

# Ascension of the Lord

by Carl Armerding

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*The ascension of the Lord is a unique feature of the Christian faith, demonstrating his triumph over Satan and his domain, and his victory and glory.*

**Duration:** 36:49

**Scripture:** Luke 1:1-3, Luke 1:11, Acts 1:2-4, Acts 1:9

**Topics:** "Ascension"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of discussing the ministry of Jesus between his death and resurrection, as well as his ascension. He argues against the notion that the gospel has become obsolete, stating that it is still the only thing that can truly fulfill its purpose. The preacher encourages the audience to trust in the gospel and highlights the unique features of the Christian faith. He also mentions the hope of reuniting with loved ones in heaven and seeing Jesus face to face. The sermon is based on Acts chapter 1 and includes references to the Gospel of Luke.

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## Transcript

For our meditation tonight, we'll please turn to the book of the Acts, chapter one. While you're turning to the first chapter of Acts, allow me to say that my health, to which reference has been made tonight, has been a question for the last two years or so. The doctors have told me that I could be expected to go anytime, and it didn't frighten me a bit, because I told them that I'm a good Calvinist, I believe when my quarter's full, I'm going home, and that's it.

So I wasn't too much worried about that. You know, these old school teachers, and I'm one, having taught school teaching a long time, we don't die, we just fail the next grade. So one of these days I suppose you'll hear about it.

But don't worry, because I'll be having one of the most wonderful times you've ever heard of. Reunions in heaven with loved ones gone on before, and best of all, to see our Lord Jesus Christ face to face. You know, this is tremendous about our Christian faith, and tonight I want to talk about some of the unique features of our Christian faith.

But before I do that, let's read Acts chapter 1. Let me read for you the first 11 verses. The former treatise have I made, and this of course refers to the gospel according to Luke, because the writer of the books of the Acts is none other than the writer of the third gospel, the gospel according to Luke. When he says here

the former treatise, he's referring to the gospel of Luke.

The former treatise have I made, O Theopolis, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandment unto the apostles whom he had chosen. To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion, or his sufferings, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, commanded that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, Ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom again, again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth. When he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 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. We've said that our Christian faith has many unique features. As a matter of fact, I don't think any other school of religion, any other form of religion can even begin to approach the number of unique features we have in our Christian faith.

To begin with, of course, there is the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is unique. And it's unique in more ways than one, because in the first place it was predicted many hundreds of years before it ever occurred. It wasn't something that was blazed abroad in the newspapers after it did occur.

But at least 700 years before Christ was born, the prophet Isaiah gives to us this wonderful prophecy concerning the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. Yes, but somebody says to me, you know, the scholars have decided that that word virgin back there in Isaiah 7 could really have been a young married woman. They have taken advantage of the breadth of meaning of the Hebrew word to give that rendering, almost denying that it also has the other meaning of an unmarried young woman.

But when you come to the New Testament to see how the Holy Spirit, quoting that text in the book of Matthew, He uses a word which has no other meaning except an unmarried young woman, a virgin in herself, the Virgin Mary. This is unique. And you know, dear friends, when I come to think about this matter of the virgin birth, I say I'd like to question at least one witness, and that would be enough for me.

It would be the man who was engaged, or to whom Mary was engaged, none other than Joseph. And I say to Joseph, what do you think about this? And Joseph would say, I'm absolutely convinced that the woman I'm going to marry is a virgin who is with child by the Holy Spirit. That testimony would be enough for me.

That would be enough for me. Because he was minded to put her away, you remember, until God revealed this fact to him, and he believed it. And if he could believe it, and he could accept it, who am I to reject it? I say this is one great feature, the virgin birth, but even this doesn't exhaust it, because the Holy Spirit not only went on to say that he was to be born of a virgin, but it actually named the place where he was to be born, 500 years before he came.

There are some of us in this room tonight, I'm sure that their parents did not know a year before they came where they were going to be born. In my own case, it's rather funny. I'm living in the state of Texas now, and I tell these Texans that I'm a Texan by intention.

It so happens that my father was minded to go to Texas. In fact, I understand he had bought a ticket and was on his way to Texas to join a certain German community right near San Antonio, either in Fredericksburg or New Brownfells, and that's where I was supposed to have arrived. But instead of that, dad was turned back by better offers in the east, and the result was I was born in that great state of New Jersey.

But nobody could tell us very far ahead. But imagine having 500 years before it happened. This is told.

Then Daniel also specified the time when he was to be born. You read the ninth chapter of Daniel, and there you'll read that there is said to be a certain number of weeks until Messiah the Prince, and the Lord Jesus Christ comes in the fullness of time according to Galatians 4 and 4. This is unique. You know, if we didn't have anything else than that, that in itself would be sufficient to say, well, Christianity is distinctive because of this great unique feature.

But this isn't all. Our Lord's death upon the cross of Calvary stands out, as something unique in history. I'm not saying that there weren't thousands of other people crucified, but there was only one of whom it could be said, this man hath done nothing amiss.

Here was a man who was dying, not for his own sins, but for the sins of others. That's unique. And here's a man who not only died, but who rose again from the dead.

And that's unique. And then I move on to the next unique feature, and that's what I want to talk about tonight. Our Lord's ascension.

In these verses which we have read tonight, you will find two words which occur three times over. They are the words taken up. Do you notice them, please, here in verse 2 of the chapter? Until the day in which he was taken up.

Then look at verse 9. And when he had spoken these words, while they beheld, he was taken up. And again in verse 11. Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This thing, Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven.

And it's mentioned again in the 22nd verse of the chapter, where it is mentioned in connection with the man who was to take the place left vacant by Judas Iscariot. This is the subject for tonight. The ascension of the Lord Jesus.

And I submit to you, friends, that this again is a unique feature of our Christian faith. I don't know anywhere in my reading of the writings of the Buddha, the writings concerning him, where they make any such claim that he ever rose from the dead and that he ascended to heaven. As a matter of fact, they have no such hope.

It is true that the Muslims believe that Muhammad went home to heaven. At least he went up with his horse. But they have yet to produce the evidence that we have in this chapter here.

Because here was a group of men who were witnesses of this wonderful event. I never read such a thing about Confucius. I don't read anything like this about Joseph Smith or Brigham Young.

And I don't read anything like this about Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy. But I do read it about the Lord Jesus. That he not only rose from the dead, but he's gone home to heaven.

And this ascension was the terminal point of his ministry. That's the first thing we call attention to here. You know, sometimes when you put the question to a class of students, what do you consider the terminal point of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ? And many of them will say, well of course his cross.

Because that is the climax, there's no question about it. But that's not the terminal point of his earthly ministry. Look at this please, in this chapter here this evening.

You notice it says in verse 2, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles with whom he had chosen, whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen to them forty days. And here's his ministry. Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Here's a ministry between the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and his ascension. Speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. This is a ministry which I'm afraid we've neglected in some sense.

We haven't talked enough about it. We've been quite content and I'm all for it to talk about the gospel ministry. I believe we should be talking about it.

But why limit ourselves to this when we've got so many other things in the Bible to talk about? It's wonderful that Jesus died for our sins upon the cross, and I wouldn't ask you to stop for one moment talking about this, but I want you to go on. I want you to give at least all of the things that St. Paul includes in the gospel, for he says that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, he was buried, and he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. That's all part of the gospel.

This is where we believe our Roman Catholic friends have missed it, because they present to us a Christ on the cross, on the crucifix. I say to them, you don't go far enough. I appreciate this very much that you brought before me the one who died for me upon the cross, but look, he's no longer on the cross.

He's not in the tomb. He's risen again. That doesn't end the story.

He's gone home to glory. And you know, dear friends, this was part of his victory. According to the second chapter, the epistles of the Colossians, I wonder if you'd like to keep your bookmark here in Acts 1, so you'll have easy to find it again, and let's turn to Colossians chapter 2 for a rather interesting verse of scripture there.

Colossians, the second chapter. We read here that in verse 14, Colossians 2 verse 14, speaking of our Lord's work on the cross, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross, and having spoiled principalities and powers. Get that.

Having spoiled principalities and powers. Well, you say, what are these principalities and powers? Well, you turn to the sixth chapter of the epistle of the Ephesians, and you find out that they're a whole group of

supernatural, superhuman beings that infest the heavenly places. There they are.

Do you want to turn back a few pages to Ephesians 6? You'll find it. We're coming back to Colossians 2, so hold on to that. I'd just like you to see this in Ephesians 6, verse 12.

Ephesians 6 and verse 12, We wrestle not against flesh and blood. Now that rules out all human beings, doesn't it? Get that clear in your mind. We wrestle not against flesh and blood.

That rules out human beings. But against principalities and powers, who are not flesh and blood, you see. Because it just now eliminates the flesh and blood.

So here you have principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness, or as another translation puts it, wicked spirits in heavenly places. Say, I never heard of such things. Well, the Bible talks about them.

If you go back to the book of Daniel, chapter 10, you get the story there of how Daniel was told why an answer to his prayer was delayed 21 days. The superhuman being that brings this answer to Daniel tells him that his prayer was heard 21 days before. But, he says, the prince of Persia withstood me.

Who's that prince of Persia that could withstand a superhuman being? He's one of these princes. You read up here. And that this is true, that he is a superhuman being, is proven in that same chapter where you have reference made to the prince of Grisha, and in the end of the chapter you have reference made to Michael, your prince.

And Michael, as we know, was the archangel. So there are these representatives there in the heavenly places. And the Lord Jesus, in his ascension, went right through the domain of Satan.

Figure that. When he ascended, he went right through the domain of the prince of the power of the air, that's the devil himself. He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, as you have it in Colossians 2. What a triumphant ending that was, wasn't it? Do you know of anything parallel to this in human history? I don't.

Dear friends, this is the kind of a thing that makes a person's heart just warm. As some of my wife's Scottish relatives would say, it warms the cockles in the heart. Just to think about it.

That you have a savior who not only overcame things here on earth, but who was mighty enough to go right through Satan's domain. He stood on the top of the Mount of Olives and went on up. Remember when we were standing on the top of the Mount of Olives some years ago.

Yes, it was way back in 1938 we were on the top of the Mount of Olives. And our Arab guide was showing us around, and he showed us what looked like a great big human footprint. He says, you know, this is where Jesus pressed down his foot when he went up to heaven.

And some of us had still got some of the jargon of the young people. We said, oh yeah. And then one of them said, you know, a lot of people like to kiss this because this is where Jesus put his foot down.

And I said, well, I'm not one of the kitten kind. Let it go at that. But there they were trying to give us some physical evidence.

We don't need any of that. Our savior's alive. He's at the right hand of God.

But now I'd like to talk a little bit about his ascension. Let's come back now to the first chapter of the book of the Acts. To the ninth verse.

Oh, there's so much we could say about the verses in between. Yes, I'd love to talk to you about that verse where the Lord says, it's not for you to know the times and seasons, but we'll talk about that some other night. Let's look at the ninth verse of the chapter.

He says, when he had spoken these words, spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up. And a cloud received him out of their sight. This is no physical cloud.

No, this is a physical cloud where any one of us who's ever traveled in an airplane has had this experience. Coming over here yesterday from Dallas to Jacksonville, we went through a lot of clouds. And they must have received this out of the sight of the people down on the ground.

They saw this plane vanish into the cloud. That was it. That isn't what you have here.

I am persuaded, dear friends, that this cloud is one of two things. It's either that same cloud that guided the children of Israel through the desert, which we refer to as the Shekinah cloud, the symbol of the divine presence. And that in itself would be sufficient for me in interpreting this passage of Scripture that when our blessed Lord went home to glory, he was welcomed by the Father and the Spirit.

But you know this word cloud is also used with regard to God's people. In the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, we read about a cloud of witnesses. And that cloud of witnesses is none other than this great collection of those who have gone on before, of whom he gave some samples in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to Hebrews.

And you know, I think I have a right to use my sanctified imagination here at this point. I believe that the Lord was not only welcomed home by the Father and the Spirit, but he was welcomed home by the saints that had gone on before. Yes.

And I wouldn't be surprised, dear friends, that this is somehow duplicated for those who go home to glory now. I remember when my dear mother died, we talked about who would be there to welcome her on the other side. And we thought of some that she knew very well in her life, dear Christian friends.

And we just wondered if there would be a reception committee for her. But you know, when my father died some twenty-two years later, by this time I'd had time to think this thing through. And I had this idea, I pass it on to you for what it's worth, that when my father passed away, or was about to pass away, the Lord said to my mother, Annie, Ernest is coming from on beyond the reception committee.

Wouldn't it be lovely of the Lord Jesus to bring together again these two people who have been so happily married all these years. You say, you must have a personal object in view. I sure have.

This is exactly what I'm looking forward to. This is exactly what I'm looking forward to. She went home on the forty-ninth anniversary of our engagement.

I'm looking forward to this. And I wouldn't be surprised that there'll be a little duplication of this, should the Lord tarry, and I have to go this way. There'll be a little duplication of this.

Oh, I'm not for one moment saying that the Lord Jesus will not be the very first one that I'll be looking for. Yes, indeed. You know, that again is a wonderful thing about our Christian faith, isn't it? We love

somebody we've never seen.

I'm working for somebody I've never seen. Well, it says, well, that's true of a lot of people. I'm working for people in Washington I've never seen.

You know that when you pay your income tax, don't you? Yes sir, you really know that. But this is different, isn't it? This is very different. Here's one been serving the Lord for over half a century, and he's never seen Him.

But oh, he's just as convinced of a reality as if he had actually seen Him face to face. This is another unique feature of our Christian faith, isn't it? I'm so happy that I was brought up in a home that had some of the traditions of central Europe. Both of my parents were born in Germany.

They brought with them some of the celebrations and customs of the old country. Of course, it was a very great custom to celebrate the birthday of our Lord Jesus. Christmas was always a great day in the house, and in the right way.

We weren't thinking of presents. We were thinking about the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was a great thing that was held before me as a child.

It's the earliest remembrances I have of Christmas, just that. It isn't the presents I got, but the fact that my father and mother put the emphasis on the fact that this was a day, whether this was the exact day or not, that didn't matter. This is the day when we're celebrating the coming into the world of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

That is one thing. Then we also celebrated the day that he died. Oh, there was absolute silence in the house for three hours that day.

Then, of course, there was that glorious celebration on Easter Sunday. Oh, there was a special meal for that as well. This was a great day.

Then, 40 days after that, on the third day, 40 days after the resurrection, was what the Germans called Himmelfahrt, the Ascension. I had that impressed on me as a boy, that my Lord had not only risen from the dead, but he's ascended to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Ten times over, our Lord makes reference to his ascension in the Gospel of John.

That's another unique feature about that Gospel. I think you have one reference to it in the Gospel according to Luke. But in the Gospel according to John, ten times over, the Lord Jesus refers to this.

He's going back to the Father. That makes it important, doesn't it? But this ascension of our Lord is connected with one more thing here tonight. This we get in the 11th verse, where these dear ones who had seen Him go, and they were eyewitnesses of this fact.

You know, we need only two witnesses to confirm anything, but here was a whole handful of disciples watching the Lord as He went up. We know that He had more than 500 witnesses of His resurrection. St. Paul tells us that.

In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, He was seen of above 500 brethren at once. There's no fact in history that's better attested to than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Now we come to the Ascension, and here are these men, standing on that mountain, watching Him going up.

And these two men, whom we suppose to be angels in human form, they're the new men of Galilee. Why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, this same Jesus which you've seen Him grow, is coming again. He's coming again.

And this to me, dear friends, is very lovely, that the Ascension of the Lord Jesus is linked with His coming again. That wonderful hope of the Church. Are you waiting for Him to come again? Oh, I can see a number of your heads nodding, yes.

I've been waiting for Him for over 60 years, dear friends. This has been my hope. In fact, I like to begin my morning devotions something like this.

I've made it a habit for years to get up at 5.30. This is my rising hour. By 6 o'clock, I have finished with all my shaving and everything else, so that I can go into the presence of my Lord, as I would if I was going to a business engagement. Because I want to do like they said to Joseph, he shaved himself before he went to the presence of Pharaoh.

I like to look nice when I come into the presence of my Lord. And as I bow down in His holy presence, just to say this, as it be today, Lord, you know, a wonderful thing is before tomorrow morning sun rises, He keeps that promise. But what about anyone present tonight who isn't ready for that? My dear friend, may I just solemnly in these closing moments of this meeting just press upon you the necessity, the very selfish necessity of seeing to it that you are ready for that.

Because that may terminate your opportunity to ever know Him as a Savior. Tomorrow's sun may never rise to bless thy long deluded sight. This is the time.

Oh, then be wise, I would be saying, why not tonight? You have heard us talk about the unique features of our Christian faith. There's nothing like it. There's nothing like it.

And don't you believe these people who tell you that it's become obsolete. Nothing is obsolete that's doing a job that nothing else can do. I don't care how old the machine is, if it's doing a job that nor the machine can do, that machine is not obsolete.

The gospel is doing a job tonight that nothing else can do. Its age doesn't make it obsolete. It's proving that it's the only thing that works.

Tonight we commend it to you if you've never touched it. There are those in this room tonight who can bear witness. It's been preeminently worthwhile even so far as this life is concerned, and how much more for the life to come.

Now in the spirit of this, let's turn now hymnals to hymn number 412. Hymn number 412. I thought so much of this hymn that when we were laying away the precious remains of my beloved help me, the benediction had already been pronounced and people were beginning to move away from the grave.

I said, oh no, we can't do this. We have to sing. We have to sing.

And this is what we sang. Some glorious morning sorrow will see. This is a unique feature of our Christian faith.

My dear friends, as we talk about it tonight, we trust we've made you jealous. Say, I'd like to have what that man has. You can have it through trusting the Lord Jesus Christ just like I did many years ago.

Number 412. Let us rise as we sing. Hymn number 412.

Some glorious morning sorrow will see. We thank thee for this blessed hope. We thank thee that the same one who was down here on earth and suffered, bled, and died, who rose again, has ascended to thine own right hand in glory, coming back again to receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may be also.

We thank thee for the assurance which thy blessed Holy Spirit has given us of these things. And as we have looked at the unique features of our Christian faith tonight, we trust, our Father, that the ascension of our Lord Jesus will mean more to us than ever before, because we realize that he's gone up there to sit at thy right hand ever living to make intercession for us. Oh, how wonderful, Lord Jesus, to think that thou art concerned with every one of thine own in everything that they pass through.

Thou knowest all about our hearts' sorrows. Thou knowest all about our perplexities and our problems. But, precious Savior, we thank thee for thy constant intercessory ministry at the right hand of God.

And now, Lord Jesus, we just commit ourselves in thy hands to this night. We pray that thy blessing may be upon thy people. Bless us, we pray thee, tonight with a fresh and restful sleep.

And bless all those whom we represent. We pray in thy precious name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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