Spirit would be our helper. The word is translated “comforter” in the King James version. It means “advocate” or literally “one called along beside to help”. We have help in the time of need (Heb. 4:16). The Spirit doesn’t do it all, He is one “along beside us to help.” No matter the task we face or the difficulties we encounter we have the very presence of God and Christ in the Spirit as our helper. Further “and He when He comes will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin because they believe not in me, concerning righteousness because I go to my Father and you behold me no longer, and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.” (Jn. 16:8-11). The sin of which the Spirit convicts is the sin of unbelief in Christ (the only sin that condemns a person). He will convict of righteousness because contrary to Satan’s lie and the belief of many people, we as Christians can be made righteous in him. He will convict of judgment because he has defeated Satan and bore our judgment on the cross. In verse 13 of this chapter we are told that the Spirit will “guide you into all truth.” He is called “the Spirit of truth” (Jn. 14:17; 16:3; I Jn. 5:7). Jesus said in John 8:32 that “you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.” It is only by the revelation of the truth that we can be set free. The Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit would glorify Christ (Jn.16:14). For the first time in history a man (I Tim. 2:5) is glorified and takes the position that only Deity had held. Now the position of glory is made known through the Holy Spirit and we can be partakers of that glory. II Peter 1:3, 4: “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.” None of these things could take place without the ascension. The work of redemption could not be completed until Christ ascended.

