



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 143

**Ascension** – Jesus referred to His ascension numerous times (John 6:62; 14:1-2, 12; 16:5, 10, 28; 20:17); it is also described in the epistles (Ephesians 1:20; 4:8-10; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; 4:14; 9:24). Luke provides the most detailed description of this event (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11).

**Nature of Christ's ascension** – First, it was a visible event, leaving no doubt that Christ was taken away from the disciples, marking the start of a new phase in their relationship with Him, who would no longer be visibly present with them on earth. Second, it was the visible movement of the body and soul of the God-man. Third, it was a local movement of the person of Christ, from one location, earth, to another location, heaven. The Bible speaks of heaven in a number of senses, one of which is the abode of God, also of angels, glorified saints and the human nature of Christ (Matthew 18:10; 22:30; Luke 2:15; John 14:1-2), implying that heaven is not only a condition but also a location. Apart from God, all others in heaven have a finite spatial component or limit to their being, and thus dwell in an actual location.

**To receive glory, honor and authority** – To accomplish redemption for His people, Christ humbled Himself, came into this world by taking on a human nature, and thus set aside His heavenly glory and honor. In Philippians 2:9-11 Paul explains that because of what Christ did the Father has highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him great glory and authority, which He did not possess beforehand. This exaltation was not with regards to Christ's divine nature, which was His from all eternity (John 17:4-5), but was with respect to His human nature. Beginning with His resurrection and ascension Jesus possessed according to His humanity what He always had according to His divinity (Hebrews 2:7-9).

**To present His sacrifice to God in the heavenly temple** – Just as in the Old Covenant the animals were slain outside the Holy of Holies, and then the high priest would take and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies for the atonement of the people (Leviticus 16:14-15), in the same manner it was necessary that after offering Himself as the perfect and flawless sacrifice, Christ as our High Priest would then pass through the heavens and enter the temple made without hands, the heavenly Holy of Holies, and present His offering before God, on our behalf.

**To intercede for His people** – The priestly ministry of Christ did not end with His offering of a perfect sacrifice, but it continues with His resurrection and ascension, where Christ as our High Priest is interceding for us before the Father in heaven (Hebrews 4:14; 7:25; 8:1-2; 9:24; 10:12). Jesus is continuously praying for our spiritual growth and perseverance (John 17:20; Hebrews 7:24-25); He is defending us from our enemies (Zechariah 3:1-2; Romans 8:33-34; 1 John 5:18); as our merciful and compassionate High Priest He is ministering to us from heaven (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15-16); and He is rendering our worship, prayers and service, being stained with sin, acceptable to God (1 Peter 2:4-5).

**To prepare a place for His people** – Referring to His ascension Jesus told His disciples that He would be leaving them and going to the Father to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-3). In addition to our physical resurrection, as prefigured by the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ also prefigures and assures us of our own future ascension into heaven, to be with Him forever. Talking about this, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 Paul calls us to “encourage one another with these words.”

**To send the Holy Spirit** – It was also necessary for Christ to depart in order to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples (John 14:16-18; 16:5-7). Jesus told His disciples that this was necessary and to their advantage (John 16:16-22). Thus, the Spirit's full and diverse ministry began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), in order to enlighten, sanctify, empower and equip believers to walk in the newness of life, to put to death the deeds of the flesh, and to serve and carry on the work of Christ, by proclaiming the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth (Luke 24:49; John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16-18; Ephesians 1:17-18; 4:7-16).