

Bristol Conference 1973-02 the Lord Jesus Christ

by Stan Ford

Jesus' ascension into heaven was a necessary step for the Holy Spirit to come and make his presence real in our lives.

Duration: 35:41

Scripture: Psalm 139:6, Isaiah 63:3, Matthew 26:39, Luke 2:14, Acts 1:2-3, Revelation 19:13

Topics: "Christology", "The Cross"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the significance of Jesus' scars on his hands. He highlights that these scars were the only thing that man ever made that would be in glory. The preacher also discusses the importance of God doing what he asks us to do, using the example of requiring two witnesses for every divine truth. He encourages the audience to spend their lives searching the scriptures to discover the wonderful and profound aspects of Christ. Additionally, the preacher reflects on the loneliness and purpose of Jesus' death on the cross.

Transcript

The former treaties have I made, O Theophilus, 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 commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible truths, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. I mentioned one evening that my favorite hymn in your hymnbook, the choice hymns of the faith I believe that is, is Alfred Macy's lovely hymn. O lead me to the man who died, who all God's nature glorified, Descending to the depths of woe, and for us vanquish every foe.

O lead me to the empty tomb, His death hath robbed of all its bloom, He's risen, the Lord of life and peace, Holds us in his armed embrace. O lead me up to heaven's heights, To see the Lord enthroned in light, The gazing on his glory there, I may reflect his image here. And it is because this evening we are continuing our studies in the first of Acts, and we are dealing tonight with that second verse, until the day in which he was taken up.

And I wanted to quote to you that third verse of the hymn, The gazing on his glory there, we might reflect his image here. And I pray that this may be the outcome of our reading and consideration of the Word of

God tonight. You will remember during the past evening, for surely it behoves us just to go through very briefly what we have considered, you will remember that we were considering a little of this, our blessed Savior.

We thought a little of the lowliness of his birth, and I'm certain that every one of us wondered as we thought of he whose body prepared of the Father, and produced of the Spirit, and possessed of the Son, was the body of a man as he moved amongst us. And when one ponders the lowliness part, and one realizes that there he lay, in the very manger of a stable. And I often allow my imagination to run away with me.

I often think of that dark Galilean night, and when my way and imagination to that stable, and remember that there's no candle, there's no light there, and yet that babe is the very light of the world. I remember there's no doctor, and no midwife there, and yet that babe is the very great physician. I remember that there's no food there, for there was no place in the inn, they have no room or time for him, and yet this babe is the very bread of heaven.

And I marvel at the lowliness of his birth. And then we were thinking not only of the lowliness of his birth, but we were utterly amazed at the loveliness of his life. We thought of this blessed Christ who moved amongst men, who could hear the exclamation of heaven, this is my beloved Son in whom I am wealthy.

O brethren, sisters, may I say this to you, and I'm sure you would say it to me, that the more I open my Bible, and the more I read the Lord Jesus, the more I realize that he was a wonderful person, and I am utterly amazed at the loveliness of his life. But then I also acknowledge that I am but a man. I also acknowledge that the Bible tells me that there were many things that Jesus did and said, that there was no room to record all that was said and done.

There are so many things I don't know about him. But isn't it wonderful that there was not a grasp he took, there was not a stance he took, there was not an action he did, but God the Father saw it all. And as long as I open the Bible to write it all, and as long as my intellect is so dull I can't understand it all, and my knowledge so cramped that I can't measure it all, yet there's a Father in heaven that knows it all, and has seen it all, and he says, this is my beloved Son, in whom I find all my delight.

Oh my young friend, you spend your life searching the scripture concerning the Christ, and you'll still find there's more to find out, and you'll still find that he's more wonderful than any of your mortal ones. But if we keep thinking a little of the loneliness of his birth, and the loneliness of his death, did not he spend one occasion to consider the loneliness of his death? We thought of this one who went on to Calvary. While we may not have quoted the verses, I am sure we could have quoted the words of the 63rd of Isaiah, and I am certain none of us would have been in any doubt that, in spite of the Savior, I have trod the winepress alone.

Oh, please don't come to me after wooden slavery, Mr. Preacher, this is the 19th of Revelation, I know it is, but because he will tread the winepress of the wrath of God in a day that can't be come, and can it alone, he's treading it there, because on Calvary's cross alone, he met the requirements of God of all our needs. You know, brethren, sisters, the more I think of the loneliness of Christ, the more my heart is moved. You see, there is a loneliness of faith, isn't there? Some of us know something of the loneliness of faith.

I spend most of my time away from my wife, and my children, and my grandchildren, and I have never got used to being away from them. There are times when I find myself desperately lonely, and if occasionally you see me wander off on my own, you can rest assured of this, that I'm no longer in your lovely country, as lovely as it is. I'm back home again, and I'm thinking of the children, and the grandchildren, and the wife.

There's a loneliness of faith, and Jesus many a time knew the loneliness of faith. Could there be a lonelier place than Calvary? But will you remember there's something deeper in loneliness than the loneliness of faith? Where is the loneliness of faith? To be surrounded with thousands of people, to have them clamor that you might speak to them and bless them, yet find yourself so distinctly awake. Have you ever stopped to think that in thirty-three and a half years as Jesus walked in this scene, again and again he wanted to talk to someone about the purpose of his being here? Again and again he tried to.

On one occasion, as we've seen, he had actually returned to a disciple having spoken to him of the reason of his being in this scene, and hearing the disciple refute him for it, he had to say to the disciple standing behind him saying, there was only one occasion in thirty-three and a half years that Jesus could speak intelligently to anyone as to the reason he came into this scene. And on that occasion, God had to lift the lip of eternity, and summon some prophet in a patriarch to speak on the mount of transfiguration of the deceit that he should accomplish at Jerusalem, or the loneliness of the cross. But, if we have thought indeed of the loneliness of his past, and the loveliness of his life, and the loneliness of his death, this evening, oh blessed God, we're going to talk of the loneliness of his exaltation.

We're going to remember that they may have placed him in a tomb, but up on that tomb he arose, and blessed be God, he ascended into heaven. He ascended into glory. May I read the words of our text tonight? Until the day in which he was taken up.

Taken up. May I do what I said I would do each evening? I don't know that I have, but may I do what I said I would do every evening? May I tell you what I'm going to tell you? We're going to look just for a moment first at the expediency of his ascent. You remember the words of Jesus himself, it is expedient that I should go.

We're going to look at the expediency of his ascent. Then we're going to look, if we may please for a moment or two, at the eve of his ascent. We're going to see some of the things that happened ere he was received up into glory.

But then we're going to look not only at the expediency of his ascent, and the eve of his ascent, but we're going to look together, if we may, at the eyewitnesses of his ascent. We're going to see who it was that saw him. Then you will well understand if I suggest to you that we will also consider the extent of his ascent.

Where has he gone? How far has he gone? For the extent of the ascent of this blessed saviour of ours, we know something of the depth to which he went, but how high has he gone back? How far? First of all, then, could we look together for a moment or two at the expediency of his ascent? In the glorious words of the saviour himself, in the 16th chapter of John, and in verse 7, it is expedient that I should go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come. May I repeat that? It is expedient that I should go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come. What is so glad of this? Many a time I expect we have wondered why it was, having risen from the dead, that Jesus Christ did not stay, did not stay right here in this scene at that moment.

And when we do, we come, all of us, to the same conclusion, don't we? And this is the conclusion we're bound to come to, that there is a text in which we're glad he didn't stay. Last evening, our good friend Mr MacLean showed you some of the slides of his trip away to Jerusalem. I've been hearing today of some of you other folks that are going, I believe, this year, or as it may be next year.

Can you ever stop to think what would have happened if Jesus had stayed in Jerusalem? Every boat, every train, by every means, hundreds upon thousands of people would be rushing to Jerusalem to see him. And if you and I would suddenly say we're going to see him, you'd talk about a queue for dinner. Why, we'd never get near him, would we? We'd never be able to see him.

Let it be God he has attended in the glory, it was expedient that he should go, for he has gone there to send to us one who can make his presence real in our lives, not from distance away, where we can visit him occasionally, but make his presence up where moment by moment, day by day, week by week, year by year. Blessed be his name to the end of the journey, when in glory we shall see him face to face. All brethren, sisters, let thank God that Jesus ascended into heaven, and because he has ascended, because he has been glorified, he has sent to us his Holy Spirit.

Oh, blessed be his name for this great gift. Now, I will be talking a little about the work of the Spirit before we finish, but could I just say this here and now, and I think it's most important, I must say it, you've had it said to you a hundred times, I must say it again. When we speak of the Holy Spirit, as we have seen in the birth of the Lord Jesus, produced by the Spirit, we are talking of a person, not of an influence, but a person.

Never let us forget this, for if you do, you'll ever be in trouble. You do not receive a person in bits and pieces, do you? You receive a person in his entirety. I think it's important for us to remember that.

I will be emphasizing that maybe on another occasion, but here is the expediency of the return of the Lord, at least the ascension of the Lord. But then let's look for a moment at the eve of his ascension. The twenty-fourth chapter of Luke comes to its close with words like these, And he lifted up his hands and he blessed them.

And while as he was in the process of blessing them, he received up into glory, all the eve of his ascension to glory. But there he is, about as far as the Bethany, and he lifts up his hands and he blesses them. Have you ever done what I have done? Have you ever wondered why ever he led them as far as Bethlehem? I can think of a legion of places he could have led them to.

Or tell me, why did not this blessed Christ lead them as far as Bethlehem? The counting angels have told of his birth. Why didn't he lead them as far as Mount Cable? For we've been thinking already, as we have thought indeed of his transfiguration, that it was there at Mount Cable that celestial beings hovered in homage before him. Why was it he didn't lead them as far as Calvin? Had not the ribandoths and the orphaned graves proclaimed to all that this was God of all, blessed forever? Why didn't he lead them to the temple courts? The Shekinah glory at Shalport can always wonder in this place.

No, it was not to Bethlehem, or to Calvary, or to Mount Cable. It was not to the temple court that he led them, but he led them out as far as the Bethany. Oh, isn't that wonderful? Don't you feel you ought to just praise God? For my youngest friend knows this, that Bethany was the place of his deepest sorrow, but hallelujah, it will be the place of his greatest joy.

The place of his deepest sorrow? It is only twice recorded in the gospels that Jesus wept. Only twice recorded that so great was the sorrow that came upon him that the tears rang down his face. Once he wept over one man, once he wept over a city of men.

Once he wept over a dead man, once he wept over living men. But, on the both occasions that in the gospels it's recorded that Jesus wept, he was at Bethany. He wept at Bethany over the grave of Lazarus.

He wept at Bethany as in the distance he saw the walls heading to Jerusalem, and cried, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ye who stole of the prophets. There is one other occasion in Holy Rick where we're told that Jesus wept. The latter epistle to the Hebrews says, with strong, crying tears, and there is little doubt that he's speaking of Gethsemane.

Tell me, where was Gethsemane? It wasn't at Jerusalem. It was hard to Bethany. From the scene of his greatest sorrow, the scene of his greatest sorrow, the bible tells us Bethany, they leave them out for the scene of his greatest sorrow, that one day will be the scene of his greatest joy.

For, hallelujah, as we saw this morning, he's coming back again, having taught his own to be with him. After that time, when indeed there will be the judgment seat of Christ, the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the presentation of the Father, hallelujah, he's coming back again, and he's coming, and he shall stand upon the Mount of Olives. The mountain shall split asunder, Jerusalem in that day shall be as before it.

Blessed be God, back to the Mount of Olives, back to the place of his sorrow he has come, to show his sovereignty. Leave them out to a place of sorrow. They're going to know sorrow, aren't they? They're saying goodbye to him.

But, he leads them to the place that will tell his greatest joy, for out of his sorrow comes our supper, and our joy. He leads them as far as the temple, and he lifts up his hands. I like that, don't you? I like that.

You know, there are so many lovely hymns, aren't there? That how many times has made the outfather unheard? Are there crossings through heaven and hell? Burns through heaven and hell? Are there heartaches, and tears, and anguish? Are there lonely things to take? Family, homeward, and asylum? You'll find him. He's the only one who cares and understands. Standing somewhere in the shadows, you will find him, and you'll know him by the nail prints in his hands.

He led them out as far as the Bethany, and he lifted up his hands. Wonderful hands, wounded for me, wonderful feet nailed to the tree, wonderful eyes, lovely within, wonderful heart, broken by sin. He leads them and he lifts up his hands, and I wonder what those disciples thought when they looked at that, the only thing that man ever made that would be in glory, as they looked at those scars in his hands.

No wonder he could blaspheme, no wonder. A repressing scream, downflow from hell. What to drown below thy God's decree, an omen has been made.

All that guilt he wrest, redemption's price he paid. Oh, wondrous grace. Lifted up his hands and he blessed them.

I say, was he not doing what men have done, like Cynthia? Brother, sister, was he not doing what the patriarch has done in the years that were long past? Do you remember there came a time, there came a time when the aged father of Jacob, rather, the aged Jacob, or there came a time when the aged father of

Jacob was going to bless Jacob's son. Do you remember what happened? And, oh, I dare suggest this to you, but just as in that day hands were lifted to bless, so the hands of Jesus were lifted to bless, to bless you, and to bless you. He ever wishes to do this.

He lifted up his hands and he blessed. Oh, here was the very eve of his ascension, and we praise God this very day, do we not, that just as he blessed people where he went to glory, so the word of God comes in all, in all its thrill to our heart, that as he went, so he's coming. He went in blessing, and hallelujah, he's coming back again in blessing.

But, if we have thought a little of the expediency of his ascension, and we have thought a little of the eve of his ascension, I wonder if we could say just a little about the eyewitnesses of his ascension. He ascended into glory, and in the 11th verse of the first chapter of Acts, if we go down that chapter, we read these words, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This saying, Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. You will notice, of course, in verse 10, that we are told that there were found there two men in white apparel.

I think this is rather important to know. You see, I learned long ago, and I'm sure you did, I learned long ago that God does what he asks us to do. Could I repeat that? God does what he asks us to do.

For instance, you remember in the Old Testament, God gave the great statement and law concerning evidence. He told us that we must never accept the word of one man, the testimony of one man. It is in the mouth of two or three witnesses that every word shall be established.

Now, God does not tell us that we must not accept the word of one man, but only the word of two, unless he himself gives two witnesses to every divine truth that's essential for our salvation. And never you forget that. If you forget that, you can run into terrible trouble.

It is because of this, these people that call themselves Latter-day Saints have come, and they're baptism of the dead, and they have taken one obscure verse, and they've built what they call a doctrine upon it, but it is in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Have you noticed how completely God has done this? He wants you and I to accept that Jesus Christ is his son, so he gives two witnesses at the baptism of the Christ. The Spirit came in the dark, and he himself uttered his great cry, My Beloved Son.

So, we have the twofold witness as to the loyalty of Christ. We have the twofold witness, indeed, as to the redemption in Christ. On the land of transfiguration, as we've taught already, there appear two, Moses and Elias, and they speak of the deceit that he should accomplish in Jerusalem.

There is the twofold witness as to his resurrection. Do you remember yesterday, we were thinking how the angel said, he's not here, he's risen, and there were two of them. One sat at the foot, and the other at the head.

And so, we have the twofold witness as to his loyalty, the twofold witness as to his redemption, the twofold witness as to his resurrection. But, here with this God, the twofold witness as to his return. And, there stood two men in white apparel which said, this same Jesus shall so come in like that.

Oh, we have not followed cunningly divided tables. Here what God requires of us, he himself has done, and has given us the twofold witness. Now, I don't know who these two men were, do you? Oh, I could allow my imagination to run away with me.

By the way, they weren't angels, were they? I mean, it's said so, doesn't it? I mean, I don't know about your Bible, but my Bible says this, that there stood two men stood by in white apparel. Two men. And, I assure you, the word men there is men, is men.

I don't think they were angels. I once heard a dear brother, and I would put it that way, because if I didn't, you'd come to me asking me, well, I can't give it, I'm just. But, I once heard someone say that these two men were the two men that appeared with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias.

And, Moses, who tasted death, the dead in Christ shall rise first. And, Elias, who was caught up in a chariot, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive and remain under the coming of the Lord shall be caught up, not taste death. Now, I don't know if that's right.

I only know this, that my heart is glad, glad that there were two messengers that came from God, and they dared to say to the men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up? Don't you realize there's something to do? Don't you realize, indeed, that this Jesus is coming down today? There's no need for thine heart to be broken. There's no need, indeed, for you to be cast down. This Jesus shall come again in light, in like manner.

Oh, I bless God for this, that those who were the eyewitnesses of ascension were those, indeed, who in this scene had walked with him, these men of Galilee. Here were some of his disciples. Here were some who, for fear of the Jews, had bolted and barred the door of a room, and yet they had seen the Christ as he stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you.

They had come to realize that it was true all that he had said, and now they see him as standing in the heavens. Oh, the wonder of it all! But there it touched their lives as it should touch your life and my life today, brethren and sisters. Then, of course, there's the extent of his ascension.

As I come to a close, may I say this to you, that if you were to ask me how high Christ has ascended, all I can do is quote the scripture to you and leave it at that. All I can say is the words of Hebrews 7 and 26. He has made higher than the heavens.

If you ask me how high, how far he has gone, then I can quote to you the words of Ephesians 1 and 21, and I can dare say to you that God set him far above principalities and powers. Oh, he has ascended into heaven. Because he has ascended into heaven, we can praise God today that he's available for us.

Available for us! We were reminded yesterday, were we not, a little of the high priesthood of the Christ. We were reminded of the wonderful fact that Jesus Christ is a high priest, and it's the power of prayer in our hearts which we share with us something of the truth of God in this matter. And may I call to a close by just passing one or two simple affirmations about the high priesthood of Christ.

The Bible tells me that he is a high priest, Hebrews 7, after the order of Melchizedek. A high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Now, Melchizedek, what did he do? Remember that.

Melchizedek had neither beginning of day nor end of day. And is it wonderful to know that Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven, and is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek? He's always there, and if that's all the Bible said of the high priesthood of Christ, I would chant, hallelujah! That he's not only a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, are you listening? For this is the most important thing I've said tonight. He is not only a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, but he's a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

You see, Melchizedek had never been born in a concentration camp. Melchizedek had never known what it meant to be smacked at, and kicked, and sworn at, and beaten. Melchizedek never knew what it meant with tears running down his face, to sink to the ground, and make his strong sword to heaven.

But Aaron did. Aaron had been born in a concentration camp in Egypt. Aaron had known the whip of the taskmaster across his back.

Aaron had had his hopes built to high heaven, and dashed to the earth, as his brother started out to be indeed a missionary, and turned out to be a murderer. Aaron again, and again, and again, and again, has seen the pain and suffering that comes from men and women who seek to turn God into sin. And I have a high priest in heaven, and hallelujah, he's there forever.

A high priest rather forever. But praise God, he's not only after the order of Melchizedek, but he's after the pattern of error. I have a high priest who comes in touch with the figuring of our infirmity, because he wants at all points, tempted such as we, yet without sin.

He knows what it means to be smacked at, but did not the fitful of men that led him away to Calvary run down his face? He knows what it means to be laughed at and jeered. He says, Ha ha, let him strain himself as if he might be the chosen of God. He knows what it means to be buffeted, did they not blindfold him and smite him? He knows what it means to pass through all the pain and suffering of this age.

Sister, brother, he's in heaven, he knows it all, and he's my high priest, and he's ascended to glory. There's not a pain that comes to my heart, there's not a problem that comes to my life, there's not a pathway I have to tread, but I have a Savior in glory that's been there before. Yeah, I'm a tailor in my clothes.

Oh, oh, lead me up to heaven's heights to see the Lord in honey light, gazing on his glory there, I may reflect his image here. Could we pray? God's Father, we're utterly amazed at the loneliness of his birth, at the loveliness of his life, the loneliness of his death, but we rejoice together tonight in the loveliness of his exaltation. We praise thee that God hath given him a name which is above everything.

We thank thee that in glory today there's found a high priest. Oh, we're blessed to be born of a high priest. We can't leave our advocate.

Oh, but we're blessed to believe our high priest. We ask thee that thou would ever grant that we might understand that he's available for us. We're blessed in this, not just walking a street in this world where only a few can talk to your head, but he has exalted to the right hand of God, and he's available for us.

God grant that we might avail ourselves of him. We ask it in his name.

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