

# Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

*Ascension 2024, pt. 2*

## INTRODUCTION

People of God, we all know that Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. And who does not believe Easter to be the Queen of the Seasons? But St. Bernard of Clairvaux once said, “The Ascension of Christ into heaven is the most perfect consummation and fulfillment of all the other festivals, and a most happy ending to the whole journey of the Son of God.”

Indeed, the Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven is even more important for us than His incarnation, death, and resurrection from the dead.

Liberal Christians pay lip service to the good works that Jesus did during his earthly ministry. But Christ’s life is incomplete by itself.

Reformed and Presbyterian Christians concentrate on the doctrines Justification by faith alone. But that focuses chiefly on the judicial aspects of our salvation in the death of Christ.

Evangelicals preach the necessity of being born again, which focuses on the resurrection. Which is good. We must be born again. But there is more.

With out the Ascension, Christ’s life, death, and resurrection remain incomplete.

For if Christ were born and never died for sins, than his life would be nothing more than a mere example of what it means to do good. And moralism never saved anyone.

If Christ had died for sins and never rose from the dead, then we would have no hope of the forgiveness of sins.

And if Christ rose from the dead, but stayed here on earth, and never ascended into Heaven, then we never would receive the fullness of our salvation, which is our adoptions as sons, becoming partakers of the divine nature, and being reunited back with God.

The Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven is in fact the culmination of our salvation because our human nature has been eternally glorified in God.

The Heidelberg Catechism asks: How does the Ascension of Christ benefit us? ...we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, our Head, will also take us, his members, up to himself.

The wonderful hymn “See, the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph” says in v. 5:

*“Thou hast raised our human nature, In the clouds to God’s right hand.  
There we sit in heavenly places, There with Thee in glory stand.  
Jesus reigns, adored by angels; Man with God is on the Throne.  
Mighty Lord, in Thine ascension We by faith behold our own.”*

In Christ’s ascension, a Man has become a member of the Trinity. St. Athanasius was so in awe of this teaching that he just simply said, “The Son of God became Man so Man might become God.”

Not that we lose our creatureliness and become absorbed into God. The Human and Divine Natures of Christ remain distinct. But the Scriptures teach us that we are in Christ, and Christ is in God the Father, and we truly do now, and in the world to come, participate and communion and union in the Divine Nature.

Therefore we are united in some mysterious way to the God-Man in His glorious ascension and exaltation, such that in Christ, we are taken up into God, and are one with him. And this union and communion in God and with God, is our salvation.

## PREPARING A PLACE

Thus Jesus said that it was for our advantage that He go away from us and go back to Heaven. He needed to go to prepare a place for us in God. And while He is in Heaven preparing a place for us, He sends the Holy Spirit to us to prepare us for the place.

So, what is the place that Christ is preparing for us? And what is the place the Spirit is preparing us for? The place is God himself.

Jesus prayed for the apostles in John 17:5, saying: *“Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”*

God the Father and the God the Son have eternally indwelt one another from before the foundation of the world. And that mutual eternal indwelling of the Father and the Son, is what Jesus speaks of as his “glory.”

But then Jesus’ prayed for you and me in John 17:21. And listen to what his prayer is. It is so amazing and that it is almost incomprehensible to us mere humans. He prayed *“that they may all be one, just as you Father are in me, and I am in you, that they may also be in us.”*

Just as the Father and the Son are one and mutually indwell one another, so Christ prays that we would join in that mutual indwelling of Father and Son, that we would be in them!

The Holy Spirit dwells in us to transform us to such a glorious state of being that we can indwell God.

But what is the mechanism by which we are transformed to indwell God?

A few verses later in John 17:24 Jesus says: *“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”*

To be transformed to indwell the Trinity we must be in the immediate presence of God and see His glory. But no man can see God and live, unless that Man is the God-Man. Thus, we need to have our Human Nature so united to God that we can see the glory of God, and live.

## **THE GLORY OF GOD**

What is God’s glory? God’s glory is His manifest presence and light. All through the Bible God has been revealing His glory in stages and in types, teaching us about Himself. And every time God revealed His glory it was for the purpose of transforming the creation and bringing it into union with Heaven.

God’s first displayed His glory when He manifested His presence at the creation when God said, “Let there be light.” The uncreated Light of God’s glory was manifested at the beginning of creation, bringing the Heavenly pattern down to the earth, by the Spirit and Word.

The glory of God was manifest on top of Mt. Sinai, when God appeared to His people in thunder and lightning and a thick cloud of fire and smoke, and God spoke forth His law.

Christ's ascent into Heaven was seen in a type when Moses went up that mountain and entered into the glory cloud of God for 40 days. When Moses came down Mt. Sinai the skin of his face shone brightly because he had been in the presence of God talking with him. And he would have to wear a veil over His face when he talked with the people of Israel, because he shined.

That same glory cloud that was on Mt. Sinai dwelt with God's people as the Shekinah glory which dwelt in the tabernacle over the mercy seat. The word 'Shekinah' is actually derived from the word 'to dwell.' As in Ex. 25:8 God says, "*And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may 'dwell' in their midst.*" God's glory dwelt in the midst of His people in the sanctuary in the form of the pillar of cloud and fire.

And we know from Christmas that the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father.

When we finally get to Rev. 21, we see God's glory and presence dwelling with His people in the New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. There it says, "*Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God himself will be there God.*"

What does this bride's adornment look like? It looks like the radiance of God's glory and light. Rev. 21:11 says the "*Holy City Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel. And in the city there will be no need of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light.*"

God has always sought to dwell with His people, and when he every time he manifests His presence in the light of His glory.

As we think back to Moses ascending up to the top of Mt. Sinai, we now see this as a type of the Ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father. Moses had received glory from God, but Moses' glory was a reflective glory, which did not originate with him.

According to Paul, Moses had to cover his face with a veil while speaking to the people because the radiance and glory that shone from his face would eventually fade away. Moses wanted to conceal the fact that his glory was diminishing, and therefore he would frequently return to God's presence to witness His glory and become glorified himself.

But Christ has even more glory than Moses. Moses' glory and light faded away with time. But Jesus Christ is the uncreated Light and glory of God, who is the radiance of the glory of God.

And now that He has ascended into the presence of God on the top of the true Mt. of God, heavenly Mt. Zion, with our human nature, the light of his glory will never fade away from him, or from us. Jesus is always in the presence of God, and God's face shines on the Son, and the Son's face shines onto us. *"He is the true light which give light to everyone."*

We see a preview of that glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, *when his face shone like the Sun, and his clothes became white as light.* – Matt. 17:2

Luke's account says *as he was praying his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.* This word dazzling in Greek is used

in Ezek. 1:4 in the LXX to describe the glory of God as “*a bright cloud with brightness around it and lightning flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal.*” Thus Luke is trying to tie together the glory of God that Ezekiel saw with Jesus.

This is why Luke says that Peter, James, and John *saw his glory*, and as they stood there watching, *the cloud overshadowed them, and they entered into the cloud.* This is not just any cloud, but this is the glory cloud of God that has dwelt with God’s people from the beginning.

When we look on the glory of God in the shining and radiating face of Jesus Christ, People of God, we are being transformed into that same glory, for we are brought into Trinity of Glory and Love, being perfectly united to the Father and the Son in the Spirit.

Thus Paul says, “*And we all, with unveiled face are being transformed into that same image, from one to degree to another.*”

The light of God’s presence and glory is therefore what we are saved by, and what we are saved to.

This puts a fresh understanding on the refrain of Ps. 80 – “*Restore us, O God of Hosts! Let your face shine that we be saved.*”

Just as Moses saw the glory of God when he talked to Him and his face shone like light, so Christ’s shining face of glory is what glorifies us when we see him in the Word by faith.

This is how the Spirit is preparing us for the place, by shining the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in our hearts, through the Word of God, transforming us into that perfect image of glory.

*“For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’”*

But He who we behold with the eyes of faith now, one day we will acquire full possession of, and be fully transformed into His glorious likeness. As 1 John 3:2 says it like this – *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as His is.”*

## **BECOMING LIGHT**

There are many Bible passages that describe our salvation as us shining like light, and as God shining His light upon us. And from this we can conclude that when God shines upon, we will shine in glory even participating in God’s own glory and light.

Dan. 12:3 – *“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

Matt. 13:43 – *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”*

Judges 5:31 – *“May your friends be like the Sun as he rises in his might.”*

2 Sam. 23:4 – *“he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless day.”*

Ps. 21:5 – *“His glory is great through your salvation; splendor and majesty you bestow on him.”*



Num. 6:24-26 - *“The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

John 12:36 - *“While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”*

Col. 1:12 - *“...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”*

2 Peter 1:4 - *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence...so that you may become partakers of the divine nature...”*

It is in the light of these passages that Heb. 2 tells us that Jesus was crowned with glory and honor, in order to bring many sons to glory.

The hope to which God has called us, and the riches of our glorious inheritance in the saints is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Thus, in the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, our human nature has been glorified and has been brought into the eternal fellowship of light and love and glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit. God and Man dwell together in God. This is the goal of all history, the point of creation and redemption, to restore man back to God, and incorporate Man into the Godhead, by shining forth the light of His glorious presence upon us forever in the face of Jesus Christ.

And so we say, *“Restore us, O Lord God of Hosts. Make your face shine that we be saved.”* Amen.