

## The NT Evidence for Jesus' Ascension

### Prophesied in the Hebrew Bible

#### Psalm 110

Here is the LORD's proclamation to my lord:

"Sit down at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool!"

<sup>2</sup> The LORD extends your dominion from Zion.

Rule in the midst of your enemies!

<sup>3</sup> Your people willingly follow you when you go into battle.

On the holy hills at sunrise the dew of your youth belongs to you.

<sup>4</sup> The LORD makes this promise on oath and will not revoke it:

"You are an eternal priest after the pattern of Melchizedek."

### Jesus' Predictions of His Ascension

- (1) "No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven - the Son of Man." (John 3:13)
- (2) "Then what if you see the Son of Man ascending where he was before?" (John 6:62)
- (3) "Then Jesus said, 'I will be with you for only a little while longer, and then I am going to the one who sent me. <sup>34</sup> You will look for me but will not find me, and where I am you cannot come.'" (John 7:33-34)
- (4) "Then Jesus said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will look for me but will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come'" (John 8:21)
- (5) "Because Jesus knew that the Father had handed all things over to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God," (John 13:3)
- (6) "There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you." (John 14:2)
- (7) "You heard me say to you, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28)
- (8) "Instead your hearts are filled with sadness because I have said these things to you. <sup>7</sup> But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment - <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned." (John 16:7-10)
- (9) "Jesus replied, 'Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'" (John 20:17)

### Jesus Predicts Separation from Disciples Physically

- (1) "But those days are coming, and when the bridegroom is taken from them, at that time they will fast." (Luke 5:35)
- (2) "Then Jesus said, 'I will be with you for only a little while longer, and then I am going to the one who sent me.'" (John 7:33)
- (3) "For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me!" (John 12:8)
- (4) "Because Jesus knew that the Father had handed all things over to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God," (John 13:3)
- (5) "I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me," (John 14:30)
- (6) "concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer;" (John 16:10)
- (7) "You have not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now but you believe in him, and so you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy," (1 Pet 1:8)

- (8) "Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is." (1 John 3:2)

### **Jesus' testimony before the Sanhedrin Sitting/Seated at the Right Hand of the Power of God:**

- (1) "Jesus said to him, 'You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man *sitting at the right hand* of the Power and *coming on the clouds of heaven*.'" (Matt 26:64)
- (2) "I am," said Jesus, "and you will see *the Son of Man sitting at the right hand* of the Power and *coming with the clouds of heaven*." (Mark 14:62)
- (3) "But from now on *the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand* of the power of God." (Luke 22:69)

### **Luke Alludes to the Future Ascension of Jesus**

- (1) "Now when the days drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus set out resolutely to go to Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51)

### **The Ascension Event (Thursday, May 14, 33CE at Bethany on the Mount of Olives)**

- (1) "Now during the blessing he departed and was taken up into heaven." (Luke 24:51)
- (2) "until the day he was taken up to heaven" (Acts 1:2)
- (3) "After he had said this, while they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight." (Acts 1:9)

### **Terms**

- (1) ἀναφέρω (Luke 24:51): *take, lead, bring up, "he was led up"*; to cause to move from a lower position to a higher position
- (2) ἀναλαμβάνω (Acts 1:2, 11): *take away, "was taken up"*; to lift up and carry away
- (3) ἐπαίρω (Acts 1:9): *lift up, "he was lifted up"*; to cause to move upward
- (4) possibly ἀνάληψις (Luke 9:51): *ascension, assumption, taken up, received up, assumption of an office, "to be taken up," "to be received up"*

### **Definition:**

The act by which Jesus finished his postresurrection appearances to his disciples and his physical presence departed spatially to heaven, and is enthroned at the Father's right hand, to remain there until the day of his return.

### **References to the Ascension After the Ascension**

#### **Peter**

- (1) "beginning from his baptism by John until the day he was taken up from us - one of these must become a witness of his resurrection together with us." (Acts 1:22)
- (2) "So then, exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out what you both see and hear. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says, '*The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand <sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.*''" (Acts 2:33-35)
- (3) "This one heaven must receive until the time all things are restored, which God declared from times long ago through his holy prophets." (Acts 3:21)
- (4) "God exalted him to his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these events, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." (Acts 5:31-32)
- (5) "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who went into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels and authorities and powers subject to him." (1 Pet 3:22)

## Stephen

- (1) "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> 'Look!' he said. 'I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'" (Acts 7:55-56)

## Paul

### Direct Reference:

- (1) "Therefore it says, *"When he ascended on high he captured captives; he gave gifts to men."* <sup>9</sup> Now what is the meaning of *"he ascended,"* except that he also descended to the lower regions, namely, the earth? <sup>10</sup> He, the very one who descended, is also the one who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things." (Eph 4:8-10)
- (2) "And we all agree, our religion contains amazing revelation: He was revealed in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." (1 Tim 3:16)

### Alludes to Ascension:

- (1) "This power he exercised in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms <sup>21</sup> far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And God *put all things under Christ's feet*, and he gave him to the church as head over all things." (Eph 1:20-22)
- (2) "made us alive together with Christ - by grace you are saved! - <sup>6</sup> and he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus," (Eph 2:6)
- (3) "As a result God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow - in heaven and on earth and under the earth - <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2:9-11)

### Indirect Reference by Virtue of Reference to His Present Location:

- (1) "Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us." (Rom 8:34)
- (2) "Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." (Col 3:1)

## Author of Hebrews

### Direct Reference:

- (1) "Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession." (Heb 4:14)
- (2) "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became *a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.*" (Heb 6:20)
- (3) "For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands - the representation of the true sanctuary - but into heaven itself, and he appears now in God's presence for us." (Heb 9:24)

### Indirect References that Presupposes the Ascension of Jesus

- (1) "The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word, and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, *he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" (Heb 1:3)
- (2) "But to which of the angels has he ever said, *"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?*" (Heb 1:13)
- (3) "but we see Jesus, who was made *lower than the angels for a little while*, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by God's grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone." (Heb 2:9)

- (4) "Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, one who *sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven*," (Heb 8:1)
- (5) "But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, *he sat down at the right hand of God*," (Heb 10:12)
- (6) "keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and *has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God*." (Heb 12:2)

**Conclusion:** The ascension of Jesus is a literal, historical, postresurrection event. It was not a nonliteral, nonhistorical, preresurrection event. Jesus died, was buried, bodily rose from the dead the third day, and ascended into heaven 40 days later. The eyewitnesses and early church regarded Jesus' ascension to heaven at the Father's right hand as a historical fact and a part of Jesus' exaltation.

"With respect to Christ himself, the Scriptures virtually exhaust available "triumphalist" language, images, and metaphors, to describe the significance of Christ's ascension for him. As his resurrection was the means to his ascension, and so a significant aspect of his total exaltation, so his ascension in turn was the means to his climactic exaltation and enthronement (*sessio*) at the Father's right hand as Holy One, Lord, Christ, Prince, and Savior of the world (Acts 2:27. 33 36: 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3). If his ascension was "in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16), exalting him thereby "higher than all the heavens" (Eph. 4:10; Heb. 7:26), he is also now "crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9), "with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him" (1 Pet. 3:22), with "everything under his feet," the Father alone excepted (1 Cor. 15:26; Eph. 1:22a), sitting "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (Eph. 1:21). God has also "given" him to be "head-over-everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph. 1:22-23), indeed, who fills "the whole universe" (τὰ πάντα, *ta panta*) with his power and lordship (Eph. 4:10). In sum, he now occupies the "highest place" (Phil, 2:9) of glory and honor (Heb. 2:9) which heaven can afford, and to him belongs *de jure* and *de facto* the titles "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:12) and Lord above all other lords (Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:9b; Rev. 19:16), "that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10-11a). The nature of his lordship entitles him sovereignly to bestow gifts of every and of whatever kind upon men as he pleases (Eph. 4:7-8, 11)." - Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p579

### Why is the Ascension Important?

- (1) The ascension insures the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus was not a temporary resuscitation, return to normal life on earth.
- (2) The ascension confirms the current location of Jesus' full humanity.
- (3) The ascension affirms the presence of the first resurrected man in heaven. As the Scottish thinker, "Rabbi" Duncan said, "The dust of the earth is on the throne of the majesty on him."
- (4) The ascension indicates Jesus is fulfilling prophetic expectations regarding the King of Israel (Psa 110)
- (5) The ascension establishes the credibility and further authenticated the claims and teaching of all Jesus said (see predictions above).
- (6) The ascension is a source of comfort to the church to know Jesus is in heaven with the Father.
- (7) The ascension makes possible the promise and gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (May 24, 33CE; John 16:7).
- (8) The ascension commissions believers for world evangelism (Acts 1:8)
- (9) The ascension looks forward to the mode of Jesus' return ("clouds" imagery Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess 4:16-17)
- (10) The ascension looks forward to the location of Jesus' return ("Mount of Olives" Zech 14)
- (11) The ascension proclaims Jesus' triumph over fallen angels (Col 2:15)

**The ascension is not the loss of Jesus  
It's the increased presence of Jesus!**