

We thank You that through our Lord Jesus Christ, our wonderful Messiah, our Redeemer, our Lord, we have everlasting life. Thank You that we presently have a great High Priest in the heavens, who daily prays for us. I pray that that present ministry of our Lord, will hit us with a great impact and encouragement today.

We thank You in the precious name of our Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Let us begin with the ascension. Open your Bibles to Acts 1. We want to deal, very simply, with our discussion on the ascension and present ministry of Christ with just three major things: (1) the place where He ascended into heaven, which we will just look at briefly (it establishes the historicity of our Lord); (2) we want to spend some time with the position that He now has in heaven, and how Christians are a little fuzzy on this; (3) we will look at the purpose of His ascension and present ministry, which is a wonderful section.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; [They might be angles. They might be Moses and Elijah.] Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus,

which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The Greek word for “gazing” is where we get our English word “theater.” It is talking about a prolonged looking. It was not a quick glance. The text seems to suggest that His ascension was slow and not rapid. It occurred in a dramatic form. They were constantly watching as that cloud received Him from their sight.

You can imagine what they felt. What if you were there? He was the One you had loved and served, and died on the cross and rose again, the One that the women grabbed and said, “We’re not letting you go this time.” He said, “No, I need to ascend to My Father. Stop clinging to Me.” They had Him for forty days and now, there He goes. They did not have a Bible like you have with a New Testament to read. Neither did they carry around their private copy of the Tenach (the Old Testament). What would you have thought?

Then they were told that “this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.” I would like to suggest that that is referring not to the Rapture, but to His revelation at the end of the Tribulation, when “every eye shall see Him.” At the Rapture we meet Him in the air and the world does not see it.

Peter’s message in Acts 2, brings this up. It was only ten days after the ascension.

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath

shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:32-36)

Turn to Romans 8. Romans is the Magna Carta of Christianity, and in it, Paul said the following:

Who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. (Romans 8:34)

There is an issue of triumph and victory. He died and rose again, and now He is both at the right hand of God (a place of acceptance and approval by God) as well as in a ministry on our behalf. We will say more about that in a moment, but that is your first indication of what He is currently doing up there. He is making intercession for us!

Intercession is one of the words for prayer. For instance, in 1 Timothy 2:1, we have a list of the kinds of things we do in prayer: supplications, prayers, giving of thanks and intercessions. The Greek word means “to fall into,” but it is not talking about falling down. If you think about it, when we say, “You have fallen in love,” we do not mean that you tripped and fell, but that you have fallen in love with this person. It is like the word for intercession. You are falling into somebody. Is it not interesting that our Lord would describe it like that? He would not just say that He is praying for us, or that He is asking God to do something for us, but He would say that

He is giving intercessions for us. This designates a close and intimate caring of everything that goes on in your life, and I think that it is beautiful.

In Ephesians 1, Paul gives some more information about this ascension into heaven.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward
who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,
and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far
above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and
every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that
which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and
gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is
his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Ephesians
1:19-23)

He presumably fills all the believers, in every situation of life. It is the preeminence of our Lord in our lives. This is also a beautiful text.

In Ephesians 4, he gives a very stunning analysis of the matter of why He has given gifted men to the church to equip us for ministry.

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led
captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he
ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the

lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)
(Ephesians 4:8-10)

He first quotes from Psalm 68. The Greek word for gifts is *doma*, not *charisma*. He is not talking about charismatic gifts there. Charismatic gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. *Doma* or *domatic* gifts are referring to people who have been given by Christ since He has gone. Now that He ascended, “what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” Some say that refers to the difference between the cross and the Resurrection. They say that this refers to Christ going down to *sheol* (or *hades*) to proclaim a gospel of judgment (i.e., the reality of what they had rejected would be facing them). He is preaching to the pre-flood generations that are the spirits in prison, mentioned in 1 Peter 3:19. “Took captivity captive” would be the Old Testament saints who are to be taken to heaven. There does appear to be a change in the location of paradise. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with Me in paradise.” Jews always thought of the believer as going to paradise, *sheol*, the grave, which had two compartments (one for the wicked, and one for the righteous), with a great gulf fixed between the two. Jesus verified that this is the truth when He told the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. It was commonly held among the Jews, and taught by former rabbis.

“He took captivity captive” could refer to the Old Testament saints being taken to heaven. That is a view, which I prefer, but in all fairness, there are many Bible teachers that say, “No, this is talking about His humiliation, as Christ left heaven’s glory and came to earth. Therefore, the earth is the lower parts, meaning that He descended and He ascended far above all the heavens.”

Though I prefer the first view, it is more complicated.

In Philippians 2, we have an additional remark by Paul. He apparently loved to speak about the ascension and present ministry of Christ. That might be good instruction for all of us to spend a little bit more time with it. In Philippians 2:9, after telling us about the person of Christ (that He is both God and man, and had gone to the cross), Paul said, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.” Now there is a play on words here. The word “exalted” means “to lift up.” This same word appears in John 3:14, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” Now Paul just got through saying that Christ became obedient unto death in Philippians 2:9, “Even the death of a cross.” “Wherefore God has highly lifted Him up,” is a play on the idea that when anyone has put on the cross, they are lifted up on the cross. Then it is jammed into the ground. God said, “Well, *you* may think that as being disgraceful and shameful and awful, but I see it as glory.”

God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus
Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the
world (Galatians 6:14).

So “God highly exalted Him” is a play on the ascension, referring to the cross. If He were still on the cross, or dead, or still in the tomb, there is no Christianity. “He gave Him a name which is above every name.” Now we learn that the purpose of the ascension and the exaltation of Christ, is to cause us to fall at His feet—not to sit at the cross and have pity on a dead savior. He rose from the dead! He has been exalted by our God! “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth.”

I remember there was an old man many years ago back in Ohio, when I was pastoring there. Every time I would say, “Jesus,” he would get out of his seat and get on his knees. I could not

figure out for the life of me what he was doing. One time I asked him what he was doing, and he said, “Well it says at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” That is what this man wanted to do. We might smile at that, but I think he might have had something that maybe we need to think about. The Lord was exalted at the right hand of God that every one of us would bow the knee and proclaim Him as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Sometimes we read verses without understanding the context. The context is that He is exalted. Now that He is ascended, what is the proper response of the believer? It is worship! This means, bowing in His presence, and confessing that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Amen. Do not miss this.

In Colossians 3:1, it is as if Paul cannot stop referring to this truth. Maybe some have said it is because he had an encounter with the exalted Christ on the road to Damascus.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are
above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
(Colossians 3:1)

In the Greek grammar, it basically says, “If and it is so.” We would use the word, “since” in English. Apparently, Paul wants us to keep thinking about where He is.

One lady told me that Jesus had come to visit her in her room last night. He sat on her bed and talked to her. I listened to her and she said, “What do you think of that?” I said, “I think you might have had chili to eat. You might be on medication. Had a bad dream, but Jesus did not come to your room. My blessed Lord will not be coming that way. He is at the right hand of the

throne of God, exalted above every name, and He wants you to worship and bow in His presence.” We say a lot of silly things sometimes.

“Set your affection on things above”—I like that. I know many of you have the word “mind” there, but there is something about the word “affection” out of the old King James vocabulary that to me, still tells it better than just, “Set your mind there.” The mind is very much what your heart is. I think we are confused on that one also, because we know the pumping organ is located about eighteen inches from where your brain is, and so we have the idea that these are separated. They are not. The heart thinks, it reasons, it perceives and it knows. I think, because of modern communicate we talk about, “Oh I love you with all my heart,” which means that you can just check your brains off and just feel something. That is not biblical. Sometimes people say, “You’ve just got a head knowledge. You don’t have a heart knowledge.” I know what you mean. What you mean is that they may not have applied the facts that they have learned, but do not ever come to believe that Christianity is not based on head knowledge. Thank God, it is one of the only religions in the world that does not ask you to set aside your brain in order to believe it. God wants you to understand it, search it, examine it, and study it. He wants you to be like the Berean Christians and search and examine the word to see if this is so. Christians are dedicated to proving with evidence what the facts are of Christianity. We do not take this lightly.

There are so many people in a crusade that share this testimony, “I asked Jesus to come into my heart but nothing happened.” What Jesus did you ask? What did you believe about Him? Sometimes they are at a loss to tell you. They do not know what they are believing about Him. There are a lot of guys down in Mexico named that. Why do you not believe in them? What is this? We have corrupted what the Bible actually says, and we have made it something less than what it is. We have no reason to fear or hesitate anybody’s examination of Christianity.

It is interesting that God would say, “Set your affection,” because the mind is what creates the affection. The mind is what controls the emotions, and God has taught that. When He expressed that you are to be renewed, He never said, “Be renewed in your emotional feelings.” He said, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Your mind is controlling your emotions. That is why it is very important what goes into our mind as well as what comes out of it. It is like a computer, and a lot of us have got a virus in there. It needs to be cleaned out. You do not need Norton’s Antivirus program, but you do need the Lord Jesus and His blood.

We need to understand that when you set your mind on Him who is exalted at the right hand of God, you are setting your affection on Him. It means that you are concentrating and focusing on Him. He is your Lord. He is your master. He is your life. He is your all in all. Do not walk through a day ignoring Him. He is the Lord. He is the king. He is the master. At the same time He is also a shepherd, and a friend. He cares about you and wants you to talk to Him. Do not ignore Him. He is highly exalted, and every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The Book of Hebrews speaks about the present ministry of our Lord, perhaps in a more-detailed way than other books in the New Testament. It was written to Jewish people who understood the concept of the priesthood. Read these three verses with me:

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of
his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power,
when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right
hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3)

Paul is introducing what is going to be a tremendous discussion.

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that
come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make
intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

One last verse:

But this man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever,
sat down on the right hand of God. (Hebrews 10:12)

We will tell you what that means after the break.

[[This editorial break represents a fifteen-minute intermission.]]

The place where he ascended into heaven was the Mount of Olives. There is a little church marking the place, but I do not know for sure where it was. It was a Sabbath day's journey, therefore it was very close. If you have been to Jerusalem you know that the Mount of Olives is very close. Some people have argued that because Zechariah 14:4 says that His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, that it is connected with this statement in Acts 1:12. He ascended from the mountain and He will come back on that very mountain. Actually it does not say that. All it says is that His feet will be there. We are going to learn about this when we talk about the Second

Coming in the next couple of weeks, but He does not come back to the Mount of Olives first. He will get up there, but that is not where He comes first. You will find out about that in the next two weeks. Not now.

The two main subjects that we want to deal with (which sometimes present some problems to believers), is the position that He now has in heaven as well as the purpose behind the ascension and present ministry of Christ. I do not think, as I said earlier, it is being dealt with as it should be. It is a very important doctrine in the Bible. Why is it not important to us? I do not know. It used to be found in a lot more sermons and messages than there are now, but I have given you a list of the passages that deal with His position that He now has in heaven.

The problem comes up among evangelical-fundamental believers who believe that He is God. Now, He is God, and as God, He is omnipresent. If I say, “I ask Jesus to come into my heart,” there is nothing wrong with that because in John 14, Jesus said, “That when I leave I am going to send you a Comforter and He will come to you.” Then He also says, “We will come to you and make our abode.” He even says that the Father and He will make their abode in us. I guess that we should start saying to people, “Will you ask the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus to come into your life right now?” but that would really confuse some.

First of all, Jesus spoke about being outside the door of the church of Laodicea, saying, “If any man will open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him [like have a meal together, fellowship] and he with Me.” Our Lord taught that His presence can be made real in our life even though He ascended into heaven. He is omnipresent. The question is, “Is the physical body of Christ omnipresent?” The answer is, “No, it is not.” That is what most false doctrines and cults tell you. Therefore to them, He winds up being a sort of an apparition, or an appearance. If He did

it then, He could probably do it now. It does not violate the fact that He is up in heaven, in their view. Well, it violates it in my view.

The physical presence of Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven. It will not be back here until His Second Coming. The whole point of leaving us gifted leaders (the point of His being gone, “I am going away, but I will not leave you comfortless. I will send the Holy Spirit”) is that He is not here in His physical presence. Those that try to get you to believe the other view (like the lady who had the vision of the Lord showing up in her bedroom) is nonsense. Do you know there are many religious groups who believe that? They believe it very powerfully.

The Jehovah Witnesses got so twisted in this that they believe that Christ did not have a physical body when He rose from the dead. They say it is an appearance of Jesus.

One time, when a Jehovah Witness leader and his trainee came by my house to talk about their beliefs, we got into an argument over the Resurrection. I said, “Give me your Watchtower Bible.” He gave me his Watchtower Bible. I turned to Luke 24, and said, “I do not know about you guys, but I have trouble with a spirit eating food. It says so right here in your Bible.” “Oh, that’s only for our benefit.” “No, it says He ate. Oh by the way, He said, ‘A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see Me have.’” Well, He just did that for their benefit? No, He did not. The trainee, I can still remember him, turned to him and said, you never told me all of this. That leader could not wait to get the trainee out of our house; he was about to lose his own trainee.

Please do not get confused about the omnipresent attribute of Christ. When we spoke about the Resurrection, we came right up to a final point in dealing with the evidences. Remember that the last point was assurance in a believer’s heart. I do not count this as very strong evidence, though

it is to every believer, but I also think that we do not tell it right. I am going to try and explain that now, because it fits with what we are saying about His ascension and whether or not He pays any personal visits here, or if there are any appearances of His physical presence to us.

I might say to you, “I know He lives. He lives within my heart.” There is a song, “Since Jesus Came into My Heart.” This song, by the way, was a bar room tune that Ira Sanky heard as they were walking by a bar in one city. He heard this tune, and liked it so much that he told Moody that he was going to put Christian words to it. Moody was scared to death, “What are we going to tell people?” The first time he sang it, people just loved it until they found out it was a secular song, then they about crucified him. It became a popular song to Christians.

Could you not say that Buddha lives, because he lives within my heart? The Mormons say that they have this burning in their heart. Do you understand that it is not strong evidence? Plus the fact that I do not believe that it is correct. When we interpret the heart as feeling, emotions alone, we are not saying it correct either. If I said to you, “You know I really believe in Jesus with all my head.” You would say, “Oh head knowledge, huh?” Do you understand what I am saying to you? We get this vocabulary going, but we do not explain it to people. Can you imagine if you are not a Christian listening to all of this? “What in the world are you saying? You’ve got to have some sort of emotional deal with Jesus and then you’re in the in-group. What?” Let us start thinking. What we believe about Him is very important.

Even the matter of assurance in my heart, that He is resurrected and that He now lives, is very difficult evidence with which to deal. This is what I think you should believe with regard to this.

This is he that came by water and blood, [even] Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. (1 John 5:6)

Now we have a debatable passage. Some of your have Bibles say that most ancient authorities do not agree with KJV here.

There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost and these three are one. (1 John 5:7)

The Jehovah Witnesses will jump on this and say it is not in the best manuscripts. Obviously, they want to believe that, because this would be a powerful verse against them.

There are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit and the water and the blood. And these three agree in one. (1 John 5:8)

You read the commentators and it is unbelievable. They have got water as baptism and the blood as the cross. How does that fit in with the spirit and the water and the blood? They get all confused. I suggest you do not read them, just read the Bible.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. (1 John 5:9)

Nine out of ten doctors say this is good for you, and so, we receive the witness of men without even knowing the validity of the product. In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established. Do we receive the witness of men? Of course, we do. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. We would agree. He is God; He does not lie. “For this is the witness of God which He testified of His Son.” Many people read that verse and forget what it is talking about. What testimony about His Son did the Spirit bear witness? Look back at verse 6 which indicates that He came by water and blood.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself:
he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he
believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (1 John 5:10)

I’m going to explain the assurance in your heart to you. “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record” The words “witness,” “testimony,” and “record” are all the same in Greek. “He believeth not the record (or witness) that God gave of His Son.”

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and
this life is in his Son. (1 John 5:11)

Apparently you have to believe that He came by water and blood in order to have this.

He that hath the Son hath life; [and] he that hath not the Son of
God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that
believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye

have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:12-13)

What is the issue here? The issue is what does it mean when Jesus came by water and blood? Whatever it is, the Spirit bore witness to it and it is the Spirit that is true, because God's witness is greater than that of men. What is he talking about? The apostle John wrote 1 John as well as the Gospel of John. Turn to John 19 to see how the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit.

Have you ever had anybody come up to you and say, "My spirit just bears witness that there is something wrong in your life." The Bible tells you not to do that, and condemns it. "God has revealed to me that there is a spirit of oppression on you." "Really?" The Bible tells you not to do that. You are to judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes and then He will bring to light all the hidden motives and secrets of the heart. As a matter of fact, it is so bad, that you yourself do not even know your own motives. How could somebody else know? That is why we are not supposed to be judging outward appearance and acting like we know another's motives.

It is like a guy who sat in the front row of my church in Long Beach for years. People say that he is the meanest and ugliest man that they ever saw, but he was not. He was sweet and kind. He had surgery on his jaw that made his mouth tight up and looked mean and angry, but he was not really like that. He loved the Lord with all his heart, and was a sweet brother, but everybody judged him by his outward appearance.

"Hey, man, you don't look like you feel good."

"I feel fine."

“Well, you know, it shows on the countenance. I can tell.”

“No you can’t. I didn’t sleep well last night. I’m not sick, okay. I’m happy in the Lord. Now get lost!”

We are making these judgments all the time, are we not? Sure we are. “Oh look at his smile. He must really be a Christian.”

“No, he’s a Buddhist, actually. He just smiles a lot, you know.”

You have been in churches where they say, “I tell you, if you really love the Lord let’s all show it.” By smiling? What if I have a broken heart and I just lost my dog or something? Why do I have to smile? Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We say the dumbest things when we do not follow the Bible; we just make it all up.

In John 19, you find the real answer that you are looking for and how the Spirit bears witness with your spirit. Paul wrote in Romans 8:16-17 that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit and we are the children of God. Apparently this is the only way to know that you are really a Christian. We are really checking into you right now.

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and
forthwith came there out blood and water. (John 19:32-34).

Who wrote this Gospel? John. Who wrote 1 John? John. Do you think that there might be a connection? Watch what he says.

And he that saw [it] bare record, and his record is true: and he
knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things
were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him
shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall
look on him whom they pierced. (John 19:35-37)

What is the argument here? Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture and you cannot be saved without it. What is the evidence that He really died on that cross? Out came blood and water. In many of the commentaries they will explain the medical issue of the separation of the blood and He died of a broken heart, *etc.* I am not interested in that right now. I am taking the Bible just like it said, “out of Him came blood and water.” This is proof that He was dead. That is why they did not break His legs, which was also a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The reason that the soldier pierced his side, though he did not know it, was a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. “They will look on Him whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10).

Why was He wounded and pierced? Why did He have stripes? The Bible says, “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities.” “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” and “with His stripes we are healed.” This is pretty powerful! We are dealing with a very central issue of the gospel.

How do I know it really happened? Because it is in the Bible. How does the Spirit bear witness that you know you are a Christian? It is very simple, if you followed this folks, you understand how assurance happens. If you are truly a believer and you have been born again, when you read the Bible about something like the death of Christ, the Spirit bears witness with your spirit that that is the truth. If you are not born again, you say, “Ah, I don’t believe that.” Do you understand that the way the Spirit bears witness with our spirit is not by some spiritual osmosis or waves running through the air in a good church meeting? The Spirit bears witness with your spirit as you study God’s Word. When you read what the Bible says about our Lord Jesus, your heart says, “That’s true.” No man can say that except by the Holy Spirit, as Paul wrote, because there are a lot of people in this world that do not believe one ounce of it.

Last week, I spoke at *Adat Hamasheach*, a Messianic Jewish fellowship in Irvine, and we had a lot of guests there. I had invited a lot of people and so did a lot of other people. I spoke on who is a Jew. Afterwards a man, who is a Gentile married to a Jewish woman bringing her there (forcing her, I think), and trying to make out like she is a believer, said to me, “Hey, I want you to talk to her. She’s already a believer. Please, just....”

I said, “Hey, you be quiet. I’ll find out.” So I turned to her and said, “Do you believe that *Yeshuah* is the promised Messiah of Israel?”

She said, “I really don’t know.”

I said, “Do you believe that He is God in human flesh?”

“No.”

“Do you believe He died on the cross for your sins—your sins?”

“I can’t say that.”

“Do you believe He rose again from the dead in a body?”

“Nobody does that.”

I turned to him and said, “Your wife is not a Christian, but she seems like a lovely lady. If I were you I would get a little more honest about this.”

She right away says, “Oh and one other thing,” as she talks to him after hearing what I said because I defended her, “One other thing. If you really want to help me, then I want to go listen to this guy. Now, whatever he teaches, that’s where I want to go, and I don’t want you telling me what to believe. I’ll think about it myself.”

So I invited her to come tonight, and I expected to see her tonight. Then I got to thinking, “You know, what I am on tonight are the laws of purity on leprosy,” and she is going to think that I am a wacko. Then I got to thinking, “Wait a minute, King David used leprosy to refer to his own sin, when he said, ‘purge me with hyssop and I will be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.’” The hyssop plant is what was used in the ceremonial cleansing of the leper as you scrub the sore to see if it spread. David said to God, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.” So I think that we can get the gospel in there tonight as well.

Do you understand what I am saying to you? If you want to know the validity of something and you are a true believer, all you have to do is read it. You know there is stuff that I read that I do not even understand, but I believe it. Have you had that experience? You read it and you say, “Boy that is really amazing. It’s God’s Word though. I believe it but, wow. I’ve got a few questions, but I believe it.” Amen.

We are not talking about mind-over-matter, or trying to convince yourself of something when you do not honestly know what it says. I am telling you that if you are already truly born-again, when you read the Bible the Holy Spirit has promised to bear witness and give you conviction and assurance in your heart that what you are reading is the truth. It is amazing to me how unbelievers can read the exact same verses that are precious to us and not see what we are so excited about. It is nothing to them. This is crazy. A lot of us say, “Well, if you had a new modern English it would really be a blessing to you.” It is interesting how far we have come? If you get the Holy Spirit in you, you would start understanding it—even if it was the old King James Version. Amen.

Now, let us talk about the position that our Lord has in heaven. What is it? Look at the list.

- Ephesians 4:8 – “ascended up on high.”
- Ephesians 4:10 – “ascended up far above all heavens.” We know of three heavens in the Bible, according to 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul was taken up to the third heaven. We think there are three. Shirley MacLaine says that there are seven, but I believe that there are three. The Mormons also have more, but I believe three. Our Lord was ascended far above all heavens. The third heaven is supposedly where God

dwells, but our Lord is so great, that He has ascended above that as well. You are going to worship Him in the future.

- Acts 2:33 – “by the right hand of God.” This is said of him several times.
- Acts 2:34 – “into the heavens.”
- Acts 7:55-56 – “standing on the right hand of God.” This is what Stephen observed in Acts 7. He must have got up as an encouragement to Stephen because most of the passages say He is sitting. The word used for “to stand up” is the same Greek word meaning “to rise from the dead.” I think that Stephen needed that as they stoned him to death. He is at the right hand of God (cf. Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1).
- Hebrews 1:3 – “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” It says many times (especially in Hebrews, but also Colossians and others) that He sat down at the right hand of God. Why is that so significant? Why is that theme being pushed? The answer is really quite simple. No priest ever sat down in the tabernacle or temples in the Old Testament; there are no chairs there. The picture was of somebody who never finishes his work. When the Bible says that He sat down, “By one sacrifice He had offered for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.” When He had purged our sins, Hebrews 1:3, He sat down. You see, this was written to the Jews, and the Jews would have understood this and known that the work is done. The sacrificial system is over. He sat down. No priest ever sat down except our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful thing.
- Consider also Hebrews 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22
- His position in heaven basically reflects three things. I have already mentioned them in passing, but let us make sure that you have them.

- It reflects God's authority. He is at the right hand. Now if you want to study that for yourself, look up on your computer, "the right hand," and you will see tons of passages. It demonstrates the power and authority and justice and judgment of Almighty God. He is at God's right hand. Whoever is at the right hand is the one who is being ordered to carry those things out. Does our Lord carry out judgment on behalf of the Father? Absolutely. The Father even gave all judgment unto the Son. Who will be sitting on the Great White Throne at the judgment of all unbelievers? Our Lord will be sitting there as the judge of all the earth; He sat down at a position of authority, exercising the will of the heavenly Father. Jesus came to do the Father's will.
- His position also reflects God's approval. When it says, "At his right hand," God exalted Him. Lifted Him up how much? Above every name that is named. He is above all principality, all power, all authority, all thrones, dominions, everything. The Father has exalted Jesus by His ascension.
- His position reflects His accomplishment, as we have said. He sat down. His work was finished. He said on the cross, "It is finished," and He meant it. The sacrificial system is no more!

A lady actually asked me Saturday, at the Jewish fellowship, "Do you have a Passover in your home?"

I said, "Yes."

"Do you have a lamb?"

I said, “No.”

“Why not?”

“Because the lamb of God has already died and paid for all our sin. It would be an abomination in the sight of God for me to have a lamb on that table.”

“What do you do?”

“Just put a shank bone there as a memory.”

“You don’t eat it?”

“I don’t know if you’ve ever tasted one, but I won’t eat one. It’s just a bone.”

She said, “Interesting.”

I said, “Are you Jewish?”

She said, “Yes, but I have always wondered why we don’t fix a lamb.”

I told her that growing up in a Jewish home is interesting. “Why do we have a shank bone there?”

The official Jewish answer is because there is no temple in Jerusalem.”

But she said, “I’m confused because my rabbi told me that every home is a temple.” She is a smart woman.

I said, “Well I’m sure he’s trying to explain it. The real reason is that we do not have the sacrificial system any more because it all pointed to the Messiah (the lamb of God and the Redeemer).”

“We would not do that,” she said, “that is all.”

I wanted to talk to her more, but you have to learn, when a Jew is done, he is done. He just walks away—“Bye.”

The third main subject that we are talking about is the purpose of the ascension and present ministry. This is a really sweet teaching of the Bible. We will review number one again. Obviously, one of the purposes was His exaltation. Just want to add what we said from Philippians 2. “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that He is Lord.” Is it not possible that the reason we are not submissive at times is that we are not setting our affection (our mind) on Him who has been exalted to the right hand of the throne of God? We forget His exaltation that happened at the ascension, and God wants you to bow the knee to Him, to the glory of God.

One of the most wonderful things that go on, and one of the purposes of His ascension was His intercession for us. Look at Hebrews 4. We looked at Romans 8:34 that tells us that no one can condemn us because Christ died, is risen, and He is even at the right hand of God. He is praying for you.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] profession. (Hebrews 4:14)

He constantly refers in Hebrews to the ascension of Christ.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

Now we are back to those hymns. Does Jesus care? “I need You every hour.” “Simply trusting You every day.” Is He touched? Yes, with the feeling of our infirmities. “In all points tempted or tested as we are, yet without sin.” He had no sin, but yet He knows our struggles.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.
(Hebrews 4:16)

“I need Thee every hour.” His intercession provides care. Are you hurting, or do you remember what it was like? Do you remember when somebody really cared? Do you remember what it was like when you shared with somebody how you were hurting and they said, “Well that’s great. The Lord will take care of that,” and they walked away. You knew that they did not really care. Do you remember how it hurt? Have you tried to share with somebody what is going on in your life and they yawn? “Ahhh, I’m sure that was really important to you. It’s late. How long’s your

story?” You understand; it does not minister to your heart. Have you told somebody something really heavy, and they are talking to somebody else at the same time?

“Excuse me, hey John. How’re you doing? What was that you were saying?”

“I was just telling you my life’s in ruins.”

“Well, God bless you, man.”

That hurts. Is that hurting you now?

Are you not glad that there is Someone in the heavens who is over all and yet cares. Jesus cares. I like the word “care,” but I also like the word, “closeness,” because it says that He intercedes. Do you have a relationship with Jesus where it almost seems like you can feel His breath sometimes? It feels like it sometimes, yet other times He seems so far away. God tells you why that is. If there is sin, ugliness, bad attitudes, or whatever, His hand is not shortened, and His ear is not heavy. The problem is the sin in your own heart separating you. When you are right with the Lord, and you are fellowshiping with Him, how close does the Lord seem to be to you? Now if you do not feel close, guess who moved. It was not Him. He said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” I like that. I need His care and His closeness. He ever lives to intercede.

I like the word, “continuity”—just to make them all start with the letter cee. He ever lives, or continues, to make intercession. He never has stopped. There is never a day that He does not pray for you. Is that not great? Imagine what He sees—what you are in to. What grief must come. No

wonder the Bible says that our sinful attitudes can grieve the Holy Spirit. He is as real as you are. He continues forever, the Bible says, and He never stops interceding.

I like the word, “conquer” (or “conquest”), because there is somebody up there accusing you day and night, and that is the devil. The accuser accuses the brethren day and night, and Jesus calls Himself at the right hand of God, an “advocate.” It is an old Greek word for defense attorney. We still use it today, do we not? Lawyers are called advocates. He is a defense attorney. He is defending you. We overcome the enemy by the blood of the Lamb, but imagine that the devil is accusing you before God night and day. I do not know if he has a long scroll with your name on it or what, but he is constantly telling the Lord why you are nothing but trash. “Look at the way they act.” Yet Jesus is up there, “But I died for them. See, I paid it, and who can condemn?” It is Christ that died and rose again, who is ever at the right hand of the throne of God making intercession. Is that not great? Praise the Lord!

Another purpose for His ascension and present ministry is His preparation.

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. (John 14:2)

Some believe that when He says, “I go to prepare a place,” is referring to Him going to the cross which makes it possible for you to have a place in heaven. Others believe that “No, He was saying I am going up to heaven and going to build you a mansion.” I do not know which one is true, but I do know that He is working in my behalf. I say, “Glory,” and He said, “One day I will come again and receive you unto Myself.”

Why would He say, “In My Father’s house are many mansions” if He didn’t mean it? Some of you have the NASB and others have the word, “dwelling places,” because that is the word. If you like “dwelling place,” God help you. I have read the end of the story in Revelation 21:22. Those are not just some old shacks in heaven. It is a beautiful city that we are going to be a part of. If you want to have an old shack, go ahead, but I am going to have a mansion. I think that the KJV was correct with, “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” Dwelling places does not do it for me. I have been in a lot of crummy dwelling places in my life.

You know that there is something else about His exaltation and present ministry that I think we are forgetting. I do not know why we do not teach it more. It is what I call His fullness as the head of the church. For example, in Ephesians 1 we read about His ascension, but notice the context. He ascended far above all principality and power, and then in verse 22 it says, “and hath put all things under His feet and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him what filleth all in all.” In Colossians it says, “Christ is all in all.” Is that true? Sure, it is true. It is in the Bible. But do you understand that?

The fullness. What is the church? It is the life of Jesus Christ. There is an old Catholic statement that says the Church is an extension of the incarnation, and there is something to that. “God became flesh and dwelt among us.” He ascended into heaven. Our bodies have become the temple of the Holy Spirit, but is all the fullness of God in your one body? No. He says in the church we see the fullness of Christ’s life. You know something about Jesus that I do not know. He has done something in your life that He has not done in mine. I know things about Him that you do not know. Together it forms the fullness of the life of Christ in every one and in every situation. Jesus does not sit in heaven like the Deists says, “Winding history up like a clock and just watching it unwind.” No, He is actively involved in every one of our lives. Your life is going to become so

much more meaningful as a Christian, if by faith, you walk that way. “Walk by faith, not by sight.” The Lord Jesus wants to live His life in you. The Bible says, “Christ in you is the hope of glory.”

If you want to do a neat Bible study, just take the words, “in Christ,” or “in Him.” It is unbelievable. Do you realize how often that is in the epistles? What is it to be a Christian? It is having Jesus Christ living in your life. We might say it is through the power of the Holy Spirit, or through what I know about Him, or what I have read about Him in the Bible, but we also know, that, because He is omnipresent in terms of spiritual presence (in a real sense), the Lord Jesus Himself has made His life possible in me. Of course, the truth of the matter is that my physical life comes from Him, as well as my spiritual life. It is really what it means to be born again. It is the fullness of the Lord Jesus.

I love Colossians 2:9, which says, “The fullness of God dwells in Him in bodily form.” All of it! Then it says, “Ye are complete.” It is the same word for “fullness,” or “filled up,” in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. He said, “Ye,” not “Thee.” In other words, only the corporate body of believers experiences the fullness of the life of the Lord. That is why we need each other. We cannot walk alone.

There is one more thing to discuss, and that is His expectation. Do you know that everything, including unbelievers, every part of this world and its system is all going to be put under the dominion and authority of Jesus Christ? During His millennial reign, He will be calling all the shots. He will be in charge. He will not have a cabinet. There will be no CNN to report on it. He is going to establish His kingdom on earth, and we are going to rule and reign with Him. When He ascended into heaven, He was exalted. That is not the end of the story.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. [The Father will never be put under Him.] And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

Do I understand that? No, but do I believe it? Absolutely! Apparently someday after the millennial reign of Christ, when He exercises His authority over all things that will be put under His headship, then He is going to deliver all things back to the Father in some dramatic way that the whole world will know that the plan of human history began and ends in the heart of the Father. The ultimate object of God the Father is that we would worship and praise Him forever. Amen!

Lord, we thank You for Your word because we would be so lost without it. Help us, Lord, to understand the present ministry of our Lord, who is ascended into heaven and who will come back one day. In our expecting of His coming again, may we not ignore and neglect His intercession, His care, His comfort, and His compassion for us now. It is a throne of grace that we come to now—not a throne

of judgment. Your throne is where we find mercy—that is, you are holding back from us what we really deserve. Your throne is also where we find grace—that is, you giving us what we do not deserve. You give us grace to help in the time of need. Lord, may we see our need and bring it to You. As the song said, “I must tell Jesus all of my trials. I cannot bear these burdens alone.” Help us to believe that and to apply it. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.