

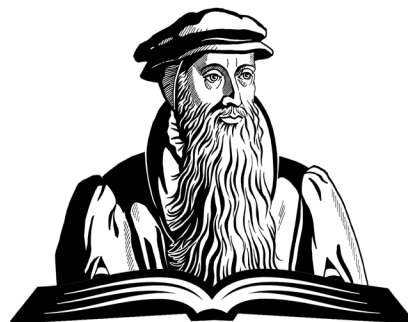
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #23, Lord's Day 18

The Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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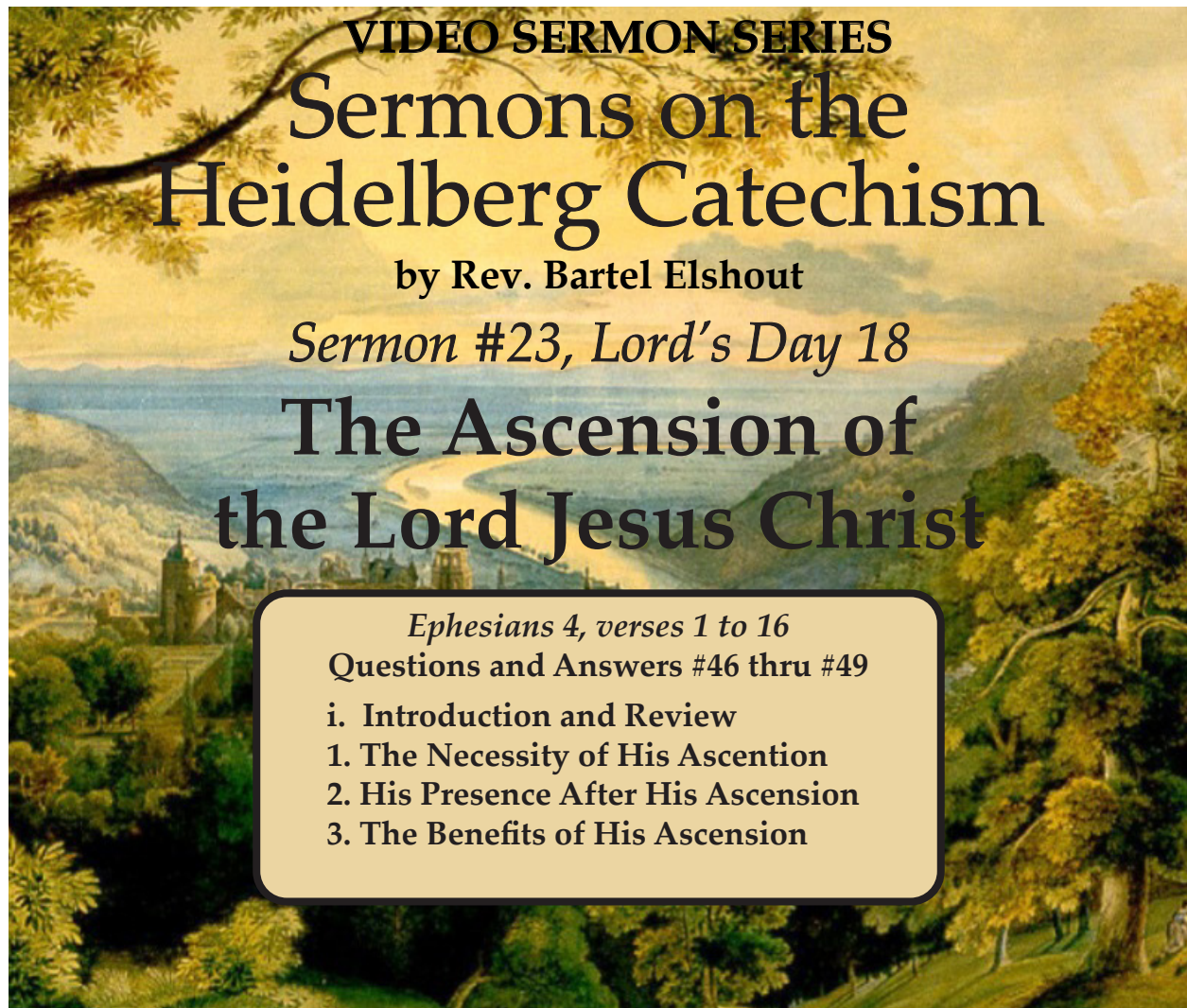
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Sermon #23, Lord's Day 18

The Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ

Ephesians 4, verses 1 to 16

Questions and Answers #46 thru #49

i. Introduction and Review

1. The Necessity of His Ascension
2. His Presence After His Ascension
3. The Benefits of His Ascension

Introduction and Review

Boys and girls, I'm quite sure that you are very familiar with the story of Joseph. That's a very favorite story. It was a favorite story of mine when I was your age. And you know that at one point, Joseph ended up in prison. And in the prison, God used him for two of Pharaoh's employees who had been committed to prison. And you know, they both had a dream. And they told Joseph the dream, and God gave Joseph the wisdom to explain the meaning of those dreams. And it came to pass exactly as Joseph had foretold. The baker was hanged, and the butler was set free. And as the butler was about to leave, to leave behind him the shame of the prison, and to be exalted again to his former glory in the presence of Pharaoh, Joseph said to the butler, "When you return to the palace, can you please put in a good word for me, and tell me that I am in this prison unjustly?" And the butler said, "I will." He promised him that he would speak on Joseph's behalf to the king. And you know what happened, boys and girls—the butler forgot. He was restored to his glory, he was restored to the Pharaoh, and he forgot the promise he made to Joseph.

And so it is not with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, before he ascended on high, he said to his disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 28:20). And so, we have a Savior, who was, as we've seen, who was deeply humiliated, who suffered the full consequences of sin,

as our Mediator; but who now is exalted, first of all, by being raised from the dead, the first step of his exaltation; followed by the second step of his exaltation, namely, his return into glory. And what a comfort it is to know that that ascended Christ, at the Father's right hand, never forgets his Word, never forgets his people, never forgets his promises—not like the butler who did not keep his word, when he returned to his former glory.

And so, with God's help, we're going to focus on that blessed ascension, and the benefits that accrue from it, by way of Lord's Day 18 of our Heidelberg Catechism. Please turn to Lord's Day 18 with me. And we read,

in Question #46: *How dost thou understand these words, "He ascended into heaven"?*

And the Answer is: *That Christ, in sight of His disciples, was taken up from the earth into heaven; and that He continues there for our interest until He comes again to judge the quick and the dead.*

Question #47: *Is not Christ then with us even to the end of the world, as He hath promised?*

The Answer is: *Christ is very man and very God; with respect to His human nature, He is no more on earth; but with respect to His Godhead, majesty, grace and Spirit, He is at no time absent from us.*

Question #48: *But if His human nature is not present, wherever His Godhead is, are not then these two natures in Christ separated from one another?*

The Answer is: *Not at all, for since the Godhead is illimitable—infinite—and omnipresent—everywhere present—it must necessarily follow that the same is beyond the limits of the human nature He assumed, and yet is nevertheless in this human nature, and remains personally united to it.*

Question #49: *Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension into heaven?*

Answer: *First, that He is our Advocate in the presence of His Father in heaven; secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that He, as the head, will also take up to Himself, us, His members; thirdly, that He sends us His Spirit as an earnest—or pledge—by whose power we "seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and not things on earth.*

1. The Necessity of His Ascension

And so, as we consider the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, first of all, we will consider *The Necessity of His Ascension*. Why is the ascension also a very essential event in the history of redemption? Secondly, *His Presence After His Ascension*—in what way is the ascended Lord Jesus Christ present with his people and in his church? And thirdly, *The Benefits of His Ascension*—and then we looked at Question and Answer #49, and there three benefits are mentioned: *He is our Advocate* in his Father's presence; he is the *pledge* that we will one day be taken up to him; and thirdly, *that he sends us His Spirit*. So, *The Necessity of his Ascension, His Presence After His Ascension, The Benefits of His Ascension*.

And so, as we pointed out to you already last week, congregation, in the resurrection, we see the restoration of life. But now, in the second step of his humiliation, the risen Christ, after being on earth for forty days—that's a significant number in the Bible, forty days—during which he appeared to his disciples, during which he instructed them. After forty days, he now ascends on high. He is taken up by his Father, and restored into the presence of his Father. So, first, we have the restoration of life.

But then we also have the restoration of the privileges that belong to that life. Because,

remember, everything Christ did, also in his exaltation, he did as Mediator; he did as the substitute of his people. And so, in Christ, God's children again receive the gift of life, as we saw last week. Your spiritual life, the very fact that you are spiritually alive unto God, is the direct result of his resurrection. But not only does he restore life to us, he restores us into the very presence of God, because that's the position from which we have fallen. As I pointed out last week, that's the privilege Adam and Eve enjoyed. Not only were they created by God in his image, but they lived in God's presence in that wonderful garden. They enjoyed daily fellowship and communion with God, all of which was lost when they fell. And now, we see that the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, now as the exalted Mediator of his church, brings us back to where we fell from; brings us back into the very presence of God. Because when he ascended on high, he did not ascend on high by himself, but as he ascended on high, he literally carried his entire church with him. That's why Paul writes, in Ephesians that in him, in Christ, we are now seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). In Christ, we have been brought literally into the presence of God. In Christ, we are again near unto God. In Christ, all the barriers have been taken away. And in Christ, God can now freely commune with his people, and we, in Christ, may now freely commune with God.

And therefore, what a glorious day it was! What an unspeakable moment it must have been, when the exalted Christ, the second Adam, when he returned into the presence of his Father! Oh, that glorious moment was prophesied in Psalm 24, where we read this in verse 9, and it's repeated in these last verses: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Oh, how rich that is, congregation! Because that's what happened as a result of the fall. The gates of heaven were shut. The garden of Eden was literally heaven on earth. The garden of Eden is where God walked in that garden, and had fellowship in his Son with Adam and Eve. And when they sinned, they were expelled, and the doors went shut. The angels, the Cherubim, stood there with flaming sword, barring the entrance into the presence of God, to where the tree of life was. And now, we see again that in his exaltation, Christ, step by step, reverses all of the consequences of our fall. And so, as the door went shut to the first Adam, so the door opens again to the second Adam.

And we know that he ascended on high. We know this from Psalm 68, that he was surrounded with an innumerable multitude of angels that were worshipping the exalted Christ. And what a return that must have been, when he came, and those gates of heaven, they had to yield. They could not remain closed, they had to yield, those everlasting doors, they had to lift. And the King of glory did come in.

Oh, what a joyous reunion that must have been between the Father and the Son. Oh, what a joyous moment, for the Son to return into his Father's presence, and to be able to say, "My Father, I have accomplished the work thou gavest me to do. I have finished the work thou hast gave me to do. I have accomplished the redemption of all those whom thou hast given me, in the stills of eternity, all those whom thou has given me. Father, I have lost none of them. I have accomplished their redemption.

Oh, our human words are so inadequate to begin to describe the unspeakable joy there must have been in heaven when Christ returned. We know that, as a result of that ascension, is that the Spirit of God would ultimately be poured out, reverently speaking, as the finishing touch of the redeeming work of Christ. Because you see, that outpouring of the Spirit would be the natural outgrowth of what he accomplished. Because it is only through that Spirit that everything Christ had accomplished in his humiliation, and also by means of his exaltation, it is only through his Spirit that fallen sinners would become the beneficiaries of all that Christ had accomplished. But

that Spirit could not be poured out until Christ returned into his Father's presence. That's why, on the eve of his crucifixion, as he spoke to his disciples for the final time, he said to them, in John 16, verse 7: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

And so, the Catechism says here, in the Answer to Question #46, *That Christ, in sight of His disciples, was taken up from earth into heaven; and that He continues there for our interest.* He continues there for our interest—what a lovely phrase that is, congregation. And, of course, I will be very brief here, because that is really unpacked for us in Question and Answer #49. But what I want to emphasize here is that the Catechism correctly echoes the Word of God, and tells us that our Christ, our High Priest, our exalted High Priest, is as active in his exaltation, on our behalf, as he was in his humiliation. And so, dear people of God, you have a Savior, you have an High Priest who is fully engaged on your behalf; who continues there for your interest; who ever lives there to make intercession for us.

In Hebrews 4, verse 14, the Apostle says: "Seeing then that we have"—we have!—"a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens." And of course, this was all symbolized in the Old Testament. Every single day, the priest would enter into the sanctuary. Every day he would carry the whole nation with him into the presence of God. And on the basis of what happened at the altar, he would offer up the praises of Israel. What a beautiful example of what really happened here. And so, just like the priest was actively engaged on behalf of the people of Israel every day—they could witness this every morning and every evening, so the Lord Jesus Christ is continually engaged as our High Priest. *He continues there for our interest until He comes again to judge the quick—or, the living—and the dead.*

That tells us something about this stage of Christ's exaltation. And so, this tells us what the Word of God clearly teaches us, that what Christ is now doing at the Father's right hand, as the ascended, and as the exalted Christ, he is paving the way for his return. He is paving the way for his second coming, when he will come again for the second time to judge the quick—or the living—and the dead. And that, of course, will be the final step of his exaltation. And so, we are in the advent season. We are reflecting the fact that Christ came for the first time. And at the same time, we need to focus on his second coming. And so, we are an advent people. The people of God today, as the people in the Old Testament, they were waiting. They were waiting for the consolation of Israel—Simeon, Anna, and many others in Jerusalem.

And so now, we are waiting for his second return, when he comes for the second time without sin, when he will come, not as a babe in the manger, a great humiliation. He will come the second time in glory, as the Judge of heaven and earth. But between now and that moment, he is building his church. He's actively engaged, by his Spirit. He continues to work around the world. That's a comfort for us in the midst the turmoil that swirls around us. Christ is on the throne. He is executing his good pleasure. He is gathering in his church from the very ends of the world, until that work is completed.

And so, he is now seated, as we will see next week. He is now seated at the Father's right hand, which we call the third step of his exaltation. Right, so there, you have it. In the resurrection, we have the restoration of life. In his ascension, we have the restoration into the presence of God. In his being seated at the Father's right hand, we have the restoration of fellowship with God. And then, ultimately, when he comes in glory, to judge the living and the dead, we will forever be restored into the favor and presence of God, to enjoy God forever.

And so it says it so simply that the disciples witnessed this. That's really been important,

congregation. We know that when the resurrection occurred, no one witnessed it. The guards, they knew something dramatic happened. But the ascension was a very visible event. The disciples saw it. They literally stood there—you can read it in Acts chapter 1—they stood there in utter amazement, as they saw their Savior being lifted from off the earth. And I can assure you that that must have been a glorious and a dramatic moment, when the exalted Christ, when he, no doubt, emanated his glory, as he ascended on high, surrounded by the angels shouting the praises of their King as he was lifted up from their presence. And so, they saw that he physically left the earth, and physically returned into the presence of God.

Of course, our forefathers wrote the Catechism during the time when there was much controversy with the Lutherans. Because Luther¹ denied that. Luther taught what we call “the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ.” That’s a fancy word, “ubiquity,” what it simply meant, Luther said that also the human nature of Christ became everywhere present. Now, why did Luther teach that? Luther taught that to sustain his teaching about the Lord’s Supper. Because, even though Luther denied transubstantiation, which means, he denied what the Roman Catholic Church teaches, that the bread really becomes the physical flesh of Christ, and that the wine becomes the physical blood of Christ. Luther denied that. But still, he had this bizarre doctrine that somehow, Christ was still physically present when the Lord’s Supper was administered. And so, to sustain that doctrine, Luther had to teach that after the resurrection, the human nature of Christ became everywhere present. Congregation, that’s not a minor thing. That’s not a minor thing, because what Luther thereby denied is that Christ’s humanity after the resurrection was no longer like ours. And that defeats the whole gospel. Jesus went out of his way to demonstrate to his disciples, by eating, that he was the same Jesus. And the angels came down—no sooner had their master returned, and they came and said, “This same Jesus,” whom you have seen taken up into heaven—clearly indicating his physical removal from the earth—“This same Jesus”...will return again (Acts 1:11). Because we know that the humanity of Christ is real, is genuine, even now, at the Father’s right hand. He will forever be very man. And the nature of humanity is that we can only be in one place at a time. And so, in his divine nature, he’s everywhere present. But in his human nature, he moved from earth, he moved into the very presence of God.

And so, this is an event, again, that was witnessed by all of the disciples, possibly even more, possibly some of those five hundred that Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 15. In other words, the point is this, is that this event, the ascension of Christ, was a completely verified, historical event.

That brings us to the next Question,

2. His Presence After His Ascension

Question #47: *Is not Christ then with us even to the end of the world, as He hath promised?* And, I have to say, on Luther’s behalf, his objective was a laudable one. Luther so much wanted to preserve the idea of God’s presence with his people, also in the Lord’s Supper. But he could not divorce himself completely from his Roman Catholic background. That’s why Calvin² is the one who said, “Yes, Christ is present, but not physically, but he is present by means of his Spirit.”

But this question is a beautiful one. It’s a question asked by someone for whom this means

1 Martin Luther (1483–1546), was a German priest, theologian, author, hymn writer, professor, and former Augustinian friar, who was the seminal figure of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Protestant Christian history.

2 John Calvin, or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) – was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and well-known Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

everything. *Is not Christ then with us...as He hath promised?* And how beautifully, congregation, this highlights the true nature of spiritual life. For the true believer, the presence of Christ means everything. The very fact of knowing that this Christ is with us, that this Christ dwells among us, that even today, as we are gathered here in his name, we have his promise, Wherever you “are gathered together in my name,” I will be with you (Matthew 18:20). And for the true believer, that means everything. For the true believer, Christ is everything, and to know that he is present with us means everything to the true believer. That’s why also, experientially, the most grievous thing for a believer is not to feel the presence of Christ, those times when we can be so cold; those times when darkness overtakes us. There’s nothing more grievous to a child of God than not to sense God’s favor. God’s favor in Christ means more than anything else. Oh, to know that Christ is with me is the sweetest thing that a believer can experience.

So I ask you, by way of self-examination, can you relate to that at all? Can you relate to that yearning of your soul? Can you relate to it, what that means to experience the presence of Christ through his Word, in our soul. Are they not the sweetest moments in the life of the believer? That’s why there is grief in our soul when it appears to us that he is absent. Because once we have tasted the love of Christ, once we have tasted the presence of Christ, we are spoiled for the rest of our lives. And we cannot be truly happy, and we cannot be truly satisfied, unless we again sense his presence. So, in that sense, this Question is really an experiential question as well.

So, the Answer is: *Christ is very man and [He is] very God*, so, reminding us that he is Emmanuel, with a true human nature and a true divine nature. So, *with respect to his human nature, He is no more on earth; but with respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and Spirit, He is at no time absent from us*. What a beautiful statement that is. What a beautiful summary of the teaching of the Word of God. So, in his Godhead, he is always present. In his majesty, he is present throughout the world. And that’s so important for us to remember, in the tumultuous times in which we are living. Christ has not abandoned his reign. He is on the throne. He is completely involved in all that’s happening here below. And in spite of all the shenanigans of man, in spite of all that’s happening here below, as it is, of course, when you read Psalm 2, that the rulers of the earth are conspiring together against him. He’s reigning. He’s reigning. He is at no time absent in his majesty, and he is at no time absent in his grace, and in his Spirit; at no time absent from his church. Isn’t that what David expressed in Psalm 23? Didn’t he say that, Even—even when I go “through the valley of the shadow of death...thou art with me” (verse 4).

And so, dear believer, even during those difficult times; even during those dark seasons; even during those times when you struggle; even during those times when Satan howls in your ears and says, “Where is now your God?”; even when you don’t feel his presence, he is at no time absent from you. You see, that’s one of the lessons we have to learn, as believers, that we cannot judge our Savior; we cannot judge his work by what we feel. We must judge him by his Word. And we make some progress in the school of grace, even though we don’t feel what we would like to feel; even though our heart is not as warm as we would like it to be, to know that nothing changes as far as he is concerned, to know that he is as faithful as he has always been, and that his faithfulness, his involvement in our life, his engagement as our High Priest is not determined by what we feel and by what we sense at the moment. It’s defined by his precious Word. Oh, what a blessed truth! He is at no time absent from us. And so, he meant it, when he said, Lo—behold—even though I’m going to leave you now, just remember, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Question #48: *But if His human nature is not present, wherever His Godhead is, are not then these two natures in Christ separated from one another?* Again, that’s a serious and it’s an important

question. Is it possible that, as a result of his ascension, that connection between his divine nature and his human nature, that somehow those two natures have become disconnected? How can it be that he's at no time absent from us, and yet that in his human nature, he is now in the presence of God?

Years ago, an old elder tried to explain to us what that meant. And he used a very simple example, and I never forgot. He pointed, he said, "Look at your mom's wedding ring. You'll see the ring, and on that ring, is a diamond. Now," he said, "the diamond is only in one spot." It can only be in one location. "Yet, that ring goes all the way around her finger." So, he said, "Now think of that diamond as the human nature of Christ, only in one place, and his divine nature is everywhere, but the two are truly connected." So, that human nature is in the presence of God, in one location. But it's united to his divine nature, and, of course, in his divine nature, Christ is everywhere present. There is not a place where he is not.

And so, what this emphasizes here, it says, *Not at all, for since the Godhead is illimitable—without limits, infinite—and omnipresent—everywhere present—it must necessarily follow that the same is beyond the limits of the human nature He assumed.* So, it's simply saying, in his divine nature, he cannot be limited to one location. The very nature of his Godhead is it's everywhere, it's infinite. *And yet, it is nevertheless in this human nature, and remains personally united to it.*

Congregation, that also is a very comforting truth for God's children, to know that the exaltation of Christ did not change anything, as far as the union of his divine nature and his human nature. So, let me explain again why that's so important. Because, not only did Jesus become man, in the fulness of time, taking upon himself our human nature, in order to be able to suffer and die on our behalf, there's more to it. Because, when that union take place, God and man are reconnected. In Paradise, God and Adam were connected, but that relationship broke. But now, in the second Adam, in Christ, God and man come together again. God and man are united with a bond that cannot be broken to all eternity—a bond that endures forever. And so, when Christ assumed that human nature—let me emphasize that again—the incarnation itself, when God and man are united together, that's not part of his humiliation; it's the circumstances. Why do I say that? Because the incarnation is forever. And so, when Christ is exalted, we don't have the cancellation of his incarnation, we have the cancelation of his humiliation, but not a cancelation of the incarnation. Who is it that comes out of the grave?—it's Emmanuel, God and man, and he demonstrated it to his disciples. Who is it that ascends on high?—Emmanuel, God and man. Who is it that's at the Father's right hand?—Emmanuel, God and man. Who is it that will come to judge the living and the dead?—Emmanuel, God and man. Who is it that will forever dwell among his people and walk among them?—Emmanuel, God and man united forever.

And why is that so precious? Why is that so comforting? Because, dear believer, in that union, in that union between God and man in Christ is the warranty of your everlasting redemption. As impossible as it is for those two natures ever to be separated, so impossible it is for you ever to be separated from God. Because in his divine nature, Christ represents the Godhead; in his human nature, he represents his people. And so, in him, God and his people are forever connected. In him, they are forever united, and nothing ever can separate them. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39).

3. The Benefits of His Ascension

And finally, *Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension into heaven?* And again, much of it we have already touched, but let's just walk through this Answer here, beautifully phrased.

First, that He is our Advocate in the presence of His Father in heaven. So, “advocate” is an old English word. We would use the word “attorney.” What does an attorney do? An attorney pleads the cause of someone else. He pleads the cause of his client. He will go to court, and he will speak on behalf of the person that he represents. And that’s what Jesus is in heaven. He is our Advocate at the Father’s right hand. He is there to represent us, in our interest. He is there to plead our cause. He is there to intercede for us. He is there as a continual reminder to his Father of what he has accomplished. His very presence, his very presence is the argument that cannot fail. The Father beholds his Son, and he sees those pierced hands. He’s always reminded of what his Son has accomplished on the cross. That’s why that intercession cannot fail. That’s why, dear believer, he is always your Advocate, always, even if you don’t perceive it, even if you don’t feel it. He ever lives to make intercession for you, uninterruptedly. He keeps you in fellowship with his Father. In him, your relationship with your heavenly Father is secure, and it is uninterrupted. From our side, from our experiential side, it often gets interrupted, but not from God’s side. In Christ, in Christ, you are always represented; in Christ, your interest is always brought before the Father. It is that Christ who takes our feeble prayers; who takes our mumbling; who takes our disjointed prayers; who takes our groans, and brings them into his Father’s presence. And that’s why, even though we often struggle with our prayer. And especially in our private prayers, when sometimes things come out backwards, and we don’t know how to order our petitions before God. How discouraging that can be. Even then, dear child of God, even though you’re struggling, he’s there as your Advocate, and he takes those feeble mumblings, and he brings them always into the presence of his Father. Oh, we have such a high priest, the Apostle says, in Hebrews 8.

Secondly, he says that *We have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that He, as the head, will also take up to Himself, us, His members.* Very simply, that means this. Since he is there, we will be there. You see, where the head is, the body must follow. The body must follow. And so, his presence at the right hand of the Father is the warranty, dear believer, that you will be there, as surely as he is there, so surely you shall one day be there. It is *a sure pledge that He, as the head, will also take up to Himself, us, His members.* That’s why he said, “I go to prepare a place for you,” for “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). There’s a place for you, dear believer. There is a reservation in heaven, secured by his blood, a reservation that has your name on it. That reservation is secure. That reservation will not be cancelled, and Christ is not satisfied until you will be where he is. “Father,” I pray, he said, in John 17—I pray that those “whom thou hast given me” that they may “be where I am; that they may behold my glory” (verse 24). That’s his longing. And it’s only because the number of the elect is not complete, that he is holding back. But I can assure you, dear child of God, he yearns for you. He yearns for you to be with him, more than we yearn to be with him, I can assure you. Such is our exalted Christ. And so, again, because his flesh is there; because he has carried us with him into the presence of God, and so the day will come that we will surely be with him.

Thirdly, that He sends us His Spirit as an earnest—or pledge—by whose power we “seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,” and not things on earth. And so, not only does Christ think about us, always, at his Father’s right hand, but he wants to make sure that we think about him. So he wants us to know that, at the Father’s right hand, we are always on his mind, but by his Spirit, he wants to make sure that he is always on our mind. And what a gracious work that is. He sends us his Spirit, as an earnest, as a pledge. It’s that Spirit that strives with God’s people. It’s that Spirit that brings us again, time and again, to look to this Christ. For we so much cleave to the dust, so much cleave to this life. Left to ourselves, we would wander

away permanently from our Shepherd. Left to ourselves, we would backslide. That's the Spirit, you see. Christ gives us his Spirit. Our exalted Savior does not leave us to ourselves. Not only does he intercede for us, but he grants us his Spirit. And the work of the Spirit is what?—is to glorify Christ; is to take out of him, and to show it unto us. So, by his Spirit, *by whose power we “seek the things which are above.”* That's what that Spirit does, as he deals with us, is to make us heaven-oriented, so that we live our lives as strangers and pilgrims, not seeking the things here below. In our last refreshment service, we preached through Colossians 3: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (verse 1). And Christ is so committed to your spiritual well-being, that by his Spirit, he will strive with us; he will labor within us, to make us heaven-oriented, to make us Christ-oriented. So that, with the Apostle Paul, we say, “For me to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21).

Oh, dear child of God, can you echo those words? Can you say that today? “In spite of all that testifies against me; in spite of all that I am and remain in myself, but Lord, thou knowest that for me, to live is Christ. Christ is everything for me. Christ is the focus of my life. My yearning is for him. Oh, to know him, and to know more of him.”

And so, we have considered the blessed ascension of our dear Lord Jesus Christ—*The Necessity of the Ascension; Christ's Presence After His Ascension*, in heaven and here; and then, of course, the wonderful *Benefits of that Ascension*. And so, my dear congregation, is this Christ yours? Is he your Advocate? It says here, *Of what advantage to us*. Because, unless you are a true believer, you are not the beneficiary of all this. If you are still without Christ, then your future will be the very opposite of what awaits the people of God. Then, you will experience the ultimate consequences of your fall. Instead of being in the presence of God, you shall forever be banished from the presence of God. What a fearful thing it will be to fall into the hands of the living God, especially if we have lived under the gospel, especially if this Christ has been preached to us. And therefore, do not rest until you may know that what Christ has done in his humiliation and also his exaltation is truly to your advantage. Dear believer, consider the loving exhortation of Hebrews 4, verse 14, with which I wish to end: “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.” Amen.

Let's pray.

Lord, wilt thou bless thy own Word? And Lord, we pray that this may be to the comfort and instruction of thy children, those whose heart is knit to Christ, who can truly say that Christ alone is our hope. To know him is the deep yearning of our soul. Lord, we pray that we might begin to grasp who he is, what he has accomplished, and what he is doing, even at this moment at thy right hand. O, what a comfort to know that he is with us always, and that in his Godhead, majesty, grace, and power, he is at no time absent from us. Go with us into this new week, and bless us in the labor of our hands, as we engage in our daily calling. Keep us safely. Bless our children in school, our young people in college. Remember them, too, in a very dangerous, treacherous environment. Lord, pour out thy Spirit richly in the hearts of our young people, that they may remain as steadfast as Daniel and his friends were in Babylon. And gather with us again this coming Lord's Day. Hear us alone for Christ's sake. Amen.