

THE TWO ASCENSIONS OF CHRIST?

David C F Wright DD

Most of us accept that the ascension of Christ is as set out in Acts 1.9 and I am not asking you to doubt that.

“And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight”.

The disciples witnessed this, the bodily ascension of the Risen Christ into Heaven.

In Luke 23 from verse 39 we read that one of the malefactors who was crucified with Christ was converted and in verse 42 says, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom”, Jesus replied, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise”.

In verse 46 just before He died, the Lord said, “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit”.

For this we judge that when the Lord died He was in His Spirit in Paradise when His Body was being taken down from the Cross and placed in the garden tomb.

The psalmist says in Psalm 16. 19, “For Thou will not leave My Soul in Hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption”.

The word hell here is really the word Sheol which means the grave or the state after death. Sheol is in two parts namely Paradise or Abraham’s bosom and there is a great chasm between this side and the second side known as Hades or Hell where the departed who are not Christians are.

And so between the death of Christ and His resurrection, the Lord was not in hell and did not see corruption. He was in Paradise often referred to as the place of the blessed. His Spirit ascended into Paradise and this has been called by some to be the first ascension.

The second ascension is that in Acts 1, to which we have referred. This was in His earthly body which, as Thomas discovered, still showed the wounds inflicted upon Him. In Heaven, the Lord was to receive His glorified Body.

But there is another problem.

At the resurrection, Mary Magdalene found the tomb empty and asked, whom she thought was the gardener, “Where have you put Him?”. At the sound of His voice, He told her, “Touch Me not for I am not ascended to My Father”.

This refers to the soon-coming bodily resurrection. (John 20.10).

In John 20. 27, the Lord tells doubting Thomas to touch Him and to thrust his hand into His side thus proving to Thomas that He was the Christ, risen from the dead.

Mary was not to touch Him but Thomas was.

It has been said that Mary was emotional and wanted to embrace the Lord so that He would never leave her again. She wanted Him to stay on the earth and the thought of losing Him again would be too great for her to contemplate or bear.

Thomas had a need. His was not an emotional need but a matter of fact, of belief and intelligence. He had to grip the Lord and investigate His body to prove that this was the Lord risen from the dead.

Mary believed. Thomas doubted and was invited by the Lord to touch Him and have the evidence.

We all have different needs in the Christian Life and I believe the Lord supplies your need which may not be the same need as another.

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