

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 25th October 2020

The bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You that whether we are in the church building together or thinking about You alone, You are with us and hear our prayers. Help us to spend time each day singing your praises, reading and contemplating Your Word, praying for one another and those issues You bring to our attention. Amen

Song Here is love vast as the ocean –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8YOPj5TnUM>

Prayers - In your own words just praise and thank the Lord, for who He is, for what He is, for what He has done. Confess your need of forgiveness.

Song I will give thanks to Thee –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EW2VKrjMpig>

Prayers of Praise, Thanks and Intercession

Pray as you feel led. Finish with the Lord's Prayer.

An introduction

A couple of weeks ago I stated that Christ is truly unique, born truly divine and human yet sinless. Because of his uniqueness we have no precedents or experience against which to judge Christ – not that it is for us to judge Him. We have to rely on the testimony of reliable witnesses, namely the angel who appeared to Mary, the voice of God when Jesus was baptised and the writings of Paul.

Last week Graham spoke about Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

Christ's crucifixion was not unique, in the sense that thousands were crucified by the Romans. Two were crucified at the same time as Jesus.

However there is something unique about who Jesus is and why He died, as a perfect sacrifice for our sins, and how and why he rose again to life. Its uniqueness comes from the fact that Christ is divine. His death and resurrection was some kind of cosmic struggle. Paul explains this in his letters. Too much to cover now, but here is one verse to contemplate.

Col 2:15

¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Song Led like a lamb (You're alive) -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKQC7ZK_egM

Reading 1 Cor 15:1-8 *The resurrection of Christ*

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Some thoughts

The bodily resurrection of Christ

So how can we judge or decide upon the resurrection of Jesus? Once again we have to rely on witnesses. In our reading verses 5-8 Paul lists witnesses to Christ's resurrection.

Jesus is not the only person to rise from the dead. The Bible has several examples of the dead being brought back to life. For example:-

Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, whose son died and was brought back to life by Elijah's prayers. 1 Kings 17:7-24.

Jairus' daughter, restored to life by Jesus. Mark 5:35-43.

The widow's son, restored to life by Jesus. Luke 7:11-17.

Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, raised from the dead by Jesus. John 11:38-44

Dorcas raised from the dead in Joppa by Peter. Acts 9:36-42.

Eutychus raised from the dead at Troas by Paul. Act 20:7-12.

There are other more recent examples, even in the last few years.

However apart from Jesus, those raised from the dead only received a temporary extension to their mortal lives. They all died. Jesus did not die again, He ascended into heaven.

Reading Act 1:9-11 *The ascension of Christ*

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ '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.'

Some more thoughts *The ascension of Christ*

Once again we have to rely on witnesses. Luke records in Acts that it was the disciples who witnessed the ascension of Christ. They were also spoken to by two men dressed in white (assumed to be angels).

Jesus is not the only person to ascend into heaven.

In Genesis Chapter five, the generations from Adam to Noah are listed, with the age at which each father died, except for Enoch the father of Methuselah.

²¹ When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. Genesis 5:21-24

⁵ By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: 'He could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. Hebrews 11:5

As well as Enoch, Elijah was also taken up to heaven, as witnessed by Elisha.

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, 'My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!' And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two. 2 King 2:11

So ascending into heaven is not unique, but Jesus is unique and that makes all the difference. He ascended to the very throne room of God. Something else we do not have time to cover today. However here is another reading to contemplate.

Reading Ephesians 1:18-21

¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Something else to consider, the bible tells us that we will also ascend into heaven at the rapture.

Reading 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 *The coming of the Lord*

¹³ Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Song Christ triumphant -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5Xz9V-6JPA>

Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and always.

AMEN

Robin