

Knowing Christ Through His Ascension

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Let us turn to Acts 22:4, “I prosecuted this way to the death binding and putting both men and women in prisons.” Verse 6, “And it came about, as I was on my way approaching Damascus around noontime, a very bright light suddenly flash from heaven all around me. And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you prosecuting me?’ and I answered, ‘who are thou Lord?’ and he said to me, ‘I am Jesus, the Nazaraean, whom you are prosecuting.’”

Let us still have another simple word of prayer. “Lord, we thank you because you have been gracious to us and call us to be at your feet. You have spoken so many words to us. By your grace, you have enabled us to know our Christ, our glorious Lord. Not only do we know His death, but His resurrection and His ascension. Now as we come to the end of the conference, the last evening, we ask that You would present Yourself throughout the whole meeting. May Your presence be our crown. We asked that you speak to the depths of our heart. We praise You for the word that You have spoken for the past few days. We know that You still have word to speak. We ask that You speak it to the depth. Remove any barriers that keep us from hearing Your word. We say, Lord, we are all here. Listen to our prayer. In Jesus’ precious name, Amen.”

The Testimony of Paul

We all know that the theme of the conference this time is “Knowing Christ”. Our brothers have already shared on Christ’s death and resurrection. We will look at Christ’s ascension tonight and tomorrow morning. Our brothers used the verses in chapter 3 of Philippians. There is the testimony of Paul; he tells us how he knows Christ, not only that he wants to gain Christ. He does not only consider everything rubbish in order to gain Christ, but he wants to know Christ. So he mentioned how he knew of Christ’s resurrection and His death. Today, we want to see how Paul knows the ascension. There is one thing we need to be reminded about: as soon as Paul was saved, as he was reborn,

he knew the ascended Lord. His knowledge of ascension was not from books, and it was not learned from school. Paul gained firsthand knowledge of the ascended Christ. You remember that he was going to Damascus to arrest Christians. There was a great light that shone on him, and he fell to the ground. He thought that he was there to arrest those who believed in the name of Jesus, the Nazarene. But he never thought that he would be arrested. Once caught, he would never be able to escape. He was taken by the glorious Christ, the ascended Christ. From then on, he lost all his freedom. If we were to ask Paul, "According to your life experience, when did you start to know Christ?" He will tell you that it was on the road to Damascus. At that time, he was born from above, reborn, because the Holy Spirit birthed him.

When an infant is first born, the only thing he can see is light and darkness. After two or three days, in front of his two eyes, there will be a face. That face is a mother's face. This infant will grow up before the face of the mother. Daily he sees the smile of the mother. The smile of the mother's face is the reason he grows. That is why everybody celebrates Mother's Day. Nobody celebrates Father's Day. The only reason we have Father's Day is to be able to sell ties. Yet Mother's Day is remembered for the face that who brought us up. Paul was born of the Holy Spirit, so he saw the kingdom of God. When he saw the kingdom of God, he saw the glory of God shone forth on Jesus Christ's face. He knew that was the ascended Christ.

It is not as if he did not know this Lord. He knew His death; He knew that he hung on a tree. According to this theology, which is Paul's understanding of the Old Testament, all those hung on a tree should be cursed: it is, therefore, impossible that it should happen to Christ. If the Bible is correct, then this Jesus is not the Christ. If Jesus really were the Christ, the Messiah, then the Old Testament is not right, but it is impossible to have Paul admit that the Old Testament is incorrect. We all know that the Old Testament is correct.

This is Paul's understanding of Christ's death. He considers those who are hung on the tree as cursed. So it seems impossible that Jesus is the Christ. All those who follow Jesus should be dispersed. So this is Paul; in him there are three worlds: the religious Hebrew world, the culture a Greek, and the Roman political and military world. He wants to climb up to the roofs of these worlds. The one who was hung on the tree was not Christ.

He was going there to arrest those who followed Christ. He never thought that he ended up arrested.

Paul's Conversion

When Paul was saved, it had much to do with Stephen's being killed. How did he know that this was the ascended Christ? Do you remember that when Stephen was martyred, Paul was at the site? There were many words Paul did not want to hear, and many people closed their ears, Paul would have done the same. Paul did not want to hear, but he heard. Paul heard what Stephen mentioned of the Old Testament, but the Old Testament that Stephen spoken of, Paul had never seen before. He had never understood that before. This was a great shock to Paul. If Stephen is being destroyed, why is his face like an angel? How did Luke know that that face was the face of an angel? Because when Paul saw that face of an angel, he saw that Angelic face. You can see the Holy Spirit worked heavily in his heart. If this person is to be destroyed, why is his face like the face of an angel? Someone tells us, the heart of a martyred is a lion's heart, but his face is the face of an angel. Paul would never forget that face. But more importantly, before Stephen was martyred, he said, "I saw the heavens opened, and the son of men standing at the right hand of God." Brothers and sisters, Paul is one who knew the Old Testament from the Book of Daniel he knew who the son of men was, the Messiah. Now, he heard what Stephen said, he saw the heavens opened, saw the son of men in glory standing at the right hand of God. Brothers and sisters, maybe Paul did not want to hear those words, and like all the others, he covered his ears, but that word ended up in him. It brought many difficulties to him. Why? If Jesus was indeed cursed, how can he entered into glory? If he was nailed to the cross, he was not Christ. Yet only the Messiah can enter into glory and stand at the right hand of God. Isn't this the word of Psalm 110? Didn't Paul understand the Old Testament's word? Didn't Paul understand the words of Psalm 110? Stephen was right and his testimony was true, but what message is being said here? He is that one of whom people said, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Men rejected Him. But now He has ascended to heaven and standing at the right hand of God. The Bible tells us that

the crowd covered their ears, and we believed that Paul was covering his ears too, but, at the same time, he wanted to hear. Even though he doesn't like what he heard, he heard.

The Holy Spirit planted some words in Paul. And he wants to cover that voice. He wants to smother that voice, that conscience. What does he do? Either he surrenders to the sound or he believes Jesus, the Nazarene, is the Messiah. But he is not willing. So he uses his foot to kick against goad, the Lord said, kicking against the goad is difficult. In order for the voice of the conscience to be unheard, he has to go to the other extreme. So a very civil and gentle Paul suddenly becomes a murderer. He wants to bleed the saint's blood, if only he destroys all these followers of Jesus. It will be Paul's victory, and all these voices will go away.

Paul and The Light

Paul's situation is similar to what was found in Genesis 1: a big void. But the spirit of the Lord hovered around the surface of the water. As he went on the road to Damascus, Jesus said, "Let there be light." And the light of the Gospel was shown on Paul. When Paul was in rabbinic school, so many times, he learned what the glory of God was. The glory of God, he learned from the book, from Ezekiel, but this is the first time; he actually met God's glory. God's glory was manifested on the face of Jesus; now he found a noun. When God said let there be light, there is light. That is the old creation. How do you explain Paul's experience? Thank the Lord. Paul said that in Jesus Christ, he is a new creation. Paul is now saved. How does Paul know that this is the ascended Christ? The Holy Spirit already said, as Stephen testified, that if he only sees our Lord on the cross, Christ and all his followers should be prosecuted.

The death and the resurrection are interconnected: His resurrection and His ascension are interconnected. When Paul was saved, he was reborn. The one he faced was the resurrected and ascended Lord. Not only did Paul, but all of us, when we were saved by grace, in the depths of the spirit, met Him. According to the Scripture, the One whom you met is the ascended Christ. Even though you might not have understood much then, that is the resurrected Christ, the ascended Lord, this is being reborn. Seeing Him is not in your head as knowledge, but in the depths of your spirit. In the same way Paul was

arrested on the road to Damascus, we met our Lord, and we were reborn and saved. I say again, if you have never met this Lord, I am afraid that you are not saved.

Meeting the Ascended Lord

I was baptized when I was 14. I grew up in a Christian home. I thought I was already a Christian and brought many to Christ. One day, my father said, "You can be baptized." So I said, "I am willing." But at that time, the baptism is a bit difficult. You have to undergo a baptism discussion. If you pass the test, you then can be baptized. If you do not pass the test, you cannot be baptized. If they give you a 1 that means you passed; if a 3, that means you failed. I thought that I would get a one, but they gave me a three. So I was really angry, I said to myself, "Fine, I am not going to be baptized." Then my father said, "Try again, go in the evening." I had a talk with a brother who is from Zhen Don, who had a very deep voice, and the question that he asked me was so simple. But because he was so imposing, I was scared and I couldn't answer. In the evening, somebody else posed a question. The person that actually interviewed me was a judge. I said, "Now is even worse." But this judge was just like an elderly grandfather. He asked me, "Do you believe in the Lord, Jesus?" I said, "Yes". He said "Do you believe in your head or in your heart?" From head to heart is less than a foot. But the distance is like that between heaven and hell. Suddenly, I understood; I believed in my head. He asked, "Are you willing to believe in your heart?" I said, "I am willing", so I prayed. I was saved that day. Once I came out of the water being baptized, I saw that the whole world was different. It is not the world changed, but I changed. I met the glorious Lord. I met the ascended Lord. Nobody who meets the ascended Lord can return the same way.

The magi came to worship the king of the Jews. They saw the true glory of the king. The Bible told us that they did not go back the same way. Brothers and sisters, thank the Lord, this is a story of half a century ago. But thank the Lord, since those days, I can say from the depths of my conscience, the Lord that we believe in is the resurrected Lord, the ascended Christ. All of us believers begin with the ascension of Christ. This is called rebirth. This is being born from above. Why is it being born from above? Because

the ascended Christ has met us; from that day on, we are controlled by the heavens. Every movement that we have on earth is controlled by the heavens. Thank the Lord.

This is the story of Paul. If we were to ask Paul, how do you know the ascension? He is going to say, "Throughout all my experiences of knowing Christ, the first thing that I met is the ascended Christ." If you really meet the ascended Christ, you will say what Paul said in Acts 22:8. "And I answered, 'Who are thou, Lord?' and he said to me, 'I am Jesus, the Nazarene, whom you are prosecuting.'" Paul met the ascended Christ, and the ascended Christ immediately showed Paul the Lord, Jesus in history, because Jesus the Nazarene was a historical character. Jesus Christ is an ironclad historical fact of the human history. The ascended Christ and the historical Christ are closely interconnected in Jesus the Nazarene.

The Necessity of the Ascended and Historical Christ

Today, some people want to split the ascended Christ from the historical Christ. They say that the four gospels depict, you can't believe. But we in the spirit have met Christ, so we call him the Christ of faith. As long as you believe the Lord, that is ok. Whether the four gospels are right does not matter. This is called liberal theology. However, the Lord knows our difficulties. Our Lord knows that we speak of death, resurrection, and ascension. It speaks of theology clearly. You see, many modernists can begin with reform theology. They believe the so-called theology and believe every word of Paul. But they don't believe Jesus was resurrected from the death. They don't believe in the accounts of the four gospels; this is impossible. Let's remember, the one in whom we believe is Christ, and the one whom we have met is the ascended Christ. When the Lord revealed that to us, he brought us back 2000 years. Two thousand years ago, our Lord hung on the cross for us; three days later, he was truly resurrected from the death. He was not just resurrected mentally. He was actually resurrected physically as well, our Lord ascended to heaven in history. If we are to know the ascension, then our subjective experience is the ascended Christ. But do not forget, the Lord must show us that "I am the Lord whom you prosecuted." For this reason, our Lord brings us back 2000 years. Thank the Lord. Now we ask, "Our Lord, why is Your ascension a historical fact?" We

need to understand these facts. You cannot just meet the ascended Christ and not see Jesus the Nazarene. You cannot separate Jesus the Nazarene and the ascended Christ. It is true that if separate the two, the Bible would be easier to explain. Many problems are solved. For example, the five bread, two fish and the five thousands being fed. Many people find it difficult to believe. So many people said Jesus didn't use five loaves and two fish. So they explain it as everyone was so touched that each took out five loaves and two fish.

Dear brothers and sisters, He said, "I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are prosecuting." Do not forget, our Lord indeed hung on the cross for us. On the first month, day 14, from noon to three, when the Jewish priests were busy slaying the lambs for the Passover, our Lord hung on the cross for us. He said, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" Then he said, "It is finished!" Then He gave up His spirit to the Father. That was at three o'clock. From noon to three, so many Passover lambs were slain. They are but shadows. Now, John tells us, it was at that day when all of the families have the Passover lamb, that our Lord hung on the cross for us. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Brothers and sisters, this was what happened 2000 years ago. Is this amazing? It is exactly on the fourteenth day of the first month. Thank the Lord, that not only that, three days later, He was resurrected from the dead. Not only was He resurrected, He also ascended to heaven. We have to ask, "How do we know our Lord ascended?" Thank the Lord, these fact are recorded in the scripture. Of course, our material comes from the four gospels.

Mark and Luke's Account of the Ascension

When you read the gospels, you will see that Matthew does not speak of the ascension. Mark does. Luke does. John does not mention that. Why is it this way? It has to do with the Lord's revelation in each gospel: Matthew shows us that our Lord Jesus is King; Mark shows Him as the servant of God; Luke shows us that He is the perfect man; and John shows us that He is the Son of God. So we see four different sides. We see the image of a lion from Matthew, the image of an ox from Mark, the image of a man from Luke, and the image of an eagle from John.

What is the special feature of an eagle? His life is a transcended life. He is on top of the mountain, and he is on the rock. Suddenly he soars down to the ground. Because his velocity is so high, he is the one who descends from heaven and still is in heaven. John shows us that our Lord is such a Lord. His life is like the life of an eagle. You know eagles have a special feature. His eyes are different than all the other creation of the Lord. They can look directly into sunlight and not be destroyed. Not a single one of us can look at God directly and not be destroyed. But only the one in the bosom of the Father can see God's glory. So this life is the life of an eagle. He is descended from heaven yet still in heaven. You don't have to talk about ascension, so John did not talk about ascension. Mathew shows us that he is already glorified; He is that glorious king. If that is the case, the authority of heaven and earth has been given unto Him.

Mark's Account

Only two gospels mention about ascension. One is Mark, and the other is Luke. Let us read a couple of passages. Mark 16:19, "So then when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere while the Lord and work with them and confirm by the signs that follow." Our Lord is the servant of God. God sent him down to earth. When He finished His commission, He obviously went back to the One who sent Him. This speaks of ascension. But more amazingly, the Lord who was received up into heavens, sat down at the right hand of God. He became King. He is already in glory. Do you understand? The Lord said, "Whoever wants to be first amongst you shall be the servant of all." Our Lord has served everyone. He gave his life on the cross for us. He finished His mission. He is the greatest in the universe because He died for everyone. Here, we see our Lord not only ascended, but glorified. Now you see, our Lord said, "Whoever wants to be first, you will be the slave of all." Mark ended this way. But not only that, the disciples followed His footsteps and preached the gospel everywhere. They did not say the Lord went to heaven and that was it. Although the Lord went to heaven, the Lord

worked with them. They were still on earth and preaching the gospel. Every work was on earth, but the Bible said the Lord worked with them. Now, where is this Lord? The Lord is in heaven. Do you see it now? All the work is a result in heaven. All the work begins from heaven. It didn't begin with the disciples. Do you see? This is how Mark ends. And it is confirmed by the signs of that which followed, amen. That ended the book of Mark. According to this account, we can understand a little about not only just the ascension but how He was glorified. He gave His life to each of us. There is no greater love than His. His love conquered us all; His love conquered millions of people. His love is that deep. We all know that He is that greatest of all. He entered into glory. This is Mark.

Luke's Account

Let us look at Luke. We also look at the last chapter of Luke. The easiest way to look at the ascension of Christ is the last chapter. Luke 24:50, "And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted His hand and blessed them. And it came about as He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy continually in the temple praising Him."

Brothers and sisters, did you know that Luke begins with the temple and ends with the temple? Luke shows us a priest at the very beginning. The priest's name is Zechariah. Zechariah drew the lot so he could go burn incense in the temple of the Lord. All the people outside were praying. When he came out, people saw that he was mute. Here is a priest. He had no words after he came out. Do you understand? This is how Luke began. At the end of Luke, our Lord ascended to heaven. If you read Hebrews, our Lord is the great high priest in the heavens. Now that our Lord is ascended, He lifted His arm and blessed them. Now that He has ascended to heaven, He is our great priest. You can see the symmetry of the beginning and the end of Luke. Do you see that? The beginning is a picture of the Old Testament. You have a priest bringing the people to the temple to pray. After he came out, he had no words. When our Lord ascended to heaven, he blessed them. As he blessed them, he departed up into heaven. This is how the Gospel of Luke ends. When we put these two accounts together, we know that our Lord is glorified. On one hand, He is a King. On the other hand, He is a high priest, according to the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek is a king, and on the other hand, he is a priest when you take

these accounts of the Bible and put the facts of history together. Very clearly, we see. Slowly, we understand the temple. So then we understand why Psalm 110, when it mentions the ascension of Christ, why it mentioned Melchizedek. You see, God's word is very clear. When we read, that is why the Lord said, "I am Jesus, the Nazarene, whom you are prosecuting." Not only that, if you and I understand what Luke is saying, you will understand why our Lord ascended to heaven. Luke shows our Lord as the perfect man, the one who is according to the Lord's heart. Adam failed, but in the Lord, there is no failure. Who can fulfill this testimony? Nobody is more qualified than this Physician. Luke was a physician. You don't know how many lives went by him. He would see a child when he was first born. He would also see a person slowly getting old. When he looked at life, he would see life beginning in a cradle, but ending in a grave. Do you see that? The child begins slowly from the beginning. After 30, it starts sliding down. At the end is the grave. We all come in horizontally, and we leave horizontally, too. Let's remember, the people that Luke was speaking to were the Greeks. The Greeks speak of perfectionism. They want to look for a perfect person, and that person is a lawyer, a priest, a scientist, and an athlete. When Luke preached the Gospel, he told the Greek world that he found the one you are looking for, that perfect man. You cannot find a perfect life in this world.

The Lord's Ascension

The Lord was already an adult when Mark began. Because He was a servant, you don't have to account for when He was one or two years old. You can just account for the years that He worked. If you read Luke, it is the most complete account of our Lord. Luke wants to give us a testimony. He observed so many lives. He saw that this life was different than all other lives. How did this life begin? It began in a manger; the baby was wrapped in linen in a manger. This life grew slowly. After thirty years, there was a voice from heaven that said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The life of Christ completely satisfied the Father. He was like a tender shoot before Jehovah. Just like the root of a tree, you can't see it. After thirty years, the heaven couldn't help but to say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Then God opened the dams of

the waters of life and the waters of life flowed out. Our Lord bore much fruit all over for three years. And then he went to Mount Hermon. You see, He accomplished God's will. When He went to Mount Hermon, He could have gone back home to God. Whether His life or work, He satisfied the heart of God the Father. Again the heaven said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." For you and I, the Lord could not ascend to heaven then. From the very top of Mount Hermon, going by the Jordon meant descending, and He descended all the way to Golgotha. That way is but six months, yet this was clearly the way of the cross. After He finished this route, heaven had no word. Heaven had action. The Bible tells us that He was received up to heavens. Brothers and sisters, we go from the cradle to the grave. That is our lives. Our Lord is without sin. He also began from the cradle. But He came from the mostly humbly cradle, the manger. From there, He began. You see, that life grew. Thank you, Lord. After the first 30 years, then three more years, then half a year more, and at the very end, God received Him into heaven. In other words, this life, it grew all the way before God. He began at the cradle, but ended at the throne. Do you understand? Luke shows us a perfect man: this man went from a manger all the way to the throne. We come in a horizontal plane and leave in a horizontal plane. Our Lord entered this world horizontally, but He left this world vertically. Now you understand the meaning of ascension.

A slow ascension

The Holy Spirit accounts for when the Lord was received into heaven. It was a very slow ascension. After He was resurrected, He saw the disciples of Emmaus. After He broke the bread, He suddenly vanished. When He said, He vanished, He vanished. But why didn't He vanish this time? He couldn't. All the people could see and the Bible said clearly, "Slowly He ascended." You will make no mistake. No matter how many times you blink, you will still see Him. Do you see that? It is very important. The ascended Lord is the One who was resurrected from the dead. As soon as we go into the grave, our bodies was corrupt. Our Lord is without sin, so His body did not decay. Do not forget! When our Lord was resurrected, His body was not decayed. His body was incorruptible, and He did clearly have a body. When He slowly ascended, if He was just spirit, you

would not see Him. He went with a body that slowly ascended. Nobody has ascended to the heaven. That was what the Gospel of John said. But then you say, “What about Elijah and Enoch? And what about others?” I won’t answer you. Find the answer yourselves because the Lord said nobody has ever ascended to heaven. Do you see that? This has never happened before. Here you have a life on earth, a perfect man. The Lord’s ascension and His incarnation are a little bit different. When the Lord became flesh, He came down from heaven. We did not see the actual process. We just knew that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit. When He came from heaven to earth, you already saw Him in a manger. You see, the point of incarnation is not there. The incarnation just tells us that through Mary, Jesus had a body. When our Lord fell asleep on the boat, He was a man. When He stopped and rebuked the wind and the storm, he was God. Thank the Lord. Our Lord put on a body of a man and began in a manger. What is the final result? His life is very different than ours. Our life is from cradle to grave, yet our Lord’s life is from the manger to the throne. If you were to ask me, “What did the ascension accomplish for us? What does it mean?” If you only know the Lord’s death and resurrection, but you don’t speak of the ascension, what is our understanding? We know that God put men in the Garden of Eden at the beginning. Adam sinned as a result. They were finally cast out of Eden. And then the Lord worked the work of redemption. There needs death and resurrection. It all has to do with redemption. When we speak of redemption, we get saved. Finally, we gain access to paradise. If we only speak of death and resurrection, very clearly, we are not only justified by faith. We are sanctified by faith. No longer are we under the judgment for sin, but we can overcome sin.

God’s Eternal Purpose

Doesn’t this mean going back to the Garden of Eden? Is this God’s eternal purpose? What was God’s original purpose? It was for us to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life. That life of the Tree refers to the life of Christ. But sadly, man did not eat the fruit of the Tree of life. They ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Wisdom and Knowledge. This is a problem. If Adam ate of the fruit of the Tree of Life, what would be the result? The result would be what the Lord’s ascension brings us. When our Lord ascended, if sin had not

come in, we still have to leave this world, but we would not leave by death. What is God's purpose in our life? Not only are we justified by faith, not only are we sanctified by faith, but Paul tells us that we are glorified by faith, to be conformed to the image of His Son. Because we fell, you see clearly, there is a death and resurrection of our Lord. Because of our Lord's ascension, we can see God is satisfied. It is not that we return back to the Garden of Eden. What God wants is what He did not get in Adam's life. When our Lord ascended, He showed us what the eternal purpose of God is. From this, we understand the meaning of ascension. From this, we can meet the ascended Christ. He did not just allow us to regain paradise. He did not just allow us to be justified or sanctified by faith. He wants us to be glorified by faith. How do we have glory? We have no glory. When we are conformed to the image of the Son and when others see in us Christ's gentleness, patience, and glory, people will say, "This is glory." Now we understand the whole Gospel of Luke. Why does Luke describe it this way? Now you understand why Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." How does Christ live in him? Not according to Paul, but according to how our Lord lived. He went from the manger to the throne. Very clearly, Paul shows us that we need to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

The Account in Acts

Let's move forward! Let look at the account in Acts. What does Luke say in Chapter 1, verse 1 of Acts. "O Theophilus, first account I composed." Now you see that there is a first, and there is a second book of Luke. The first account of Luke is the gospel of Luke. The second account of Luke is Acts. In the first account, the ascension is at the very end. In the second account, the ascension is at the very beginning. This is very interesting. When we read the book of Acts, it begins with the ascension, but there is one difference. Luke said the Lord said goodbye to the disciples in Bethany. Acts said that He ascended from the Mount of Olive. Which is correct, the first or second book? The answer is, both of them are correct. I will ask you to find the answers at home since we truly don't have the time to go into it. The most important thing is how Luke has the accounts. When he accounted it was the same, he added a little extra here. He said that they were looking as

he was taken up. It was “slowly taken up” in the original transcript. There was a group of clouds that took Him up and then we do not see Him. Was that the end? No. As they were gazing intensely into the sky, suddenly two men in white clothing stood beside Him, wearing white clothing does not necessary denote angels. Doctors and nurses wear white clothing as well. This is how we read the Bible. The Bible did not say two angels. It said two men in white clothing stood beside Him. Their testimony is very important. It tells us what the real meaning of ascension is. What does it say? This Jesus who has been taken up from you to heaven will come back just the same way as you watched Him go into heaven. This ascension has to do with the Lord’s returning. In the first account of Luke, the ascension had to do with the incarnation. I like the words that our brother Campbell Morgan said, “Many times we speak of the biography of our Lord Jesus; we speak of the incarnation. When we speak of His incarnation, we speak of His time on earth.” He said this is not correct. Strictly speaking, we should speak of Him all the way including the throne because our Lord still has human characteristic on the throne. You see a man in glory fully satisfying God’s heart, the first fruit. Because of that, He was not only resurrected, he also ascended to heaven. This has to do with our future. Resurrection always connects to ascension. As long as He was resurrected, He ascended. It will be the same with us. When the trumpet sounds, we will be resurrected.

We will be raptured and meet our Lord in the air. Our ascension has to do with rapture. Therefore, the spirit of ascension and rapture are the same. That life is so mature that it is raptured into heaven. Why rapture? Rapture has to do with the level of maturity. When the life is mature, you will be raptured. When the wheat is ripe, you will see that portion of the head is riper. The portion nearest to the ground will become drier. It is more alive towards heaven and dying towards the earth. When you harvest, it goes away. This is why we are raptured. The spirit of rapture is the spirit of ascension. That is why when our Lord has ascended into heaven, paradise did not go up. If paradise is in heaven, not only will we resurrect, we will be raptured. You don’t come down and go back up. Resurrection comes out of death. We are raptured into heaven and will enter into glory. It is very clear here that the first account of Luke has to do with incarnation. The second account of Luke allows us to see that the ascension has to do with the Lord’s return.

How did our Lord ascend? From Mount Olive to the clouds consists of the first stage. The first stage is public. The second stage occurs in secret: from the clouds to the throne. How is He going to return? It will be in the exact reverse: from the throne to the cloud and then from the cloud to Mount Olive. In the first stage, He will be like a thief of the night; nobody will see. It is like the morning star. Only if you wait for the morning, you will see. The second stage is like the lightning. It is public. He is the righteous Sun. If you and I don't understand the ascension, we don't understand the return. It is all connected together.

Putting It All Together

We have to put all the facts together. If you were to ask me, "What did the Lord do after He ascended?" Above the clouds, the disciples could not see, yet Acts shows what is under the clouds. Luke accounts for all that the Lord has taught and did on earth. Now the Lord has ascended. What is in Acts? It seems that Acts tells us of the Lord above the clouds that we can't see. How did you know that He ascended? You just have to look at what is under the clouds. If you want to know the ascended Christ, you just have read the whole book of Acts. Nobody has gone through a war like we just have throughout human history. This is a war that you can't find in history. This war was called the digital war. Why? What is the feature of this war? We always thought that the war is fought under the clouds. It has nothing to do with what is above the clouds. No. The second war, you just saw in Iraq. On TV, you saw many sand storms. And then you saw the troops still going in. You will see that it is very dangerous. How can they win the war? You cannot see ahead of you. How can you win the war? When the bombing of the coalition began in Baghdad, the coalition wanted to have the least possible casualties. How could they be so sure? What is the difference between this war and the last war of the Persian Gulf? In the first war, the missiles were guided by laser. This time, it was guided by satellite. In other words, this is controlled by what is above the cloud. Whether you lose a war or gain a victory, it depends on what is above the clouds. Above the clouds shows you where the missiles should go. Do you know how accurate it can get? If you aim against a wall, you

can have the wall fall to the inside, not the outside. If the wall falls this way, many people might die. The newspaper would have civilian casualties. If the wall falls on the inside, the most it would do is to fall on Saddam Hussain's head. There has been no war to gain a victory. If you were just to use laser, it would not be enough. We say that bullets don't have eyes, yet now these bullets have eyes. These eyes came from above the clouds. For this reason, not only do you have to bring your gun to the battlefield, you also have to bring your laptop. Only with the laptop can you see where you are and where your enemies are. You can't see them. How can you win the war? What you can't see, the heavens can see. The US won the war. This is an example. It shows us the stories of Acts after our Lord has ascended. Our Lord used Mary's body to accomplish God's will before He ascended. Thank the Lord. Now He uses the mystical body, the Church. No matter where you go, the head is in the heavens. Our head is the ascended Christ. Anything that happens below the clouds is controlled by what is above the clouds.

What is Pentecost? Pentecost is descended from heaven. If you are born of the Spirit, you are born from above. This is the special feature of a Christian. This is what Nicodimus did not understand. He could only understand earthly things. Our Lord wanted to tell him heavenly things, but he had to be reborn. What is the church? The church was born in the ascension. When our Lord is glorified, He said, "It is good for me to go, if I don't go then the comforter will not arrive. If the comforter does not arrive, then it is not good for you." If the Holy Spirit were to descend, you know that our Lord has ascended and He's been king. Our God has made him Lord and Christ. Christ was just a title in the four Gospels. Yet in the letters of the apostle Paul, Christ is a name. It became a proper name. Why is that? Because Paul knew after our Lord ascended, He gained the name above all names. Everyone claimed Jesus as Lord. Jesus was the name that God gave to Him. Now He is glorified. This differentiates the Pauline epistles from all the other books. He speaks of Jesus Christ and Christ Jesus; not only that, he speaks of being in Christ and in Christ Jesus. He never speaks of being in Jesus or in Jesus Christ. This is very amazing. Can somebody say that I am in Washington or I am in Confucius? This is impossible. Because our Lord ascended, not only was Paul shaken, the whole church and the whole earth were shaken. This is the glorious situation of the church after the Pentecost. How do

you explain Acts? Luke ends with the ascension, but Acts starts with the ascension. Our Lord continued to teach and act. After our Lord ascended, everything began from the throne and heaven. Today, you can organize a business, but not a church. The church is heavenly. Thank the Lord. This is the book of Acts. If we read all of these, we know that this is the historical fact.

The Prophecy Fulfilled

You might still be worried. The Lord knows our weakness. The Lord knows that our faith is not that great. The Lord knew this a long time ago; in the Old Testament, He already told us. All of us begin life before we even had videotape. But our Lord had videotape before He had life. Where is His videotape? His videotape was in the hands of those that said, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Do you see how that is possible? When they looked through the binoculars for the future, could the prophets see the ascension of our Lord? There was one who saw it. He saw it to the point of being sick. He wanted to find where the explanation was. It is very amazing. This was an Old Testament prophet. They saw it through the binoculars of time. One day, they saw the ascension. They could not understand it. They were afraid. They were astounded. How could somebody slowly ascend? How can somebody enter into glory? How can you even have that thought in the Old Testament? From Genesis to Malachi, you don't have that kind of example. No wonder when they saw it, they got sick. They could not bear it. Where is this prophecy?

Let us turn to Daniel 7:13, "Keep looking at the night vision." This is Daniel. "And behold the clouds of heaven look like a son of man was coming. And it came up to the ancient of days and to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all the people, nations, and men of every language might serve Him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away." In Luke, the most we saw was the clouds. Daniel saw above the clouds. He saw one who looked like the son of man was coming. And He was presented before him as a king to the ancient of days. He was given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all the people, nations, and men of every language might serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away. His kingdom is one

which will not be destroyed. And then Daniel was sick. “As for me Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the vision in my mind kept alarming me. I approached one of those that are standing and began asking the exact meaning of these.”

Daniel wanted to know what was happening. He wanted the explanations. This is what we want to accomplish in these two days. After we see this vision, we have to see the explanation. It is something that we cannot think of. How can one man be ascended into heaven? In glory, there is a son of men. In this vision of the ascension, we see the son of man. On the throne, we see humanity. Not only has He gained dominion, glory, and nations, God made Him Lord and Christ. No wonder Daniel reacted the way he did. He could not understand this. God knows our weakness. The Holy Spirit is amazing. It describes the prophecy before us. We have to know what the spirit says. Verses 17, these great beasts, which are four numbers, are four kings, which will arise from the earth. It speaks of before the Son of Man coming. Daniel saw four beasts coming from the Mediterranean. One was a lion, one was a bear, etc. According to prophecies of Daniel chapter 2 the four kingdoms come out around the Mediterranean Sea. The first was Babylon. Wasn't Babylon from the past? Why did the Lord say, “Nebuchadnezzar, you are the golden head”? In Chapter 7 this lion came from the sea. Although Babylon happened way before, when did it arrive in the Mediterranean? It was during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The Lord's word is so accurate. It was same with Cyrus. The Persian Empire was also part of history. Not only has the lion come up, but also the bear. Four different kingdoms here represented by four beasts. Chapter 2 shows us gold, silver and bronze. It is the dream of an emperor. The only thing that they see is an awesome gold, silver and bronze. In the eye of Daniel, Israel is like a lamb, from the mouth of a lion to the mouth of the bear, and to the other beasts. Daniel 2 shows us the outer appearance of the world.

Today the young people only see the outside of the world. Nobody sees the corrupt nature of the world. It is corrupted to a point that men no longer look like men. Thank the Lord. There is going to be a fifth kingdom. This kingdom is the kingdom of the Son of Man. In this kingdom, men will look like men. God became man, so that man can become man,

not for man to become God. Just like Jesus, God will bring forth a kingdom. And in this kingdom, you will see a man. It is the kingdom of the Son of Man. The king of this kingdom must be the fifth king. The fifth king appears after the first four kings, right? It is very interesting. All these four kings were named in the Bible. We know who they are. First Nebuchadnezzar, second, we know Cyrus. And we know Alexander the Great. Now what about the fourth one?

Don't forget, after the fourth one passed away, the Son of Man will arrive, be crucified, then ascend to heaven. We have to ask where the fourth king is? Let's look at Luke, chapter 2. "Now it came about those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, a census should be taken of all the inhabitants." Then everybody knows the story of Bethlehem. And then Jesus was born. Caesar Augustus is the king of the Roman Empire. This is one of the four beasts. After Caesar Augustus appeared, our Lord was born. Later He was crucified for us and resurrected for us. Then He ascended for us. When you put together the facts and the prophecies together from the Bible, we will understand. Thank the Lord! Now all young brothers and sisters, we will have assurance. Our Lord's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension were all historical facts. The Bible used the first and second accounts of Luke to show us that our Lord ascended. Do you know why the Lord ascended to heaven? Not only might He bring us back to paradise, but also to the eternal purpose of God. Therefore, we can gain Sonship and to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. All this work is for the eternal purpose of God. May the Lord speak to the depths of our hearts.

Let us pray. "Lord, we commit these words into Your hand. We especially pray for the young people. In the very early stage of their lives, may You impress these words deeply into their hearts! We thank You Lord! You not only manifest the reality into our lives, You also enable us to understand what the ascension is. We truly thank you, Lord. We have met the ascended Christ and the ascended Christ lives in us today. This Lord takes us back 2000 years and lets us see the glorious facts. Lord, be gracious to us. Even though the meeting is ending, please continue to speak to each one of us. We pray these the precious name of Jesus, Amen."