

**ENTERING INTO THE FOURTH STAGE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE
TO ARRIVE AT A FULL-GROWN MAN
FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE**

(Thursday—Afternoon Session)

Message Three

**The Fourth Stage of the Experience of Life
(2)
Knowing the Ascension**

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:36; Heb. 2:9; 4:14-15; 7:26; 12:2; Eph. 1:19-23

- I. **The Man-Savior's ascension is His inauguration into His heavenly office through the process of creation, incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection as God and man, as the Creator and the creature, and as the Redeemer, the Savior, and the life-giving Spirit to execute God's administration and to carry out God's New Testament economy.**
- II. **We need to see the objective aspect of the Lord's ascension:**
 - A. The Lord's ascension caused Him to be crowned with glory and honor—Heb. 2:9:
 1. Glory is the splendor related to Jesus' person; honor is the preciousness related to Jesus' worth—1 Pet. 2:7.
 2. Christ is glorious in state and honorable in rank; He is above all kings and rulers; this is His honor.
 - B. The Lord's ascension caused Him to be enthroned for God's administration; Hebrews 12:2 says that Christ is now seated on the right hand of the throne of God:
 1. The fact that God in Christ is sitting on the throne means that God administers the entire universe from within Christ and through Christ, just as the light shines from within the lamp and through the lamp—Rev. 22:1, 3; cf. 21:23.
 2. Christ is now on the throne to administrate the entire universe; He is the unique Administrator, the King of kings and the Lord of lords; He is the Ruler of the kings of the earth—1:5; 17:14; 19:16.
 3. His administrating is related to the universe, but His carrying out God's New Testament economy is to propagate Himself for His reproduction to build up the church, His Body, which will issue in the New Jerusalem—cf. Acts 5:31.
 - C. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified" (2:36); in this verse the word *made* can be understood to mean "inaugurated"; in His ascension God inaugurated Christ into His heavenly ministry:
 1. The Man-Savior, in His ascension, has been made the Lord to possess all; He is now the Lord to possess the whole universe, God's chosen people, and all positive things, matters, and persons.

2. The Man-Savior, in His ascension, was made the Christ as God's Anointed (Heb. 1:9) to carry out God's commission.
- D. We are now one with Christ in His resurrection and ascension (Eph. 2:6); as a result, we have life and power in resurrection and also authority in ascension; when we contact our Lord, we need to have a realization of what He is, a realization of His status, position, and office.

III. We need to see the subjective aspect of the Lord's ascension—cf. Psa. 91:1; S. S. 4:7-8; 6:10:

- A. Christ in His all-transcending ascension transcended Hades (where the dead people are being held), the earth (where the fallen people are moving against God), the air (where Satan and his power of darkness are acting against God), and all the heavens (where Satan can go—Eph. 1:20-21; 4:8-10; Heb. 7:26; Job 1:6-12a; 2:1-6); in His ascension Christ passed through the heavens (Heb. 4:14) so that now He is not only in heaven (9:24) but also is higher than the heavens (7:26), far above all the heavens (Eph. 4:10).
- B. Ephesians 1:19-23 reveals that there is a transmission from the ascended Christ to us; verse 22 says that God gave Christ “to be Head over all things to the church”; the phrase *to the church* indicates a transmission from the ascended Christ to the church, His Body:
 1. God gave the ascended Christ a great gift—the headship over all things; what God gave Christ to be is to the church; it is transmitted to the church, and the church shares it.
 2. Verses 20 through 22 show that God caused His power to operate in Christ in four steps: first, raising Him from the dead; second, seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies; third, subjecting all things under His feet; and fourth, giving Him to be Head over all things to the church.
 3. Christ's power—His resurrecting power, ascending power, subjecting power, and heading up power—is “toward us who believe” and “to the church”; whatever Christ, the Head, has attained and obtained is transmitted to the church, His Body—vv. 19, 22-23.
 4. We should not only believe in the divine transmission; we need to experience it day by day; the church should be in the transmission of the exalted and ascended Christ; in this transmission the church shares with Christ in all His attainments—the resurrection from among the dead, being seated in His transcendence, the subjection of all things under His feet, and the headship over all things.
 5. Because the divine transmission is not once for all, the church should continually receive this transmission; this is the continual transmission into the church of the ascended Christ with the full significance of His ascension; through the divine transmission, we are joined to Christ in the heavens; as long as we are clean receptacles and are willing to open ourselves, this transmission will take place continually in us—2:6.
 6. We simply need to open ourselves and say, “Lord, I am here. I love You, and I give myself to You. Lord, I empty my whole being for You”; if you pray like this, you will experience and enjoy this divine transmission.

- C. The great goal of the divine transmission is the heading up of all things in Christ (1:10); through all the dispensations of God in all the ages, all things will be headed up in Christ in the new heaven and new earth; this will be God's eternal administration and economy:
1. This heading up is done by God through a universal man; the Head of this man is Christ, and the Body of this man is the church.
 2. Because God is heading up all things through a universal man constituted of Christ, the Head, and the church, the Body, we as members of the Body need to keep the oneness of the Body under the headship; this oneness is the instrument, channel, and sphere that God is using to head up all things in Christ.
 3. The whole creation is expecting and eagerly awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God; at that time all divisions and separations will be removed, and all things, not only mankind, will be headed up in Christ—Rom. 8:19-22.
 4. According to man's view, the heading up of the entire universe seems to be an impossibility, but with God nothing is impossible—Mark 10:27.
- D. In His ascension Christ was made the Head of the church, His Body, to express God in His fullness—Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:23; 3:19:
1. The Head and the Body are one and form a universal man; with this divine matter there is neither the element of space nor the element of time; the Body is one with the Head in the divine life and in the divine Spirit.
 2. According to the divine viewpoint, we are one with the ascended Christ, and His ascension is also ours (2:6); here in this ascension we express Him in His fullness; since the transcending Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9), His transcending transmission includes all the rich dispensing of the Triune God to make us the fullness of Christ for His expression (Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19, 8).
- E. In His ascension Christ was also made the High Priest in the heavens to bear us in the presence of God and to care for all our needs; in His ascension He was inaugurated into His priestly office—Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-15; Psa. 110:1-4; Heb. 5:6; 7:26:
1. On the one hand, Christ is the High Priest interceding in the heavens for the churches (vv. 25-26; Rom. 8:34); on the other hand, He is the High Priest moving in the churches to care for them; in Revelation 1:13 Christ is depicted as the High Priest, as shown by His garment, a garment reaching to the feet, that is, a priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35).
 2. In Revelation 8 Christ is revealed as the Priest offering the incense at the golden altar: "And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne" (v. 3).
 3. In the Old Testament the high priest typifies Christ as our High Priest; according to the book of Exodus, the high priest bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart, bearing the names of God's chosen people before God—Exo. 28:9-10, 12, 21, 29:
 - a. Today Christ is our High Priest, and we are on His shoulders and on His

- breast; He is in the heavens as the High Priest bearing us with His strength and holding us with His love.
- b. As our High Priest, Christ is also taking care of us; He is “a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God” (Heb. 2:17), a High Priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15).
 - c. Although Christ as the High Priest is taking care of us, we all have our own thought and feeling as to how He should care for us; however, what is good for us is not a matter of our interpretation but of His—Rom. 8:28-29.
 - d. The ascended Christ cares not only for us and our welfare; He cares for God’s desires; as the High Priest, He cares more for God’s need than our need.
 - e. The Lord as the High Priest establishes lampstands and trims the lamps for the expression of God (Rev. 1:13; 2:1); this work includes His edifying of the saints and His building up of the church as the living testimony of Jesus.
4. As the High Priest in the heavens, the Lord is the surety and the Mediator, the Executor, of a better covenant—Heb. 7:22; 8:6; 9:15-17:
 - a. The New Testament is a new will for our inheritance; it has many bequests, all of which are divine blessings bequeathed to the churches.
 - b. Christ died to enact the will, resurrected to become the reality of the bequests of the will, and He is now in the heavens as the living Executor of the will that He has bequeathed to us (Isa. 42:6).
 - c. Every blessing in the New Testament (Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:14) is a bequest applied to us by the living, resurrected, and ascended Christ.
 - d. Christ’s ministry in the heavens has a destination—the New Jerusalem; the New Jerusalem will be the consummation of Christ’s work in His ascension.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE HIGH PRIEST IN THE HEAVENS

In His ascension Christ was also made the High Priest in the heavens. Hebrews 4:14 says that we have a “great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.” The Lord came from God to us through incarnation, and then He went back from us to God through resurrection and ascension to be our High Priest to bear us in the presence of God and to care for all our needs (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15). Therefore, Hebrews 7:26 says, “For such a High Priest befits us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens.” In His ascension Christ passed through the heavens; now He is not only in heaven (Heb. 9:24), but is also higher than the heavens, far above all heavens (Eph. 4:10). In His ascension He was inaugurated into His priestly office. When He was on earth, He did not carry on His priestly ministry as He is now doing in the heavens.

Caring for the Churches

It is significant that in the book of Revelation Christ is unveiled first not as the

Administrator, but as the Priest. Revelation 1:13 says, “In the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet.” On the one hand, Christ is the High Priest interceding in the heavens for the churches (Heb. 7:25-26; Rom. 8:34); on the other hand, He is the High Priest moving in the churches to care for them. In Revelation 1:13 Christ is depicted as the High Priest, as shown by His garment, a garment reaching to the feet, that is, a priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35).

The first vision of Christ in Revelation, recorded in chapter one, is that of the High Priest clothed with a priestly garment. As the High Priest, Christ is walking among the lampstands and taking care of them, especially of their shining by trimming the lamps. Then in chapter eight Christ is revealed as the Priest offering the incense at the golden altar: “And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him that He should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne” (v. 3). Therefore, in chapter one Christ is revealed as the Priest taking care of the lampstands, and in chapter eight He is unveiled as the Priest offering incense to God. Then, of course, in chapter five He is revealed as the Administrator over the whole universe. To the universe Christ is not the Priest; He is the Administrator. But to the church Christ is the High Priest. As the ascended One in the heavens, He is now living, working, and ministering as a Priest.

Bearing Us and Holding Us

In the Old Testament the high priest typifies Christ as our High Priest. According to the book of Exodus, the high priest bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart: “And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth...and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial” (Exo. 28:9-10, 12). The names of the twelve tribes were also engraved on the twelve stones set in the breastplate of gold worn by the High Priest: “And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes....And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually” (Exo. 28:21, 29). The names engraved on the onyx stones and on the stones of the breastplate signify that the high priest always bore the names of God’s chosen people before God. Today Christ is our High Priest, and we are on His shoulders and on His breast. He is in the heavens as the High Priest bearing us and holding us.

As our High Priest, Christ is also taking care of us. He is a “merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God” (Heb. 2:17), a High Priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).

Although Christ as the High Priest is taking care of us, we all have our own thought and feeling as to how He should care for us. For example, we all want to be

healthy and have a long life. We may not even be satisfied if we lived to be a hundred years of age. If we reach the age of one hundred, we may desire to live to be one hundred and twenty. However, often the Lord's way of caring for us is different from what we desire. Therefore, we may complain and say, "Lord, why do You not seem to care about my health? I'm sick, and I pray for healing. Lord, where is Your power? Where is Your healing? Lord, why don't You hear me?" The Lord may not answer a prayer for healing. In His care for a certain one, He may allow that one to die of his illness. We do not know what is good for us, but the Lord knows. He knows what is needed for our life on earth.

We all have our preferences concerning our living. We may desire to be wealthy and have many material things. But the Lord may allow us to be poor and deprive us of many things. Likewise, we may desire to have children who love the Lord and serve Him. Those who have daughters may hope that they will marry the best brothers in the churches. However, the situation concerning our children may turn out to be much different from what we desire. If we ask the Lord about this, He may say, "You do not know what is best for you. I know that this is the way it should be."

Perhaps you are thinking that matters such as these have nothing to do with the ascension of Christ. However, the ascension of Christ certainly is related to these things. The Lord's ascension includes His priesthood. As the ascended One, He is the High Priest bearing us, holding us, and taking care of us. However, what is good for us is a matter not of our interpretation but of His. For example, you may buy a new car, hoping that it will last many years. But the Lord's opinion of the matter is that your car should last a very short time. If you were to come to me and say, "I bought a new car, and after a few weeks it was wrecked. Why did this happen? Didn't the Lord know that I would have an accident and that the car would be wrecked? Since He knew this, why did He allow me to buy it? Why didn't He stop me?" I, of course, cannot explain why. Only the Lord knows the reason; He is the High Priest.

Usually when I receive letters from saints asking me about their situation, I set the letters aside. The reason I set such letters aside is that I am not the High Priest, and I do not know what is on His heart concerning the saints. I cannot say anything for Him about such matters. If I were to try to say something, I actually would not be helping the saints. Fifty-five years ago I had a great deal to say when I was asked such questions. I had much to say because I did not know anything, and therefore I spoke many things in a presumptuous way. But now, having more experience of the Lord and more knowledge of Him, I have very little, if anything, to say.

Nevertheless, I can say this: the Lord's care for us is always positive. One day we shall see Him and worship Him. Some of us may say to Him, "Lord Jesus, forgive me for complaining to You about my situation. Now I know that God's will for me is good." Our High Priest is taking good care of us all.

Caring for God's Desire

The ascended Christ cares not only for us and our welfare: He cares for God's desires. This High Priest cares more for God's need than for our need. God wants

lampstands. Therefore, the Lord establishes lampstands and trims the lamps for the expression of God (Rev. 1:13; 2:1). This work includes His edifying of the saints and His building up of the church. The Lord is now building up a living testimony of Jesus.

The Executor of the New Testament

As the High Priest in the heavens, the Lord is the surety and Mediator of the better covenant and the Executor of the New Testament. Hebrews 7:22 says, “Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant.” That Christ has become the surety of a better covenant is based on the fact that He is the High Priest. Hebrews 8:6 tells us, “He is also the Mediator of a better covenant.” Furthermore, Hebrews 9:15 and 16 say, “And because of this He is Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament there must of necessity be the death of him who made it.”

In verse 15 we have the word “covenant,” and in verse 16, the word “testament.” In Greek the same word is used for both covenant and testament. A covenant is an agreement with some promises to accomplish certain things for the covenanted people, while a testament is a will with certain accomplished things bequeathed to the inheritor. The new covenant consummated with the blood of Christ is not merely a covenant but a testament with all the things which have been accomplished by the death of Christ bequeathed to us. First God gave the promise that He would make a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Then Christ shed His blood to enact the covenant (Luke 22:20). Since there are accomplished facts promised in this covenant, it is also a testament. This testament, this will, has been confirmed and validated by Christ’s death, and it is now being executed by Christ in His ascension.

Our High Priest is establishing lampstands and trimming the lamps. In this establishing and trimming, He is also executing the New Testament for us. The New Testament has many bequests, all of which are divine blessings bequeathed to the churches.

In the Bible the word “testament” is equal to the modern word “will.” The New Testament, therefore, is a new will for our inheritance. This new will is for the bequeathing of the divine blessings, including the Person of Christ and His all-inclusive redemptive work. The One who enacted this new will is Jesus Christ, who died for its enactment. Now whatever He enacted has been bequeathed to us and is available to us.

The enactment of a will and all that is bequeathed in it requires the death of the one who makes the will. Once the maker of the will dies, the bequests in the will become available to the heirs. Praise the Lord that Christ died to enact the will and that He is now in the heavens as the living Executor of the will He has bequeathed to us! How does He execute this will? He executes the new will by establishing the churches as the lampstands and by trimming all the lamps.

At this very moment the ascended Christ is establishing lampstands and trimming the lamps. I can testify that daily I am under His trimming, for I have much

that needs to be trimmed. I also realize that He is walking among the local churches, that He is establishing the golden lampstands. By doing this He is executing, carrying out, the New Testament in a real way. Every blessing in the New Testament is a bequest applied to us by the living, resurrected, and ascended Christ. This is Christ in His ascension. Praise Him that we may enjoy Him in this way!

Christ's ministry as the High Priest in the heavens has a destination—the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be the consummation of Christ's work in His ascension. Whatever Christ is now working in His ascension will consummate in the coming New Jerusalem. (*Life-study of Luke*, pp. 668-673)