

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

—based on the commentary of St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite—

Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven (Lk. 24:51).

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, 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, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same manner as you saw Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

This is how the New Testament records the Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven, which took place forty days after His Resurrection. Several prophecies in the Old Testament written hundred of years before Christ described this same event.

He mounted upon the Cherubim and flew, He flew upon the wings of the winds (Ps. 17:11).

This prophecy in the Psalms states that during His Ascension, Christ would be lifted up by the Cherubim. The prophet Ezekiel similarly attests: ***“Then the glory of the Lord departed from the house and went upon the cherubim ... The glory of the God of Israel was over and above them” (Ez. 10:17-18)***. Thus, when the multitude of cherubim came together during the Ascension, it appeared to the Apostles that Christ was sitting on a cloud, as St. Luke the Evangelist relates. Analogously, the Gospel refers to the two angels who appeared to the Apostles as ***“men in white apparel” (Acts 1:10)***, just as it refers to the angel who appeared to the Magi as ***“a star” (Mt. 2:2-10)***.

God is gone up in jubilation, the Lord with the sound of the trumpet (Ps. 46:5)

The prophet and king David again prophesied the Ascension of Christ, Who would go up with angelic cries of jubilation and with angels trumpeting His entry into Heaven (signals of victory in battle, used to declare Christ’s victory over the devil and death).

You ascended on high, You led captivity captive; You received gifts for mankind (Ps. 67:19)

You will go up into Heaven during the Ascension, O Christ, says David, and thus You will free the nations that have been enslaved by the enemy. You will captivate them who have been held captive by the devil, and, subsequently, You will send the gifts of the Holy Spirit to mankind.

Be exalted above the heavens, O God, and Your glory above all the earth (Ps. 107:5)

Here, the prophet David foretells that Christ would ascend into the Heavens (from whence He descended) after completing the mystery of His incarnation, and that, in following, His glory would race throughout the entire world through the Apostolic preaching.

Arise, O Lord my God, in the ordinance You commanded, and the congregation of peoples shall surround You, and for their sakes return on high (Ps. 7:7-8)

This verse splendidly predicts i) how Christ (whom David refers to as his Lord and God) would first resurrect from the dead, just as He had appointed: ***“Now I will resurrect, says the Lord” (Ps. 11:5)***; ii) how after His resurrection many people would believe in Him and congregate around Him, forming His church; and iii) how for the sake of His followers He would once again ascend into Heaven in order to send them the Holy Spirit, as He had promised: ***“But now I go away to Him who sent Me ... if I depart, I will send Him [the Holy Spirit] to you” (Jn. 16:5-7)***.

And his feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives (Zch. 14:4)

Speaking of the coming of the Lord, the prophet Zechariah says that on that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Indeed, Christ would often go to the mount of Olives to pray, and this is where He was on the night He was betrayed (***Mt. 26:30***). Furthermore, as it states in the Acts of the Apostles, Christ Ascension took place on the mount called olive grove (***Acts 1:12***). To this day, Christ’s footprint remains imprinted on the stone at the top of this mountain, from where he was lifted up into the heavens on the day of His Ascension.

Who is this who comes from Edom with red garments from Bozrah, so beautiful in His apparel, with force of strength? “I speak of righteousness and saving judgment.” Why are Your garments red and Your apparel as one who treads in a winepress? (Isa. 63:1-2)

Here the prophet Isaiah describes the astonishment of the angelic powers who would witness the Lord ascending to Heaven with His resurrected body. The angels stood dumbfounded when they noticed Christ's wounds (i.e. the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and the mark of the spear on His side) imprinted on His immaculate body. Seeing this extraordinary and unprecedented miracle, they asked, “Who is this person Who comes from Edom (i.e. from the earth), and Whose red garments are from Bozrah (i.e. comprised from flesh)?” The garments and apparel are the human nature of Christ; while the red color they have been dyed with are His immaculate blood that issued from His holy side, hands, and feet during His passion. Then Christ identifies Himself to the angels by replying, “I speak of righteousness and saving judgment.” Amazed at Jesus' Divinity, people on the earth asked: ***“Who is this person that even the sea and the winds obey him?” (Mt. 8:27)***. Amazed at Jesus' humanity, the angels in heaven asked: “Who is this King of glory Who comes from Edom and the earth? How did He deify the human body? How did He elevate the earthly body to the Heavens? How did he seat the fallen human nature to the right of God's throne? Oh, what depth and wealth of wisdom and knowledge of God!”

Lift up the gates, O you rulers, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall enter. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory (Ps. 23: 9-10)

Here the prophet David describes the dialogue that took place between the angels who were ministering during Christ's Ascension. The angels ascending with Christ through the air were commanding the angles located higher up to move completely out of the way and open the gates of heaven so that Christ the King of Glory may pass into Heaven. And the angels above, seeing the Lord ascending with a human body, which He did not possess previously when He had descended to the earth, were astounded and asked the angels below: “Who is this King of Glory?” To this the ascending angels replied, “He is the Lord of the angelic hosts, He is the King of glory, He is the incarnate God.”

The Lord said to my Lord: sit at My right hand until I place your enemies as a footstool under Thy feet (Ps. 109:1)

The prophet David states that the Lord (God the Father) would say to his Lord (God the Son) to sit at His right hand. Indeed, this happened on the day of the Ascension; for on that day, the Lord Jesus Christ—Who according to His Godly nature was always equal to God the Father—became enthroned at the right hand of the Father with His resurrected and deified body, and thus acquired this same glory with His human nature, as the God-man: ***“He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavens” (Eph. 1:20). “Looking unto Jesus... who endured the cross... and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hb. 12:2).***

The Lord went up into the heaven and thundered. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth, for He is righteous (1 Kg. 1:10).

In her Ode to the Lord, Hannah prophetically describes both the Ascension and the Second Coming of Christ. First she states that the Lord will go up into heaven from where He thunder. “Thunder” refers to the descent of the Holy Spirit, which Christ would send to His Apostles ten days after His Ascension. For as it states in the book of Acts: ***“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting ... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:2-4).*** And then she states that this same Lord will judge the entire world, just as the two angels said to the Apostles: ***“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, He will come in the same manner as you saw Him go into heaven” [to judge the living and the dead] (Acts 1:11).*** Therefore, Jesus Christ is the Lord.

“Rejoice ye Heavens with Him, and let all the angels of God worship Him” (Dt. 32:43)

The prophet Moses predicted that heaven and the angels would rejoice during the Ascension of the Lord, when they would witness the formerly fallen human nature of man suddenly being elevated and being rendered a citizen of heaven. And on account of this great joy, they would proceed to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet David similarly states, ***“Worship Him, all ye His angels” (Ps. 96:7).*** And the Apostle Paul expresses this event as follows: ***“And again, when He brings the First-Begotten into the world, He says, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him’ (Hb. 1:6).***

Behold how the Old Testament clearly proclaims that Jesus Christ Who Ascended into Heaven forty days after His Resurrection is the Lord God Himself!