

## DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 31 AUGUST 2020 – 6 SEPTEMBER 2020



**UPPER  
HUNTER**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

The end of Christ's earthly ministry (though even this term can have some issues) was not Christ's death on the cross, or even His resurrection. It was His ascension. The risen Christ ascended into heaven. While it may be tempting to think of the fact that Christ ascended to heaven has no real significance for us Christian theology and life, it has been a vital part of Christian confession down through the centuries, as we can see from the Apostles' Creed and this very Heidelberg Catechism.

Q46 states the fact that Christ has ascended to heaven as recorded in the Scriptures. Then the next two questions deal with theological questions regarding Christ's ascension. Firstly (Q47) it assures us that Christ's ascension doesn't mean that He is absent from us because while He is not on earth with us in His human body, He is still with us everywhere by His Spirit. Then, Q48 deals with the Christological question about how Christ can be absent from us in His human nature (human body), while present with us in His divine nature (His Spirit). The answer is found in the orthodox Christology where Christ's infinite divine nature and His finite human nature are united in one Person of Christ. So, without separation of the two natures, we can still confess and have real access to Christ by His Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Question 49 nicely sums up what blessings we receive because of His ascension: (1) Christ advocates for us in the presence of God the Father, so we can have confidence when we're assailed with guilt and accusations from Satan; (2) We can be confident of our place in heaven as Christ in his human flesh is already there, guaranteeing our entry; (3) We receive the promised Holy Spirit who empowers and encourages us to keep seeking things above where Christ is.

Please use this week's devotional aid to meditate on things of above where Christ is!

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

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### THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM<sup>1</sup>

#### Lord's Day 18

#### **Q46) What do you mean by saying, "He ascended to heaven?"**

A) That Christ, while His disciples watched, was lifted up from the earth to heaven and will be there for our good until He comes again to judge the living and the dead.

#### **Q47) But isn't Christ with us until the end of the world as He promised us?**

A) Christ is truly human and truly God. In His human nature Christ is not now on earth; but in His divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit He is not absent from us for a moment.

#### **Q48) If His humanity is not present wherever His divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?**

A) Certainly not. Since divinity is not limited and is present everywhere, it is evident that Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of the humanity He has taken on, but at the same time His divinity is in and remains personally united to His humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.

#### **Q49) How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?**

A) First, He pleads our cause in heaven in the presence of His Father. Second, we have our own flesh in heaven—a guarantee that Christ our head will take us, His members, to Himself in heaven. Third, He sends His Spirit to us on earth as a further guarantee. By the Spirit's power we make the goal of our lives, not earthly things, but the things above where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.

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#### **ACTS 1:9–11**

Acts 1:9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

*The bible clearly teaches that Christ, after accomplishing our salvation through His death and resurrection, He also ascended to heaven. It may be difficult to envision where Christ is now, since heaven doesn't simply mean the sky or space. Nevertheless, we do and must believe and confess that Christ ascended to heaven as the bible teaches us. Not only that, we must also believe that Christ will return to judge the world in the future. And there is the Christian hope. We will not forever live in this fallen world, but Christ will return and judge what is wrong and evil once for all, and He will make all things new that day.*

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#### **ROMANS 8:34**

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

*Christians are not perfect. Not yet anyway. But why doesn't God destroy us when we fall back into the same old sin? The bible gives us many reasons, one of them being that God is patient. But another important reason is because the ascended Christ is interceding for us. Christ has a tender heart towards us struggling sinners, and He pleads our case before the Father. And because Christ defends us, and God never denies His beloved Son's request, we can be sure that we will not fall under God's condemnation. When Satan tempts us, reminds us of all our sins, and accuses us for our failures, remember Christ is praying for us in heaven. And God will continue to listen to Christ's intercession for us.*

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#### **COLOSSIANS 3:1–4**

Col 3:1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

*One thing we must understand for a fuller and richer experience of God's love for us is that the way God saves us is not from a distance. It is not as if Christ's death and resurrection secured our salvation as a portable gift, like a parcel, and God posts by the Holy Spirit as a courier, all the while, Christ stays far away from us. No. The bible shows us that there is an intimate relationship that is formed between Christ and us who are being saved. Theologians call this the union with Christ. We're united to Christ when we believe Him. It is a way of expressing the reality Jesus was talking about when He said He is the vine and we are the branches, and we must abide in Him (John 15:1–11). Or, the Apostle Paul's repeated phrase "in Christ" or "with Christ" in his letters. In fact, it is from this union with Christ that all other blessings of salvation can come to us, including calling, regeneration, justification, sanctification, perseverance, glorification, etc. This is why it is true to say that when we have Christ, we have everything and lack nothing, and without Christ, we have no hope whatsoever. Being united to Christ, then, we can have every confidence that our salvation is secure and we have a glorious future in Christ.*