

THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST IN EPHESIANS

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In their consideration of Christ, many believers tend to focus on the past or the future. They look back in appreciation to a historical Jesus, recalling His miraculous incarnation, virtuous human living, redeeming death, and victorious resurrection, or they look forward in anticipation to the coming Christ, awaiting His triumphant return. However, Christians largely overlook what Christ is doing today. This is because they are still veiled concerning the crucial matter of the heavenly ministry of the ascended Christ. Many Christians are misled to believe that, following His ascension, Christ, who was a carpenter when He lived on earth, is now busy constructing physical mansions for His believers in heaven, a notion that has no support in the Scriptures. Others, with more biblical understanding, may recognize that Christ's ascension was a momentous event that signaled His manifold accomplishments, including the completion of His ministry on earth, His return to glory following His earthly humiliation, and His exaltation as the Lord of all, and that it marked the commencement of His heavenly intercession. Regrettably, even this uplifted view relegates the present ministry of Christ to a faraway, doctrinal realm, confining His activities to the heavenlies, where they remain detached from the daily life of the believers. In order to comprehend the full scope of Christ's heavenly ministry and for it to become an experiential reality in our Christian life and church life, we must receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation to apprehend the truth concerning Christ's heavenly ministry as presented in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

Among the books in the New Testament, Ephesians reveals the present ministry of the ascended Christ from a unique perspective, unveiling the believers' union with the ascended Christ and their participation in His heavenly ministry. According to this Epistle, the consummate goal of God's eternal economy is to head up all things in Christ, the God-appointed Head over all things, through the church, His mystical Body. In other words, God ultimately intends to bring all things in the universe into order under the headship of Christ through His Body as the means of His divine administration. However, before the universe can be headed up through the Body of Christ, the believers themselves as members of the Body must be headed up in Christ. This leads to a key revelation in Ephesians, one that brings Christ's ascension into the realm of the believers' experience: the heading up of the members of the Body is accomplished by the ascended Christ's transmission of God's surpassingly great power toward the believers, which is nothing less than God in Christ as the Spirit to be enjoyed as life and grace. Thus, the ultimate goal of Christ's heavenly ministry in ascension as the Accomplisher of God's economy is the building up of the Body of Christ for the heading up of all things in Christ. Toward this end the essential work of Christ in His heavenly ministry is the transmission of the power of the divine life as grace into the believers' tripartite being. It is also the basic responsibility of every believer to coordinate with the heavenly ministry of Christ for the building