

Inside the Lines
P.O. Box 1261
Fort Mill, South Carolina 29716

JESUS

His Ascension and Present Ministry Lesson 7

return pages 4 & 5 only

Something for You to Study

For forty days after Jesus' resurrection. He was seen by disciples (John 20:19), ate with them (Luke 24:41-43), talked with them, and instructed them further (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3). Then He left them to return to heaven.

The event is told simply in Acts 1:9-11. His ascension was not just a disappearance from the sight of those watching. It, was a gradual, visible, bodily return to heaven. It is interesting to note that the angels promised the disciples that He would come back the same way—that is, from heaven, in a body, and visible to all. Clouds received Him at His ascension, and clouds are mentioned in connection with His return (Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7). The ascension was prophetic of the future time when He will return to reign supreme and every knee will bow to Him (Philippians 2:9-11). After the ascension, Christ is only seen in His glorified state" and then only to those who were given a special revelation. The glory of His resurrection body was hidden from His disciples. Stephen was the first to see the glorified Christ in heaven (Acts 7), then Paul (Acts 9), and finally John (Revelation 1). It is such a resurrected and glorified body that believers will ultimately have (1 John 3:2).

CHRIST'S PRESENT POSITION IN HEAVEN

Christ's work of redemption was completed with His death and resurrection. He returned then to the glory of His pre-incarnate state with the added glory of having been victorious over sin and death. Hebrews 10:12-13 emphasizes that the Lord Jesus "sat down"; His work of redemption was finished. He now is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Hebrews 1:3). There He shares all glory, authority, and honor with God. Though all authority belongs to Him now (Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22), He is not now exercising it (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 10:12-13). The day is coming when He will take the power that is His and reign for ever (Revelation 11:15). This future day is foretold in Psalm 2:8.

CHRIST'S PRESENT WORK IN HEAVEN

The Lord Jesus has a ministry now that began with His ascension, has continued ever since, and will continue until His return. His ascension is the link between what He did on earth and what He is doing in heaven. This heavenly work is not a part of His finished redemptive work. It is a special ministry for those who have accepted Him as personal Saviour, and includes preparing a place for His own John 14:1-2, acting as the believer's advocate 1 John 2:1, interceding for believers Hebrews 7:25.

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In His work as *Advocate*, Christ reminds God the Father of His work of redemption which provides forgiveness for sin. The believer's sin is not a rejection of Christ, but the daily sins of anger, evil speaking, lying, and uncleanness, which break his fellowship with God. Such sins cannot be excused or over-looked by the holy God. Christ as advocate asks for forgiveness for us, reminding God that He has already died for those sins. In this work He is "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). This should be an incentive to a Christian to live a holy life.

In His work as *Intercessor*, Christ is concerned with the weakness and helplessness of believers who face the "fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16). He tenderly prays for those who belong to Him (Hebrews 7:25). The pattern of His intercession is given in John 17, which gives a glimpse of God the Son praying to God the Father about believers. This is the *real* Lord's Prayer. This intercession by the Lord Jesus continues for the believer as long as he is on earth.

This work of Christ as Advocate and Intercessor is for the believer's eternal security (Romans 8:38-39).

CHRIST'S PRESENT WORK ON EARTH

Christ's actual bodily presence is in heaven, where He is seated at God's right hand. But since He is omnipresent, He is also personally present in the world and lives, in a special sense, in those who believe in Him (John 14:23; Galatians 2:20). In His present ministry, Christ is building the church (Matthew 16:16-18). This is seen repeatedly in the book of Acts from the day of Pentecost on (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:32-33; 11:1). The epistles teach that the church is the body of Christ and that He is its living head (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 2:19-22). Since He is its life, it is He who directs its activity, and each member must submit to His authority (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). In His capacity as head of the church, He nourishes and cherishes (Ephesians 5:29) and strengthens believers (Philippians 4:13).

His presence within the body of believers gives them ability to overcome temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13), human limitations (Philippians 4:13), and the power of Satan and evil spirits (1 John 4:4). Christ's abiding presence is the believer's hope for future blessings (Romans 8:20-23; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 3:2).

Christ's ministry also includes the giving of spiritual gifts. He did not leave His work to be carried on haphazardly but continually gives His followers special abilities (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:7-16). Some scripture passages speak of Christ's activity and others of the Holy Spirit's work in bestowing gifts on believers. It is not wise to make too strong a distinction in this, for each Person of the Godhead is associated with the other Persons. They are distinct persons but are never completely separate.

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This ministry of Christ on earth for the believer will continue until the day that He presents him "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

A Further Word

Forty days after the resurrection He led His disciple to the Mount of Olives, and while His hands were raised in blessing upon them, He was taken from them and received up into heaven. And the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says He is there to appear before the face of God for us.

In the light of that, let us read Colossians 3:1-2.

Col 3:1-2

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

(KJV)

We should be heavenly minded people. That does not mean we are dreamers. That in no way teaches that with idle hands and complacent hearts we should sit and rock our way through the world. It means that down here we should live with eternity's values in view.

Notes

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Find Out for Yourself

Name _____

1. On the basis of what has been presented in earlier lessons, why was the ascension of Christ necessary?
2. How does Acts 1:11 refute the false teaching that Christ's return will be only as an influence?
3. In what way is Christ's present work in heaven and on earth different from His finished work?
4. What is the difference between Christ's work as Advocate and as Intercessor?
 - a.
 - b.
5. Which work does 1 John 2:1 refer to?
6. Which work does Hebrews 7:25 refer to?
7. Read Revelation 12:10.
 - a. Who is the accuser?
 - b. Whom does he accuse?
 - c. How active is he in his accusations?
8. Read Philippians 2:9-11.
 - a. What words show Christ's deity?
 - b. His present position?
 - c. His future reign?
9. Read Colossians 1:18.
 - a. What reference is made to His resurrection?
 - b. What inference can you draw from the use of the word *firstborn*?

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10. Read 1 Peter 2:9.
- a. What does this verse give as a motive for holy living?
11. Read 1 Timothy 3:16. List the eight facts about Christ the verse *refers* to.
- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. |

Check Your Memory

- Jesus returned to heaven _____ days after the resurrection.
- When Christ died on the cross. He finished His work of _____.
- _____ contains the *real* Lord's Prayer.
- Three words which describe Christ's ascension are:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Jesus' position in heaven is at _____.
- In heaven Christ's ministry is as _____ and _____.
- Christ was seen in His glorified body by _____ in Acts 7, by _____, in _____, and by John in _____.
- Christ is present on earth in every _____.



Scripture Memorization
(write on the back page three times)

John 14:1-3

- Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*
 - In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*
 - And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*
- (KJV)