

Blackrock Asc. Day, 1907 May 9.

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Matt 28, 18 all power is given unto Me

Ascension-day is the day of our Lord's triumph. It is a day when we are called upon to contemplate Him - to view Him not so much in the light of what He does for us, as in the light of His own personal glory.

Accordingly, this is what we should call rather a day of PRAISE, than a day of thanksgiving - a day for turning away our eyes from Christ as Saviour^{of men}, and for gazing upon Him as King of glory.

"Praise" means giving any one his price, his value: and today we try to estimate Christ as He is in Himself, King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

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And yet - it is impossible to keep
the two aspects of Christ apart,
(King as He is from all eternity,
He does not ascend to the Father
merely to resume the old Kingship.
He returns as God-Man, for ever
hereafter to be God-Man, and
therefore to be for ever different from
what He was before, or rather
for ever greater.

For though of course it cannot
> add to the glory of the eternal God
< that He should have become MAN,
(it cannot make the Creator greater
that He should have made Himself
equal to His creatures: yet it HAS
added to the glory of Christ that
He should have passed victoriously
through the terrible experiences
of a holy life among sinful men.

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It is the MORAL aspect of the
life of Christ on earth which makes
Him return to His throne above
with an enhanced glory: as St
Paul says " Being in the form of
God, He made Himself of no reputation:
and being found in fashion as a man,
He humbled Himself, and became
obedient unto death.
Therefore God also hath highly exalted
Him, and given Him the name which
is above every name: that at the
name of Jesus every knee should
~~be~~ bow, and that every tongue should
confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to
the glory of God the Father."

And yet I confess that when I
try to think of the glory in heaven
of the ascended Christ, my imagination

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utterly fails. When one realises that in thinking of spiritual power and spiritual glory he has to begin by ruling out all conceptions of power and glory which mark earthly sovereigns: when one realises that sheer force, gorgeous display, ~~colossal~~ colossal wealth have absolutely no meaning for God by way of giving pleasure to Him, or adding to His ~~the~~ glory - one is robbed of all the ideas that are most familiar to us, and that would express power and glory for us on earth.

And perhaps it is as well: it is into heaven Christ has ascended, and we must not allow ourselves to confuse the heavenly power and glory of Christ with what counts as power & glory among men.

We are thrown upon moral and spiritual ideas, and are led, I think rightly, to feel that the power and glory of the heavenly life of It lie in It resuming once again the exercise of the free and unfettered attributes of the life of God.
 // For what is heaven?

When we say "Our Father which art in heaven", what do we mean?

Surely we mean something more than that God is in a PLACE called heaven? do we not mean that God is in a 'state of being' which is as far above ours as heaven is above Earth, and therefore that this STATE may be fitly described as heaven? No doubt

there was a time when men thought that God lived above the sky, and

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that He was in heaven, and we upon Earth. But the prophet says "So
"not I fill heaven and earth & saith the
"Lord": and therefore we are led to
conclude that the heaven God
dwells in in the atmosphere of God's
own being, and that when we speak
of Him as "in heaven", we distinguish
Him from ourselves. We live

in a semi-twilight of moral and
spiritual development: iniquity
cleaves even to our holy things: all
our righteousness is as filthy rags.
Truth, purity, love, obedience -
all these are high ideals set before
us, ideals which we welcome and
strive towards, and yet, ideals which
the very sinfulness of our nature
prevents us from seeing in the true
light which God sees them in.

We who live on earth only see through
 a glass darkly: and, compared
 (with the blindness of our spiritual
 vision, how infinitely more groping
 are our efforts and our actions.

|| We see but a little way - and yet,
 || how far short of what we see
 || do our actions fall!

'The highest hopes we cherish here,
 How fast they tire and faint;
 How many a spot defiles the robe
 That wraps an earthly saint!'

But, to distinguish God
 'from our imperfect selves, we speak
 of Him as being in Heaven.

He dwells in light unapproachable
 by us: the visions which meet His
 pure eye would blind our weak
 sight: the depths of love and
self-sacrifice to which He descends

pass our comprehension.

In Him live and move, in their
supreme and undimmed excellence,
all the glories of patience, and
self conquest and forgiveness,
which seem to us so beautiful in
others, and yet which ~~we~~ we are
slow to apply to our own life, so much
will they constrain its liberty.

But in God they have free play,
and in God they are seen to
issue in a glorious LIBERTY.

Now it is to this heaven
that Christ has returned.

Not a mere glorified earthly court,
where courtiers bow before Him,
and first place is accorded to Him
No doubt these pictures correspond
to some real fact: but Christ ascending
into heaven must mean, above all,

that Christ resumes His unfettered prerogatives as God, which - in some mysterious mode - He laid aside when He stepped down within the circle of sinful human life.

Now once more He enters upon His life which He had with the Father before the world was, and yet - as I said earlier - with an added glory, because He is no longer God, but God-Man, Prince of the Kings of the earth.

We get, at the end of St Matthew's Gospel, one hint concerning the heavenly life of Christ.

His ascended life is not one of rest - His work on earth is indeed finished, but only finished in so far as it prepares Him to begin

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His work before the Father's throne;
as Ep and Str. says "He ever
liveth to make intercession for us."

St Matthew tells us that He
came to His disciples in Galilee, and
said "All power is given unto Me
in heaven and in earth."

Power, where Christ is concerned,
always involves personal service.

Power is given Him only to be
exercised through Him. He cannot
stand by and look on. His power
is for use. Accordingly, He
says "Go ye therefore and teach
all nations"

Here we see
the eternal truth of the Ascended
Christ. He passes from sight, but
is for ever identified with His
Church "Power is given unto Me
Go ye therefore." Accordingly,

we hold that one of the Supreme glories of the Ascended Christ is that He is implicated in the life of men — that He belongs to them, and they to Him.

The welfare of us men lies upon His heart, as the thing for which He had made Himself responsible — and we may trust Him that He will never cease from His self-imposed task till He has FINISHED it, according to His Divine purpose before the world began.

And, as proof of His abiding unity with us, — as He lifted His hands in blessing, He said "Lo, I am with you all the days even unto the end of the world." This proclaims to us the truth we often forget — that Christ in ascending did not leave us.

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Ascension means that Christ is hidden from sight, but not hidden from us: He could pass away from sight now, because henceforth nothing could separate Him from the hearts of those who look to Him in faith.