

**Christ's Ascension****Acts 1:9—11**

Christ had been spending the past 40 days getting the Disciples ready to take over ministering to Israel. They were given the Holy Spirit in John 20:21—23 so they would be ready to forgive or retain sins. This ability was not done on a human level, but through the power of the Holy Spirit and was demonstrated with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Everything that Jesus Christ taught them prepared them to reach out to the leaders in Jerusalem with the Gospel of the Kingdom with the ultimate goal of reaching the entire world with the Gospel of the Kingdom.

**The Ascension** (verses 9—11)

Christ's ascension needs to be viewed dispensationally to really understand it. Some believe it was the completion of Jesus' earthly ministry. Actually, His earthly ministry was continuing through the Disciples. This is what they were trained to do. This was why they were asking about the coming of the Kingdom (verse 6). Unfortunately, most people do not make a distinction between Jesus' earthly ministry through the 12 Disciples with the Lord Jesus Christ's heavenly ministry through the Apostle Paul. His ascension was a progression in Israel's program and not a part of the Mystery program as revealed to Paul. As long as Jesus stayed on the earth, the Holy Spirit would not be able to take His place (John 14:26; 16:7). If the Holy Spirit didn't come, Joel 2:28 would not be fulfilled when saying that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. The giving of the Spirit began at Pentecost and eventually will be given to all believing Jews going into the Kingdom at the end of the Tribulation (Ezekiel 11:17—20; 36:24—29; Isaiah 44:1—5).

As Jesus ascends into heaven, it is stated that a cloud received Him. I don't believe we are to think of these as being puffy white cumulous clouds in the sky. These were probably "clouds" of angels escorting Him back into heaven. To see why this may be so, it's important to understand that Jesus will return in the same manner as He departed. Just as He ascended from the Mount of Olives, He will return to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4—6). Notice that verse 6 indicates that all the holy ones will be with him. These holy ones are the angels who will accompany Him as He takes the throne in Jerusalem (Matthew 16:27). Revelation 1:7 seems to support this idea. Just as He was caught up into the clouds as He ascends, He will be coming WITH the clouds in Revelation.

Imagine being one of the Disciples watching the one man they gave everything to, leave them. Change is always hard and saying good-bye is hard. They must have felt a great emptiness and some anxiety about what the future held for them. The two (probable) angels in white apparel (Compare with John 20:12) comported them by reminding them that Jesus Christ was going to return to them in like manner. This was a promise to the Disciples and to Israel, not to the Church, the Body of Christ. When Jesus Christ returns, it will be a literal coming, clearly visible to the world since every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7).

The Bible compares His coming to a thief (Matthew 24:43; 1 Thessalonians 5:2). Most misinterpret this to mean that Jesus is going to come like a thief to "steal" believers away to heaven. Jesus is not stealing believers away, rather He is like a thief in that when He comes, He will take the unbelievers by surprise. A thief comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). Jesus will be coming to gather His little flock into the Millennial Kingdom while "stealing" the unsaved away from this earth to be condemned in the Lake of Fire for all eternity (Matthew 13:39—49; 24:38—41). Those who are on the alert, waiting for His coming, will be ready when He does come, while those who were not ready will be taken by surprise and be condemned (Matthew 24:42—49; 25:1—12). He only comes as a thief to those who are not His (Revelation 3:3).

Many verses in the Old Testament describe Christ's Second Coming and reign over the earth including the following:

**Psalm 24** Shows the Lord Jesus Christ coming to take the throne.

**Psalm 118** Shows the Little Flock being sustained by Christ during the Tribulation followed by His coming and setting up the Kingdom.

**Isaiah 11** Shows Christ the King ruling and the changes that will occur on the earth with His reign.

**Isaiah 66:10—24** Shows God's judgment during the Tribulation and His rule over the earth.

**Daniel 7:13—14** Shows Jesus Christ with all power ruling over all people.

**Zechariah 2:10—11** Shows Jesus Christ coming and ruling.

His coming will fill the hearts of the unbelievers with fear and trepidation while filling the hearts of believers with great relief as they see their Savior appear. His coming will be greatly anticipated by the Little Flock as they go through the Tribulation (pictured in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm with David as the Little Flock of believers going through the Tribulation. Also see Psalm 3, 6). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace is an example of the Little Flock of believers going through the Tribulation with Jesus Christ standing next to them, helping them get through this intense time of persecution.

### **His coming is not our going**

There is so much misinformation surrounding the Rapture and the Second Coming that it is hard to cut through the confusion. Most believe that the Rapture is the Second Coming even without having studied Scripture to see what it actually teaches. Often, the traditions of men take precedence in deciding what Scripture has to say. Men such as Augustine Luther and Calvin are cited as authorities as to why there will be no separate rapture of the Church. These men are often used as a foundation to build Scriptural doctrine upon. Instead of using Scripture to interpret Scripture, men often use church fathers and leaders to interpret and understand God's Word.

Their failure to see a separate and distinct Rapture for the Church, the Body of Christ comes about because of a failure to divide Scripture as instructed by the Apostle Paul (2 Timothy 2:15). The word "rightly dividing" is often interpreted to mean correctly handling. The Greek word is *orthotomeo* (G3718) and literally means to cut straight. *Orthos* (G3735) (used in Hebrews 12:13) means straight or upright (as in *orthodontics*). *Temno* means to cut or divide as can be seen from the Greek word for circumcision, *peritemno* (G4059) (*peri* means around as in perimeter and *temno* means to cut. *Peritemno* thus means to cut around).

All that to say that *orthotomeo* literally means to cut straight, or divide. It is not about teaching Scripture correctly, but is about dividing Scripture correctly. Very few translations acknowledge that we need to divide Scripture in order to understand what God is saying through Scripture. We correctly handle the Word of truth by correctly dividing the Word. Unfortunately, only about five of 50 translations correctly handled this verse, including the King James Bible, the Geneva Bible and the Darby translation.

This is important to understand and make this distinction because Paul is the person who claims to be given the commission of being the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). When we make a distinction, we divide between one thing and another. When we rightly divide Scripture, we make distinctions between how God deals with mankind. For instance, God deals with Israel in a completely different manner than He does with us as members of the Church, the Body of Christ. Those who don't see these differences will be unable to accurately understand and interpret Scripture.

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit [www.MidActsTruths.com](http://www.MidActsTruths.com)