

MIDWEST

Pilgrim News

Spring 2024

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ISAIAH 40:8 ...THE FLOWER FADETH: BUT THE WORD
OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER.



From the Editor

THE ASCENSION ADVANTAGE

Act 1:9: *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

What emotion the disciples must have experienced as Jesus receded into the sky. After the trauma of losing the Lord and miraculously receiving Him back again, they evidently hoped that any separation was past and they could finally enjoy the promised kingdom. (Verse 6) But instead, Jesus responded with the disheartening words of verses 7-8, and disappeared again from their sight.

What was happening here? Why was He dumping His ministry on them and going into retirement? It did not make any sense. Two angels had to assure them that Jesus would one day return to them and it was only then that they returned to Jerusalem to await the promise of the Father. (Acts 1:4)

Certainly, we can sympathize with the disciples' feelings for we also have wrestled with these questions. Why did Jesus leave us to do an impossible task, and why has He not returned? It has been more than 2000 years since He disappeared with no indication how much longer we have to wait. Is He going to return or has He forgotten about us?

Notice three answers from this passage to these questions.

CHRIST DID NOT ABANDON HIS PEOPLE

Thoughts of Christ abandoning His people shows either ignorance, or a failure to exercise mental discipline regarding the Word of God. Christ has not turned His back on His followers, but will be faithful as promised.

The ESV Study Bible reminds us in John 16:7 that it was to our advantage for Christ to go back to Heaven for only then would we receive something more needful.

This truth may seem strange to us; especially when we consider the miracle working power of Christ. After all, what could be better than having Christ in the flesh? But we must have faith that God does all things well. If the Father chose to take Jesus back to Heaven He must have good reason for it.

Consider the Holy Spirit's purpose and marvel at God's wisdom.

John 16:13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. *14 He shall glorify me:*

John Piper on www.desiringgod.org points out from this verse that the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit in this age is to glorify Jesus Christ's

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Submission Policy: If you have news, articles, or photos that you would like submitted for publication, please send them to the editor at the above email address.

Note: We reserve the right to choose which information is published, as well as the right to edit the submissions in order to fit spacing requirements.

The Midwest Pilgrim News is a digital publication of the Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Church and is published quarterly. There is no subscription charge. Contact the editor for subscription.

Mission Statement: The mission of the PNN is three-fold: 1.) We desire to glorify God and facilitate the worship of His person. 2.) We seek to promote the Gospel of Christ with its beautiful message of heart holiness. 3.) We seek to be an encouragement to our readers spiritually, as well as an informative source of information to those who are connected with, or interested in, our Conference.

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The President's Page

Rev. Donald Nichols

Spring is one of my favorite seasons of the year. The awakening of plant life from the sleep of winter's night is amazing. I crisscross the USA Midwest this time of the year conducting annual business meetings, and it is always a joy to see the trees budding, the daffodils blooming, and the green coming back into foliage and lawns. It reminds me of God's promise to Noah following the Great Flood, that "while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease." (Gen 8:22)

In the season of spring, we are inspired to embrace themes of rebirth, growth, transformation, rejuvenation, and renewal. It reminds us of the cyclical nature of life and the constant opportunity for growth and change.

Another important part of Spring is the season for revival. It has been heartening to me to see God moving across our Conference, time and again, as our people have given themselves to revival efforts. Praise God, the days of revival are not over. May we sow the Word with greater effort and pray the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers.

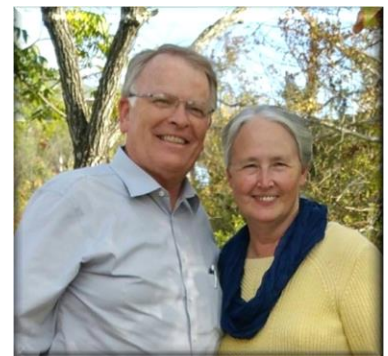
Jesus is coming, and we must work while it is yet day.

Take heart, Pilgrim! God is on His throne. May His Kingdom come, His will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

Happy Spring!

Rev. Don Nichols

Rev. Don Nichols and his wife Ruth live in Lima, Ohio, where they pastor the Lima Pilgrim Holiness Church. They have also served as the Conference President of the MPHIC Inc. They have 3 children and 11 grandchildren.



Hosea 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

The Rundell's



Rev. and Sister Merton Russell Rundell III. Rev. Rundell went to Heaven on January 14. He was a godly man and is greatly missed.



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Ruth Ann Jackman of Sumner, IL went to Heaven on Tuesday, January 23rd. She will be greatly missed.



Shirley Cox of Edinburg, IN. Shirley is a blessing at the PHC in Franklin.



Glamour girl Ember Stratton



Mark and Lana Gray of Annapolis, IL. The Grays attend the PHC in Palestine.



Jonathon and Victoria Gray



The Jonathon Gray children



Birthday boy Gabriel Rundell

News From Our Churches

Noblesville, Indiana



We have had some exciting events in our church, resulting in some real church growth. First was the birth of Callum Bennett Herring to Cameron and Elyse on January 31, 2024. Just a few days later, on February 7th, Thomas Matthew Welbaum was born to Seth and Jerusha. On February 19th, Claire Michele Price arrived to bless the home of Cody and Elizabeth. We are so grateful for the safe arrivals of these little ones and pray God's help and blessings over these families!

We rejoice for the new babies, but at the same time we sorrow over our losses. Our church family grieves the loss of Brother Merton "Rusty" Rundell. It was during our special weekend with Dr. Chris Dewhurst speaking on, "Hope for the Hurting," that Brother Rundell left all his pain behind and realized the hope for which he had lived. We pray for his family as they continue their journey of life and grief.

Our youth are such a vital part of our church. Under the direction of Pastor Josh Modlin, they have been taking charge of some evening services. What a real blessing they are! Also, we give thanks to those who so faithfully reach out and help with the youth and children of the Outreach Ministry.

The choir from Union Bible College and Academy ministered to us Sunday evening, February 25th. God blessed their singing, and the songs were a real inspiration. The Russell's, the Lees, Sister Rundell and Sister Hales were also honored at our Parishioner Appreciation Dinner, Wednesday, February 28th.

It seems we just finished the Christmas season and enjoyed the programs, but we now enter the Easter season. It is such a wonderful time when we can focus on celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus. He is our Hope. He is Risen, He is sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, and He is coming again! ~Dianne Campbell, NPHC Reporter



Greenup, Illinois

In the beginning of 2024, the church got together and began brainstorming to try to come up with a vision for our church. God helped us in our discussion, and we feel that the Lord has been helping in the things that we have been trying to accomplish. We have restarted our monthly services at the rehab facility in Greenup. Eventually we would like to see God send us some extra families that can enable us to have nursing home services 2 times a month, but it is in His time. We also began a Kids Club to try reaching out to the children in our community. God has really been helping in this endeavor and honoring those services. We have about 10 that come regularly but just the other day, we had three brand new kids show up. What a blessing that was to us! It is exciting to see the children get excited about coming and inviting their friends to come. This may be so they can get extra tickets, but it is worth every penny spent to be able to tell the kids about the Gospel message and how Jesus loves them and wants to save their souls. Another way we are reaching out is by having monthly church gatherings at the parsonage where we play games and enjoy fellowship.

We are so thankful for His continued guidance and leadership as we press forward. We would ask that you remember us in prayer as we are in need to either get our church van repaired, or that the Lord would provide a new one. We also need prayer that God will send families our way who would be willing to plug in and be a blessing in the church wherever needed. We also need provision for our church windows, as they are very old and not efficient, and the windowsills are rotting out. We are trusting God for great things and looking forward to a bright future. Psalms 34:1 says "I will bless the Lord at ALL times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth," and we want to be very careful to give Him all the praise, for He is worthy. ~Jonathon Gray



Voices From The Past

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From Page 2:redemptive sacrifice on the cross, resurrection from the grave, and triumphal ascension into Heaven to reign at God's right hand as Mediator and King. However, He could not do His best work until after Jesus' ascension. It is only as all things were completed that He could operate in the fullness of His power.

The work of the Holy Spirit in new-covenant power happens only on the basis of the blood of Christ. If the blood has not yet been shed, the fulness cannot be manifested. It is the fullness of a blood Gospel that enables the Holy Spirit to achieve His purpose of "glorifying Christ" by convicting people of the sin of not believing in Christ as the Son of God, shattering illusions of self-righteousness, and enabling them to come to a correct judgement concerning Christ.

Yet this is not the only way the Spirit glorifies Christ. There are other things that He brings to the table. We submit a partial list:

- The Holy Spirit regenerates and sanctifies the believer: (Joh 3:5-6, 8; Rom 15:16)
- The Holy Spirit provides assurance of salvation: (Rom 8:16)
- The Holy Spirit is a Divine Helper assisting believers in their service to God. (Joh 14:16-17)
- The Holy Spirit purifies and empowers us. (Eph 5:18)
- The Holy Spirit provides spiritual character, forming Christ in us: (Gal 5:16,18,25)
- The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised us. (Eph 1:14)
- The Holy Spirit is the Teacher of all things: (Joh 14:26)
- The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the NT. (Joh 16:13)
- The Spirit helps believers understand the scriptures: (1 Cor 2:9-13)
- The Holy Spirit intercedes for believers in prayer. (Rom 8:26-27)
- The Holy Spirit provides and distributes spiritual gifts: (1 Cor 12:4-11)

Obviously, life without the Holy Spirit would be bleak indeed. We would be frustrated because He was humanly limited to one place at a time. Faith would be more abstract, impersonal, and mysterious. It is the omnipresent Spirit, who brings the presence and privileges of Christ in a personal way. He enables us to simultaneously see, understand, and experience the glory of the Savior.

As Gail Seidel writes: Living without the Holy Spirit would be like living without life support, bankrupt, and trying to make my Christian life work on my own. ¹ (To Page 12)

Always in the Middle



By Tricia Grissom

Middle of what you ask? An object, the road, a philosophy of thought? No, none of these. Not long ago, I read a comment by a well-known author that reminded me in all aspects of my life, I am sitting in the middle of both younger and older women. In my simple mind, I had never really thought about it. I always considered myself a young woman; ready to learn from those much older and wiser than I. But to be a giver of said godly wisdom? That seemed overwhelming. Yes, as a pastor's wife, I am often asked for spiritual advice and counsel, but I never saw myself as that older woman. I never thoughtfully contemplated the value of my multiple years as a wife, mother, but most importantly, as a follower of Christ. As the season of Mother's Day approaches and I am preparing to love on the ladies at my church, I began to pray about how God would have me improve my stance here in the middle.

Proverbs 13:20 states “Whoever walks with the wise, becomes wise, but the companion of fools will harm him.”

Recently, I was able to spend some time with a pastor's wife that is a few years my senior. She is someone that I know without a doubt God placed in my life several years ago. Over time, she has been a continuous witness to me of who He is and how He aids those who surrender all to Him. In this recent visit, I was so encouraged by her steadfast Christian walk, her grace and patience in a very busy time of her life, and her willingness to be used by Christ. In reflecting our time together, I was reminded of another verse in Proverbs 31:26, “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.” I gleaned knowledge from her years of experience in both her calling and her personal walk with Christ.

The Apostle Paul admonishes in Titus 2:3-5 for older women to be sound in their faith, self-controlled, to seek out and train those who are younger. How can I live out this admonition? After praying over this for several weeks, I have felt God direct me to reach out to a couple younger moms I know, invite them to lunch, out for coffee, to the park, whatever works for their schedule. As many mothers with young children are aware, sometimes just the knowledge that someone understands the season of life and is praying, can sustain through some long days. But not leave it as “I'm praying over you.” Do it. In their presence. I can witness that God will use the words prayed to encourage and uplift long after the meeting is over. Be that older woman and offer encouragement in the day-to-day life. Be an example of godliness and offer guidance in their walk with Christ. Invest in their life. It could have an eternal impact.

Whatever your age, my dear one, you are in the middle. Find ways to glean godly wisdom from those that are older, but perhaps most importantly, seek His help in finding that young woman that needs guidance, a helping hand, a listening ear, words of wisdom, or the power of prayer poured over her. Philippians 4:6 reminds us that “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Seek His will in this and He will show you the way.

Tricia Reed Grissom is married to Nathaniel Grissom and lives in Madson, IN where they pastor the MPH. They have 3 children, Addyson, (13) Bryleigh, (10) and Clarkson (5). Tricia is also an RN at the King's Daughters Hospital ER. She enjoys coffee, photography, and scrapbooking.



God's Garden

Rev. Don Walden

In the Bible, Genesis 2:8, it is written, "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden and there He put the man He had formed." Then in verse 15 it states that the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress and keep it.

I had the privilege of growing up on a 40-acre farm. Gardens were a must. When we think back of all the work that is involved in making a garden, then we get an idea of the task assigned to Adam.

There is little doubt that the Eden Garden would not have blossomed the way it did without Adam's touch, especially after the fall of man. It is a picture of salvation; we must be careful to do as God has commanded.

My mind dashes back to the spring of the year. I begin to think it is about time to start preparing the garden for planting. I must work the ground when it is not too wet, otherwise it will be cloddy all the year. We may at this time need that helpmate that God made for man. I use a tractor with a disc and drag to prepare the ground, but the drag is not heavy enough to smooth out the dirt, so I need help. I could have put weights on it, but then I could not dump it at the right time and place. Presto, I get my wife to ride it and then she just hops off at the right place. Hence, if we want to get to the Lord then He works on us until we desire His way.

Once the ground has been prepared, we are ready to plant the seeds. When we have finished the planting, we trust the Lord to keep the ground moist enough to germinate the seeds. The seeds begin to swell, and the sprout pushes out toward the top of the soil. If the ground gets too hard or dry the seeds may not rot or not sprout. John 12:24 states, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Likewise, we die to self and put Christ first in our life that we might begin to grow spiritually and bear fruit for Him. Even then we may face hard circumstances. Our God will send the rain to the crops and will also meet with us in prayer and softens things for us as we need.

Now things begin to take hold and grow, but we notice the tares/weeds that are taking place among our crops; Out comes the power tiller and we work on the weeds to remove them. Now, there are times the Lord begins to reveal some tares in our life. If we do not get rid of them, they will choke out our growth. We cannot get rid of them by ourselves and must depend on God to help us. Those tares must be uprooted.

The growing season is advancing quite rapidly. The garden is growing great, blossoms are appearing on the beans and tomatoes, and ears on the corn. This is what God designed them to do, preparing to produce fruit. The Lord is spiritually developing us. It is not long until He begins to convict our hearts of some of the things He is not pleased with, and places we go that are hindering our progress spiritually. We must be quick to submit to His will. We will now walk in that light and progress in Him. We may have to break off with the old crowd, but we will gain new fellowship. He may even be revealing what He wants us to do with our life. He will make it plain our fruit is appearing, and others will notice our progress. We see the light and will walk therein.

As the season continues the changes in the seed plants are obvious. The beans are hanging down, tomatoes are beginning to change color, the corn stalks have tassels and ears are developing. The Lord of all is sending the sunshine and rain and all things are responding. So, it is with our lives. As they

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Planning for Production



By Nathaniel Grissom

Spring is seen as a fresh beginning. Winter with all its cold and harsh weather is behind us. Green vegetation begins to appear and there is a feeling of hope, expectancy, and excitement as the promise of new life becomes reality. Song of Solomon 2:11-12 states, “For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the times of the singing of birds is come.” As a Christian, how can we look forward to this season? How can we prepare our hearts for growth personally and within our local church?

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” Hosea 10:12. Before any growth can occur outside of ourselves, we must seek a personal revival. Through earnest prayer, we must seek Him to break up the hardened, dry areas in our life that has hindered us from proclaiming the gospel in the past. We must be able to present the gospel to others in a manner that is biblically sound; but not only that, there must be evidence of the change the gospel has made in our personal life.

Audrey Hepburn once stated, “To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.” As those in days of the past realized, only by planting a garden could they provide for future survival. We must be faithful to sow and cultivate gospel seeds. There are multitudes of hungry souls perishing without God. 2 Corinthians 9:6, “But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” We, as Christians, have a

momentous task of praying for God’s guidance and wisdom in reaching out to others. Additionally, we must be invested in showing them the love of Jesus. For example, just inviting a person to church once, whether they come or not, is not proper planting and cultivation. We must be committed to long-term endeavors. Psalm 126:5-6 promises us that “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” As we visualize the gospel seed sprout, we should tenderly work and develop a relationship with them, just as we would the physical seeds in which we plant.

What happens with all this hard work? Production! Proper preparation and continuous cultivation will yield fruit. With the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit in their lives and willingness on their part to respond, we will see spiritual growth. The example of our lives and the love that we have shown individuals will make an impact. It may not be immediate. More than likely, this process will take time and greater patience than we anticipated. However, Galatians 6:9 reminds us “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not.”

As we go forth this year, let us be faithful to seek for personal revival, endeavor to cultivate the relationships with people that God brings into our lives, and anticipate results for God’s Kingdom.

Nathan Grissom is the pastor of the PHC in Madison, IN. He and his wife Tricia have 3 children. Nathan also has a business buying and selling antiques. He enjoys photography, antiques, and attending camp meetings.



Continued From Last Page: develop, we are witnessing more, praying more, and frequenting His house.

When God told Adam to dress and keep the Garden, we note that without his labors the fruit would not have been at its best. Fruit producing trees will not be best producers without God and man working together. Man will need to prune them yearly, and God sends the rain, sunshine, and warm weather. Without proper pruning the fruit will be less in quantity and quality. There may be times you need to treat for insects. There comes a time in our life that we realize we are not totally what we need to be. Perhaps it is the carnal nature that is showing through. But thank God, He has a solution for that and sends the Holy Spirit to abide. He will destroy that carnal bug.

The day of harvest will come. Mark tells us of a parable of our Lord about seeds. Some fell on various types of ground, but the ones that fell on good ground (prepared ground) sprang forth some thirty and some sixty and some a



hundred. God will harvest the world and all the seeds that have been planted. God is still depending on mankind to dress and keep the garden for His glory. Be a faithful dresser and keeper, and the fruit will produce more than expected. We may then hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord.” How thankful we will be that we dressed and kept the garden.

Rev. Don Walden lives in Franklin, IN with his wife Fayrene. He attends the PHC in Franklin and teaches the adult SS class. He and his wife are active in evangelism.



Do Your Share

A Lesson for Children

I once knew a widow that had two sons. One day I went to visit this woman who worked hard all day in an office. One of the boys was home most of the day, but when I entered the home after the working hours of the mother, the beds were still unmade, the lunch dishes of the two boys were still on the table, on one chair a dirty shirt had been thrown and on another was some soiled socks.

The mother started apologizing to me, but the boy interrupted and said, "Mother, I don't have any clean socks. I've looked and looked. All my socks have holes in them."

"I'm sorry son. I haven't time."

"Well, it looks to me like you could keep clothes fixed for me. Say, I need 50 cents right now."

"You'll have to wait until payday, I don't have any money."

"Well, what's a fellow going to do?"

I felt like saying, "Go work yourself and help your mother." But instead, I quietly looked around the room. The boy could have easily picked up his own clothes and put them away. He could have made the beds, maybe not as well as the mother could have, but as well as he could. It would not have hurt him a bit to wash up those dirty dishes so his mother could have had time to mend those socks.

You know, boys, some of the best tailors in the country are men. Some of the best cooks are men and all the soldier boys certainly learned to make their beds.

Here I am talking only to boys, but I have known girls who did not keep their rooms clean. Girls who could help their mothers so much. They can learn while they are in their pre-teens and early teens to wash and iron their own clothes. Boys should never let their mothers clean the sidewalks, beat the rugs, or take out the trash. Wouldn't it be lovely if all of us would remember to help every time we can?

Here are some rules for sharing the work in the home: 1. Hang up all your clothes, 2. Place your soiled clothes in the hamper, 3. Leave the lavatory and bathtub clean, 4. Look for ways to save your parents extra steps, 5. Offer to babysit so your parents can go out together.

Galatians 6:2: "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

~Georgia Bishop, The Pilgrim Advocate, February 1947





CONTEND

Jude 1:3 *“It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

con-tend [kən'tend] Verb: struggle to surmount (a difficulty or danger):

The Grecian games of St. Jude’s time were the pinnacle of Greek culture. People would travel from miles around to come and enjoy these spectacular events. The athletes were like no others in history and were idolized for their physical prowess and skill.

Such athleticism does come easily and seeing how the games were such a major part of Grecian culture, the athletes would devote their lives towards their physical and athletic excellence. It was not enough to simply be “good” but rather complete devotion to excellence was essential to be a winner. It was a “battlefield” for the athletes. A battle of wit, skill, physical, mental, and dietary discipline to determine who would be the winner.

Why do I mention this? The statement “contend for the faith” made by Jude has war-like connotations. Scholars believe that his mind likely drifted to the lifestyle of these athletes as his thoughts were being put to paper. This letter written to the church at large became a specific warning; not necessarily against moral issues as one might guess, but against false teachers, bad doctrine, and compromise. Even so early in the New Testament church there were those who sought to divide and corrupt.

Jude recognized the dangers of compromise. He saw an inclination towards deception even in a time so close to the ministry of Jesus, and issued a warning that echoes throughout history. The challenge is not to grow lazy or careless in our doctrine and thinking but to strenuously (as an athlete training for an important competition) contend for truth. Jude recognized the importance of standing on truth no matter who spoke against it.

The reality is that Satan has been around for a long time. It is important for us to remember that he is a tactician, a master of warfare. This should not scare us for we have God on our side; yet we must be wise. Satan will use whatever means necessary to trip us up. Whether it be through blatant sin and rebellion or the slow, continuous, soul-rot that is compromise.

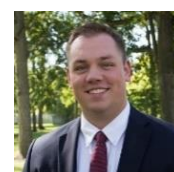
PAUL ALSO SPEAKS A GREAT DEAL TO THIS MATTER. IN EPHESIANS HE SAYS, “PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD SO THAT YOU MAY WITHSTAND THE WILES OF THE DEVIL!” NOTICE AGAIN THE CONNOTATIONS TO WARFARE.

How can we do this in a practical sense? There are so many viewpoints in the world! There is so much confusion! The truth is that the bible holds the answer to every question we have. It is where we draw our beliefs and where we form our doctrine.

As a disciplined athlete will train in preparation for His sport, we also must put in our “reps” when it comes to church attendance, bible study, and attendance to the place of prayer. It is not merely a pastime but rather the life blood of a Christian. We cannot fight a vicious battle if we are starving spiritually. We cannot defend ourselves if our “armor” is rusted and worn.

A time will come in the life of every believer where He will be attacked spiritually at his very core. His values and beliefs will be brought into question. Satan will use people (As he did in St. Jude’s time) to draw you away and make you doubt what you know to be true. Maybe it will not be outright rebellion but rather “a form of godliness which lacks the power thereof.” If we are not anchored in God, sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and spiritually sharp we are headed for disaster. Will you be prepared? Contend.

Ben Forsee is the Dean of Men at Union Bible College. He and his wife Marissa are expecting their first child. He enjoys working out, guns, fishing, and working with young people.



From Page 6: We do not need to feel shortchanged because Christ ascended into Heaven. Working in cooperation with the other members of the Trinity, He did what was needful for us. He completed His earthly stage of salvation's plan, and supplied the Holy Spirit who would carry it to the next phase.

CHRIST IS STILL ACTIVE IN MINISTRY

Col 3:1 *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

Some might conclude that the right hand of God involves a Lazy-Boy recliner and refreshments; Christ, His earthly ministry now finished, does not have much to do until His Second Coming; but again, this would again be a misconception. The redemption plan was completed and Christ's place in the plan shifted, but He is hardly inactive.

Consider briefly Christ's role in the atonement. We do not know much about Christ's pre-incarnate existence other than He has always existed within a divine Trinity composing one glorious God. This instrument of creation was One of Three, worshipped unceasingly by angels and heavenly beings alike.

Yet, when mankind fell away from God, Christ consented to surrender His heavenly position that He might represent sinful human beings. His great compassion compelled Him to embrace a human nature, in addition to His divine nature, that He might become our sin bearer and Savior.

Atonement for sin required a blood sacrifice and Christ became a man that He might declare the will of the Father, (His prophetic office) and reconcile us back to Him. (His sacrificial office) As John Wesley once wrote "He suffered in a measure what we would have suffered had we been eternally lost" and it is because of His vicarious suffering, death, and resurrection, that God's wrath has been appeased, salvation secured, and eternal life provided for all who will believe.

However, does Christ's ascension mean that Christ's incarnate role is now over with Him returning to His pre-incarnate position and personhood?

No. Christ was and always will be divine, but once He took on the form of a man, He took on that form forever. He now and will always be the God-man, 100% divine, but 100% human. It is a human face and body, with nail scarred hands, that is waiting for us in Heaven.

Furthermore, Christ is as active in the plan of redemption as He ever was. Now that He has completed His substitutionary sacrifice as the Passover Lamb, He has moved on to the next phase of the plan, which is reigning as our High Priest and King.

Just as the Old Testament High Priest served to make atonement for the sins of the people, so Christ serves perpetually in the courtroom of Heaven.

- He sprinkles His blood on the mercy seat.
- He acts as the intermediary between God and man.

- He serves as our Advocate and Intercessor pleading for us when we pray.
- He is our divine Lawyer arguing our case if we sin, securing forgiveness and restoration.
- He is our assurance that we will be resurrected upon our earthly death to everlasting life.
- He is our King reigning over His worldwide empire until the day all things will be restored.
- He is preparing a place for us to be with Him forever.

Christ's preincarnate position was glorious. He was equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit, but by displaying His holy character through His earthly life, death and resurrection, His glory has been carried to a new level and He will be praised eternally. (Rev 5:9-10, 12)

Obviously, Christ's ascension should never be a source of angst to us but one of comfort and encouragement. The ascension ensures that Christ's ministry of Prophet, Priest, and King continues and will one day be acknowledged by the entire world. It ensures that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on His people and that we never need fear condemnation.

CHRIST WILL ACCOMPLISH WHAT HE STARTED

Acts 1:11: *Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

As we consider this verse, we think of the doctor who said to his patient: "If I have told you once, I've told you a hundred times--I do not treat amnesia cases." Obviously, this frustrated physician was dealing a serious case of forgetfulness.

It is clear from these passages that Jesus has no such malady. Everything that He promised is and will be fulfilled.

- The gospel will be preached to every people group.
- The last soul will be saved, and Christ will return.
- The saints will be called to their reward and the wicked will be judged.
- Sin will be punished and Satan's work destroyed.
- The earth will be renewed and sorrow will be no more.
- Christ will reign without any challengers and everything will be according to the perfect will of God. Not one thing from all that God has declared will be omitted.

Allow me to encourage you to draw strength from this ascension truth. Do not be dismayed at the absence of Christ but delight in the advantages that have been provided. Continue being faithful for we will certainly see Him soon.

¹ *(Life Without the Holy Spirit, January 4, 2012, <https://blogs.bible.org/>)*

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