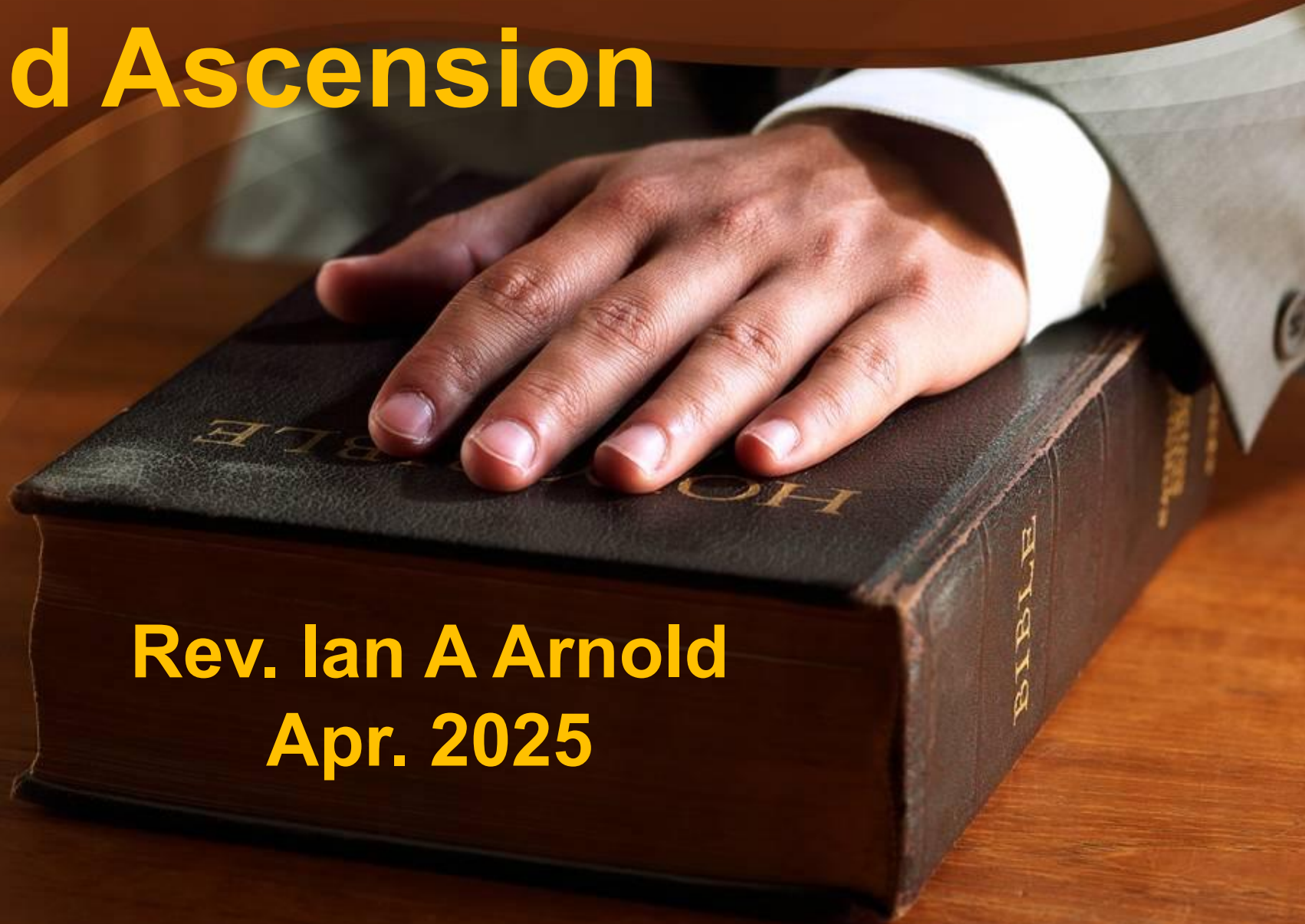


Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension



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Mark 9:30-32

“Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and (Jesus) did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, ‘The Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day’. But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.”

On three known occasions Jesus taught His disciples that sometime in the future **He would be killed and yet would rise again**. These three occasions are recorded:



the first in Matthew 16:21 (see also Mark 8:31 and Luke 9:31, 32); the second in Matthew 17:20-23 (see also Mark 9: 30-32 and Luke 9: 4-45); and the third in Matthew 20:17-19 (see also Mark 10:30-34 and Luke 18:31-34).

On that on that first occasion the disciples were obviously dismayed We know Peter protested and even “began to rebuke Jesus saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord, this shall not happen to you.’“ The question is, Why did he say that? Was it just out of self- interest? Was it because the disciples, collectively, were hoping that Jesus would lead a rebellion and set up an earthly kingdom? (See Luke 24:21) Whatever Peter’s reason **the Lord rebuked him sternly** saying, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offence to me, for **you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.**”



On the second occasion Jesus spoke about His impending death and resurrection the disciples, it is said, “were exceedingly sorrowful”. And we can all understand that. As Peter said, they had “left all” to follow Him (Matthew 19:27). and yet, here **He was foretelling being killed and leaving them.**



And on the third occasion, the disciples “understood none of these things; this saying was hid from them, and they did not know the thing which were spoken.”(Luke 18:34). This makes it sound as if they were completely confused. Immediately before this third occasion Jesus had entered in triumph into Jerusalem, people having welcomed Him as some kind of hero(Palm Sunday). And yet He had not set in motion any rebellion which the disciples, as we have seen, were expecting. They had got to the point of just not knowing what to make of what was happening.



I came across a question on the internet, “At what point in His life did Jesus know He would one day be killed and be raised again?”

We cannot say in what way but as a little boy Jesus would have felt **a calling** to some unique and very special role in life. And as He studied the Old Testament Scriptures, which were His consuming interest, He would have come across many prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, all of which – as He read them – would have struck a chord with Him to the extent that they would “speak” to Him in a way such as we cannot really grasp. If I may put it this way, **His inner intuitive sense of destiny would have sparkled and come alive as He read these prophecies.**

The Prophecies about the coming of the Messiah in the prophecy through Isaiah are especially eloquent in this regard. Here are just three of these:



“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of His root. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins and faithfulness the belt of His waist.” (11:1-5)

And a second, “And in this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wine on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the LORD GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.” (Chapter 25: 6-8)

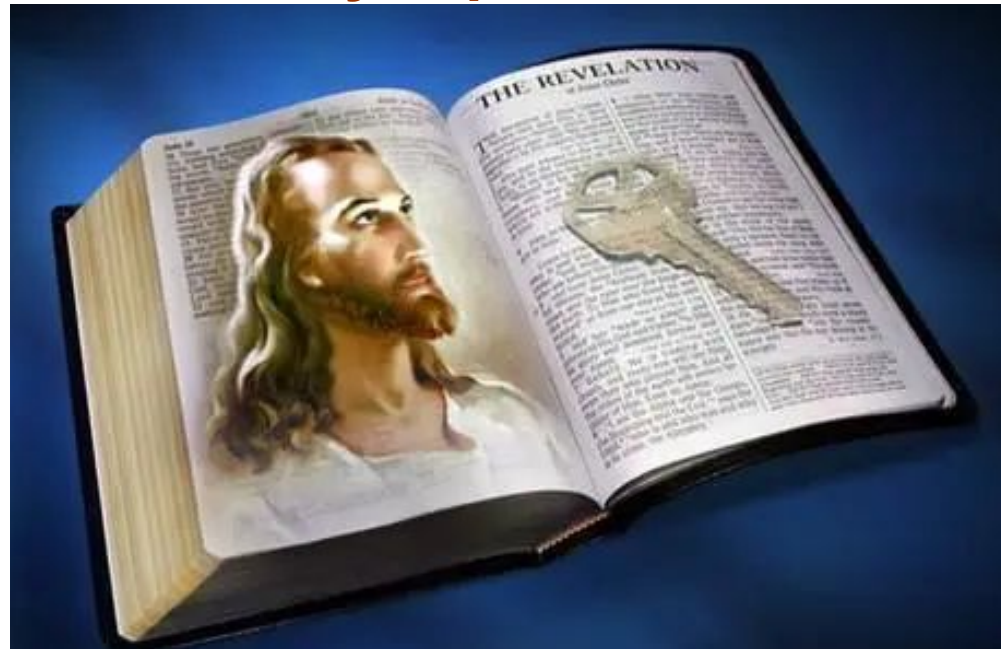


Now, a third prophecy, this time unmistakably anticipating His death: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgement, and who will declare His generation? For he was cast off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked.” (53:7-9)



And it wasn't only from the prophecies that, from intuition, Jesus knew what He read from the Old Testament referred to Himself. For example, **the call of Abram**, described in Genesis Chapter 12, "represents and means a first awareness that He (Jesus) was taking to Himself celestial and thus Divine things." ("Arcana Caelestia" 1426)

Jesus knew what lay ahead for Him from way, way, back and as from the time prophecies such as we have just heard really "spoke" to Him about Himself.



Jesus's agony

Notwithstanding this, when the time came for His arrest which – He knew – would be followed by His crucifixion, Jesus was in agony in His spirit. On the Mount of Olives, Peter, James and John being with Him, He withdrew from them “about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not my will, but yours be done.’ And an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22: 41-44)



Because of the brutality and cruelty of crucifixion, which everyone those days would have known about, it is assumed that Jesus feared the physical suffering that would be involved.

But was He? This is a question we now need to turn to.

It is not in the least disrespectful to think of Jesus's life on earth as a continual process of “putting off and putting on”. Throughout His life in this world, and through temptations (such as we read about the devil tempting Him) Jesus “put off”, or discarded, what He had inherited through, and from, Mary. And what He had inherited from Mary was NOT sinlessness, but inclinations to evil, to self-centredness, to feelings of superiority



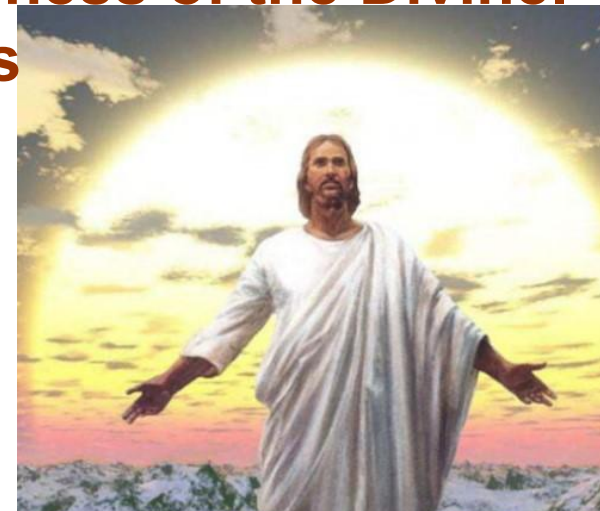
As Jesus successfully overcame such inclinations received through and from Mary and rejected them out of His life He made room for more and more of the Divine life of Love and Wisdom to flow in and take their place. **He put off the old in order to receive the new.**

This was a process which was happening continually. It was step by step. And it is very similar with us. As we overcome what is self-centred and self-promoting and self-aggrandizement – the inclinations to evil with which we are born – **we make room, step by step, for the Lord's life to flow in more fully and more strongly.** This results in us becoming re-born people.



BUT with Jesus there was this difference:

Jesus had no human father. He was conceived of Jehovah.” (“Arcana Caelestia” 1414). And what this means is that there was no limiting factor – as there is with us – in the nature of the Divine life flowing into Him. Our soul is a vessel receptive of life derived from our father. **Jesus’s soul was not a limiting vessel, but the Divine Itself.** With us Divine life is finited. With Jesus, this was not so. With Him infinite Divine Love and Wisdom flowed in. We don’t become the Divine. Jesus did, in all the fullness of the Divine. And so it was that amongst His last words with the disciples He could say, “All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18).



The suffering of Jesus

I raised the question earlier about Jesus facing crucifixion, Was He afraid of the physical suffering? Was this which caused Him His agony?

Maybe to some small extent. But His suffering was so much more intense and on another level.

God became incarnate in the person of Jesus. “God Himself descended.” (True Christian Religion 170). What led Him to do so was His concern for the state of the human race. **From His Divine Love He yearned to keep open the pathways to salvation.** And here Jesus was, in the final hours of His life in this world now facing **a last ditch attack by the devil**, causing Him to doubt if He had succeeded, the devil trying to



Over my adult life time, and as a Pastor, I have come alongside the relatively young parents of children who have died. And I recall to this day the terrible agony the parents were going through, greater – even – than physical pain and suffering.

Mercifully for us Jesus remained steadfastness and withstood this attack from the devil. In the end, and from the cross, **Divine light broke through and enabled Him to see.** “Father, forgive them”, He said, “For they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

Can you see what had transpired? Up until that moment, and such was the impression that the devil was trying to make Him believe, that the human race was lost in its sinfulness and that, therefore He had failed. But ‘No’. The reality was that mob was blind to the real nature of what it was doing.



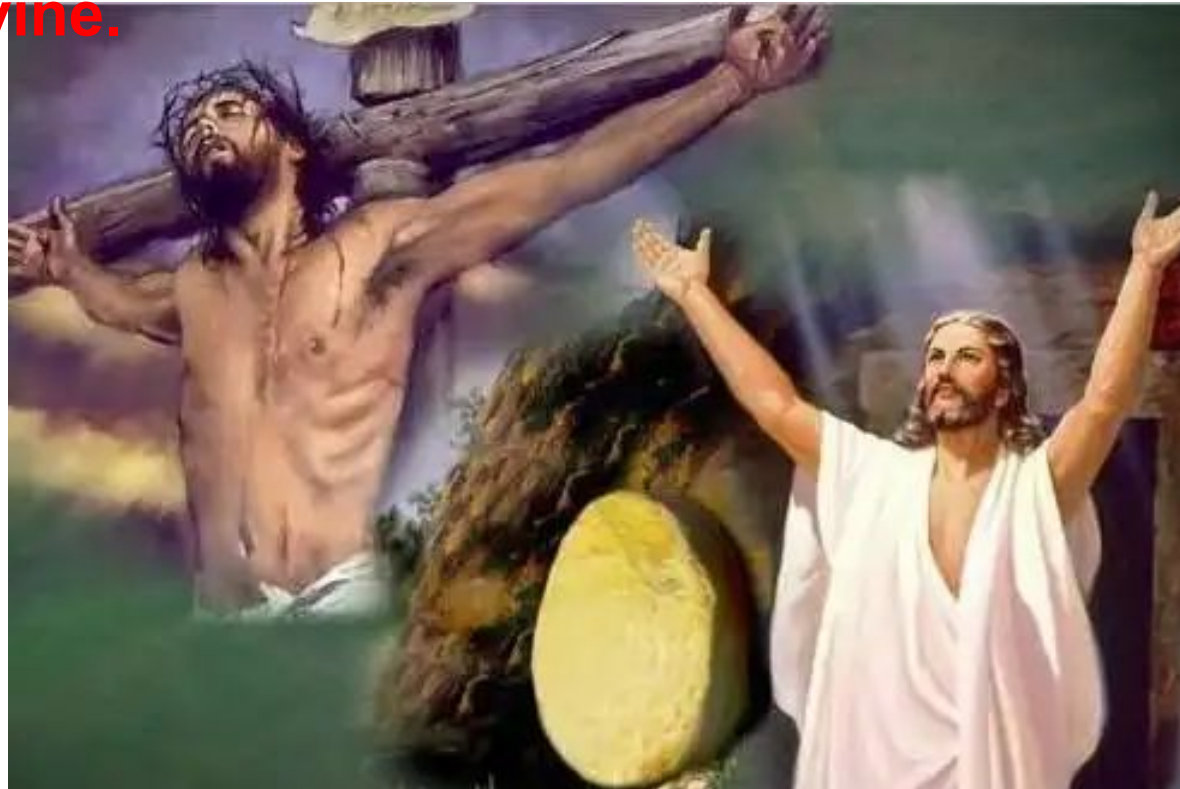
Jesus's resurrection

Divine life of Divine Love and Wisdom had, as we have seen, been flowing more and more into Jesus, replacing the old life He had derived from Mary.

Differently from what it is with us, it was Divine Life in all its infinite strength and intensity. With us it is re-birth or **regeneration**. With Jesus it was **glorification**. With us it is transformation. With Jesus it was total replacement of the “old” life with Divine life. Divine life was eventually able to flow into every corner of Jesus's being; into every thought; into every awareness of people; into every desire; into every yearning and, most importantly, into His amazing, and unmatched knowledge of Divine Truth. **The temptation, as He experienced it**



Remember: “into every corner of Jesus’s being”, INCLUDING His physical body of flesh and bones. This body was glorified, meaning it was made Divine. By the Sunday following the crucifixion the physicality of that body was no more. And this is the reason the tomb was empty. **Even the physical body of Jesus was glorified. It was no longer physical. It had become Divine.**



Jesus's post-Resurrection appearances

This brings us to Jesus's post-Resurrection appearances. Unless we know, or have teaching otherwise, it is understandable that Christians have thought that that Jesus took with Him His physical body and that in that same physical body He appeared to different disciples, first to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18))

But this is new, that at such moments, when Mary and other disciples saw the risen Jesus, **their spiritual eyes were opened**. And this explains why, apparently, He could be seen behind locked doors. (John 20:19) and disappear again.





From the book, “Heaven and Hell” we read, “It does need to be realized that we cannot see angels with our bodily eyes, only with the eyes of our spirit, because they are in the spiritual world while everything bodily is in the natural world. Like sees like because it is of like substance. Further, the body’s visual organ, the eye, is so crude that as everyone knows it does not even see the smaller elements of nature without a lens, much less things that are above the sphere of nature, as are all the realities of the spiritual world. **These can be seen by us, though, when we are released from bodily sight and the sight of our spirit is opened.** This happens instantly when it pleases the Lord that we should see. It then seems to us exactly as though we were seeing with our bodily eyes. This is how angels were seen by Abraham, Lot, Manoah, and the prophets. This is how the Lord was seen by the disciples after His resurrection.” (Paragraph 76)

You will remember that when Jesus was crucified, ‘Behold the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and were seen by many.’ (Matthew 27: 51, 52). Again, **this was what happened in the spiritual world** and it was seen by the “many” only because, **temporarily, their spiritual eyes were opened**. This is amazing, that Jesus’ victory over the devil - that is, over the forces of evil from hell then threatening to overwhelm the human race - also **liberated tens of millions of people still in the world of spirits**, enabling them to move forward to heaven or to make their bed in hell.



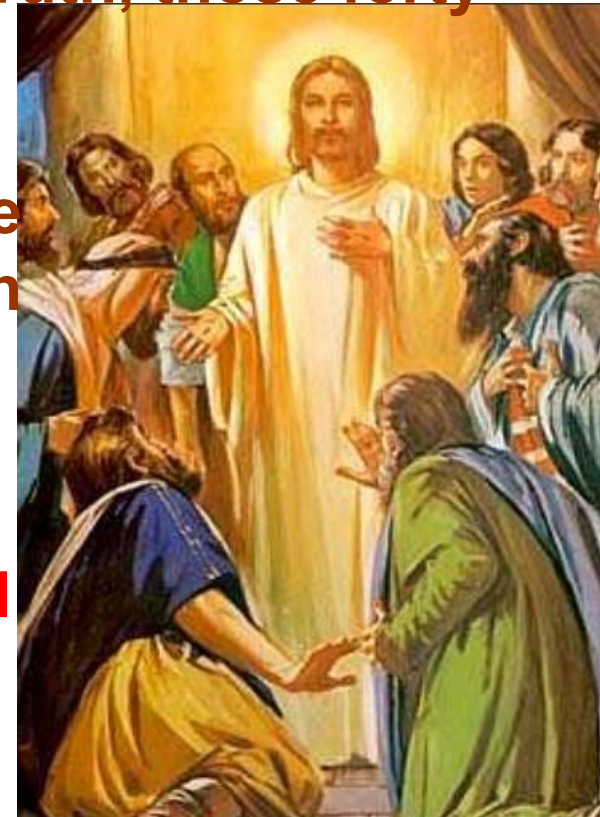
The Ascension

Forty days after His resurrection the Ascension of Jesus took place. (See Acts 1:3). Of the four Gospels only Luke actually describes it and in these words: “And Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.” And in Acts (also written by Luke) we read, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” (Chapter 1:9)



It is almost certain that we will always struggle to understand what was happening during those forty days between the resurrection and the Ascension; things so profound that they will always be beyond our fully grasping.

There is, however, something of a “clue” in the Writings that whilst Jesus had fully glorified His Human with regard to Divine Truth, those forty days were when **He completed the process of glorifying His Human as to Divine Good.** (See “Arcana Caelestia” 6993). Even at the time of the Resurrection there was still that which was unfinished. And this was **to receive in Himself the fully and glorious intensity of Divine Love.**



Crucifixion-Resurrection-Ascension as we can experience them.

You and I are encouraged to see these steps unfolding in our own life and as part of our experience of the Lord and our becoming a truly re-born person..

Crucifixion, in us, is the experience of temptation successfully resisted and overcome. When temptation is successfully resisted and overcome, **the truth** that has been at issue, and the subject of the temptation, **is lifted up on high or resurrected within us.** It comes alive for us at a higher level. Then follows the process when **that truth**, successfully defended in temptation, **is wholly infilled with the Lord's life of love and it lifts us up to heaven,** to henceforth live – in spirit – among the angels there. This is the **Ascension.**



How glorious is this promise and how worthwhile our whole-heartedly engaging with this process; knowing that as **we remain patient and strong in the Lord** we will come to live in the company and sphere of the angels, even in this world, and that **their influence on us will filter down into every aspect of our lives**, into our thoughts, our desires, and into our actions.

Amen



Readings:

Isaiah Chapter 52: verses 7 to 15

Luke Chapter 24: verses 15 to 27



Arcana Caelestia 2405:

“Seeing **that morning**’ in the proper sense means **the Lord, His coming**, and so the approach of His kingdom, what else is meant by ‘the morning’ becomes clear, namely **the rise of a new Church**, for that Church is the Lord’s kingdom on earth both in a general and in a particular sense, and indeed in a specific sense. The *general* sense being when any Church on earth is established anew; the *particular*, when someone is being regenerated and becoming a new person ; and the *specific*, as often as good flowing from love and faith is at work in their life, for this is what constitutes the Lord’s coming. Consequently the Lord’s resurrection on the third morning, Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; embodies in the particular and the specific senses the truth that **He rises daily, indeed, every single moment, in the minds of regenerate (re-born) people.**”



THE END

