

THE ASCENSION

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In my forty years with the brethren I have noticed that there are some subjects which they rarely deal with.

I have never heard ministry on the Virgin Mary. Maybe this is because it is deemed a Roman Catholic province and there are many Catholics who worship the Virgin Mary in the doctrine of Maryology.

Seldom has the subject of the Cross been ministered upon and yet Paul often couples the preaching of the Gospel with the Cross. Is this reluctance of brethren due to the fact that the Cross is the symbol of the Anglican church and, if you put a figure on it, it becomes a crucifix the symbol of the Catholic church?

Neither have I heard ministry on the ascension of Christ and yet it is a vital teaching.

When we gather on a Sunday morning to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread we do this one more time, and one less time, until He come. The Second Coming is a feature of the breaking of bread service.

In Acts 1, the disciples saw the Lord ascend into heaven and two angels spoke to them, "Why stand ye gazing into Heaven? This same Jesus who you have seen ascend into heaven shall so come again in like matter as ye have seen Him go."

It must be noted that the Second Coming would be of the same Jesus, not an envoy or agent but the Lord Himself.

The disciples who witnessed the ascension believed that the Second Coming would be in their lifetimes and this is why the writing of the Gospels were delayed.

Several questions have been asked. Why did the Lord not stay longer here after the resurrection? Why did He not go to Pilate, Herod and the High Priests and prove that He was risen from the dead?

Why did He not assemble large crowds and preach to them proving His victory over death?

Why did he return to Heaven so soon?

The first reason was that He had finished the work the Father gave Him to do. The voice from the Cross said, "It is finished." He did not say, "I am finished." The word finished here means completed or successfully achieved.

The Lord Jesus went to the Cross willingly. He said to the Father, "Not my will but Thine be done." He was not forced to do this, nor was He coerced to do this.

In the days before the silly worship songs of today, we used to sing:

He did it for me, He did it for me,
A sinner as guilty as ever could be
Oh, how I love Him
Now that I see
He suffered; He died
And He did it for me.

Our salvation is made more meaningful when we realise this.

He loved me and gave Himself for me.

The second reason is that a royal welcome awaited the Lord Jesus in Heaven and, while we must not speculate, what a welcome He must have received. He was obedient even unto the death on the Cross.

There is a ridiculous modern worship song that says and repeats endlessly

We want to lift Jesus higher, higher, higher, higher, higher etc.

But the accurate old hymn rightly says

The highest place that Heaven affords,
Is His by sovereign right.

The third reason was so that the disciples could continue the work and stand on their own feet.

Some Pentecostal and charismatics take the Lord's words 'Greater works than these shall ye do' to indicate that their works are greater than the works of the Lord. That is offensive. The word greater means more and not more impressive works.

The disciples now preached. In Acts 3, about 3000 Jews were converted and repented of killing the Lord Jesus and the Gospel was spread far and wide. Disciples became missionaries and travelled extensively.

But, as in the breaking of bread, we must remember what the Lord said, "And if I go, I will come again!".

Some of the Lord's people are becoming weary with waiting for the Lord to come. Dr F A Tatford wrote a book on this subject entitled Lord, How Much Longer.

As long as He tarries and the Gospel is preached, more may be saved and in that group may we beg the Lord to save those we love.

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