

HERITAGE OF FAITH

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The Importance of Ascension Day

MOST public holidays have religious significance, for example, Ascension Day. Yet, few of us ever appreciated its religious significance until the government abolished it as a public holiday. Many of our holidays have now been replaced with days that celebrate Mankind such as “Human Rights Day”; “Women's Day”; “Worker's Day” and “Youth Day” – an indication that the new national religion is Humanism.

Christians believe that History is His story. God is sovereign over time and space. At the beginning of time, God created the world. At another time He judged the world in the flood. At the appointed time, Christ came and died for our sins. Three days later He rose from the dead. Forty days later He ascended into Heaven. Ten days after that He sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples at Pentecost. In time to come He will return to this earth and judge the nations. History has a goal. Time has meaning. Our calendars should reflect that.

Good Friday is when we solemnly remember the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, His great sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. He suffered, bled and died for our sins. He endured the punishment we deserved – so that we could enjoy the reward that only He deserves.

Resurrection Sunday is a joyous celebration of the victory of Christ over death, hell and the grave. Jesus is risen from the dead. He is alive forever more. Death is defeated. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

Forty days after Resurrection Sunday we celebrate the Ascension of Christ into Heaven. He is alive forevermore and He is exalted and enthroned at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He is above every other name and authority in Heaven and on

earth. Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We have an Advocate in Heaven. He hears our prayers. He will crush all His enemies. He will come again. Therefore, we must go and make disciples of all nations.

THE ASCENSION IS ABOUT AUTHORITY

The abolition of the long established **Ascension Day** is very significant because Ascension Day deals with authority. Christ “has gone into Heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.” 1 Peter 3:22

“...All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...”

Matthew 28:18 – 20

THE ASCENSION PROCLAIMS THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE

Jesus has all authority. Jesus is Lord over the world of business, sport, entertainment, and government. Jesus Christ is Lord over the schools, the shops, the cinemas, the factories, the hospitals, the law courts and Parliament. There is no area of life that is outside of His authority. Every one of us, will have to stand individually before Almighty God on the Day of Judgment and give an account of our lives.

The Ascension celebrates the vindication and victory of Christ. No doubt, Caiaphas, the high priest, King Herod and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, thought that they were very important and powerful people. Yet, these religious and political leaders are only remembered today because they arrogantly dismissed Christ Jesus. They didn't recognise that they were condemning to death the Creator, the Giver of life, the eternal Judge before whom each one of us must stand. The Emperor Augustus, who issued the decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world, requiring everyone to return to their town of birth, could not have realised at the time that the Baby born to third-class subjects in far-away

Judea would one day judge him.

THE ASCENSION PROCLAIMS THE ULTIMATE VICTORY OF CHRIST

Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Those that refuse to bow to Christ as Saviour and Lord today, in the day of grace, when forgiveness is freely available, will one day be forced to bow to Christ as the eternal Judge.

The Ascension is a great comfort to believers who suffer persecution. “Therefore, since we have a great High Priest Who has gone through the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the Faith we profess.” Hebrews 4:14 We have an Advocate in Heaven. He hears our prayers. He ever lives to make intercession for us. He will come again. He will crush all His enemies. Therefore, we should not fear governments, popes or councils. We must not bow before idols, nor should we compromise the essential principles of our Faith. Though Christ is physically absent from the earth, yet, through His Holy Spirit, He is spiritually present. He is all knowing, everywhere present and all powerful.

The Ascension is a wonderful reminder and assurance to us that “...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Habakkuk 2:14

The Ascension proclaims Christ's glorious triumph and His future return and Day of Judgment. Therefore, we as Christians should return to observing Ascension Day as a holy day. If something is important then we need to work it into our calendars.

“But,” you may protest, “how can we observe Ascension Day as a holiday when the official government calendar does not recognise it as a public holiday?”

People of different minority religions often observe their own holidays and maintain their cultural identity in spite of official policies. The Jewish, Muslim and Eastern Orthodox adherents observe feast days and fast days and other holy days different to ours. We should have the courage of our convictions to structure and organise our lives and work around what is important to our Christian Faith. ■