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After he [Jesus] said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:9-11 NIV

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been said that contemplating Christ's ascension is like staring at the sun: the more intently a person looks at it, the worse his vision becomes until he can see nothing at all. This miracle of Christ is for those who do not need to understand it completely, but who simply believe what the Scriptures say about it.

After Christ's resurrection, the stone on His grave and the locked doors of the upper room did not prevent Him from passing through, although no one understands how He had done it. Thereafter, He allowed Himself to be seen, then made Himself invisible again, just as He wanted. At one moment, He was in one place and in another moment He was somewhere else. He could travel through air or on water as readily as upon earth. We will have to wait until after this life to experience this glory ourselves when Christ will "transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" as St. Paul wrote in Philippians 3:21.

But this is not the most important sign of the ascension. That Christ was received into heaven and separated from the earth on the clouds indicates that His spiritual kingdom is above this one. It is a heavenly kingdom and it will remain invisible until it is revealed. By His resurrection, Christ was made Lord over everything according to His human nature so he could say, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). The attributes Christ possessed from eternity, according to His divine nature, were retained by His human nature, but He used them only rarely during His humiliation. Even after His resurrection, Christ, according to His human nature, did not immediately assume dominion over all things. This took place after the ascension when, also according to His human nature, He entered into the fullness of the majesty of God the Father.

Human understanding cannot grasp all of this, of course. The ascension of Christ remains an article of faith that we do not comprehend with our intellect but believe with our hearts. We should note both the greatness and the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ. His kingdom is primarily not of this world and has nothing to do with temporal and visible things. His ascension should dispel any notion that a person should seek worldly power, goods, and glory from Christ or that an outward, worldly works righteousness attitude avails anything before God. In his kingdom, Christ distributes to us heavenly goods: grace, forgiveness, righteousness, redemption from sin and death, and eternal life.

The ascension demands of us that if we want to live under Christ in His kingdom, we must keep our minds focused on heaven and not seek salvation in the goods of this world. As Christ Himself says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). As Christ sits on His throne in heaven, so should our hearts be moved by a constant longing to be there with Him.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton



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Words from the Cross