

This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven. – Acts 1:11.

Thus spoke the two heavenly messengers to the apostles while they looked steadfastly toward Jesus as He went up into heaven. That same Jesus who – visibly before the eyes of the apostles – ascended into heaven shall one day come again from heaven, visibly, with great power and glory, and all His holy angels with Him. And then shall He judge the quick and the dead. And then He shall establish that eternal and glorious Kingdom of God unto which God has created us in the beginning, saved us through Christ, and sanctified us through the Holy Ghost. The scorners always scoff at Him. He shall come and put them to silence. And He shall satisfy the eager desire of His children. For those, too, who expired with Jacob’s dying prayer on their lips: “I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord!” – shall He come, and fill their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing. Thus God shall from all evil, forever, make us free from sin and from the devil, and from all adversity, from sickness, pain, and sadness, from troubles, cares, and fears, and grant us heavenly gladness, and wipe away our tears. – Dear Christian, wrap yourself entirely in His merits, His righteousness by faith, and always remain a sheep of His fold, so that when He, who is Your salvation, shall come, it may be to bring you to eternal salvation.

PRAYER. – O my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I thank You most heartily that You so faithfully remind me of Your coming in glory, and teach me to be ready therefore, and grant me to know the great and eternal comfort of it. Grant to me, I beg You, Your Holy Spirit, that my conversation may be in the fear of You, in true faith, and with a good conscience, and that I may – with a joyful heart and wakeful eye – hope and wait for Your coming in glory: You who lives and reigns and will come a Judge and a Redeemer, blessed forever. Amen.

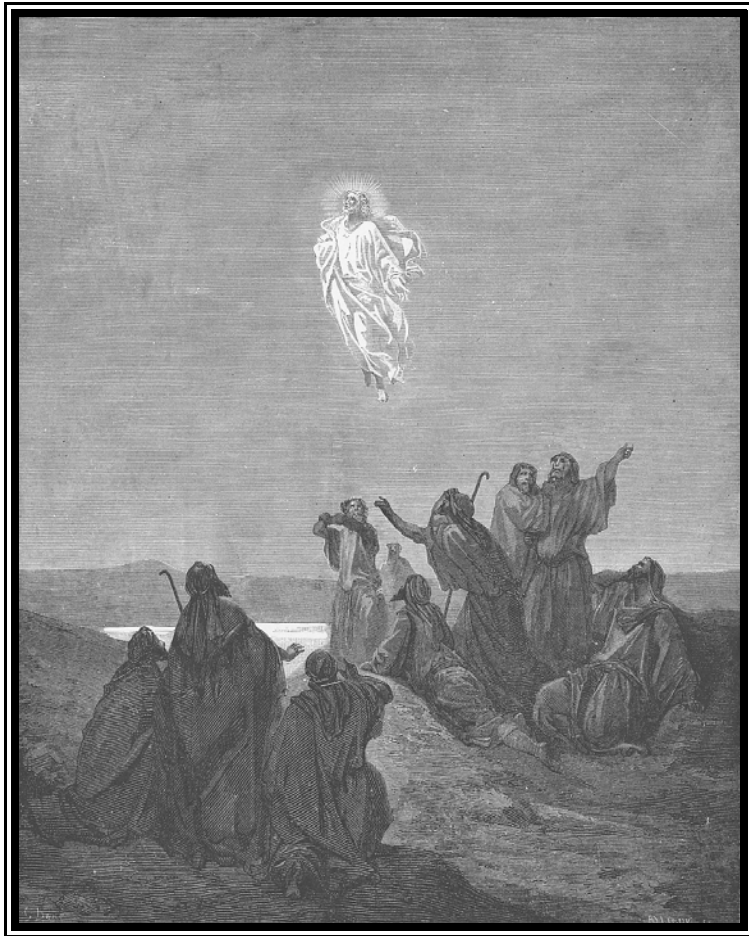


Illustration: The Ascension

A Devotional for the
Second Week in Advent.*

Hymn 136, 10.

He comes to judge the nations,
A terror to His foes,
A light of consolations
And blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing.
O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth Thy beams so cheering,
And guide us safely home!

MONDAY.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. – 2 Peter 3:10

Thus writes St. Peter concerning the coming of the Lord. It will be a terrible event indeed. Everything will topple. Everything will perish where now we live and have our being. Terrors worse than those of death will seize upon flesh and blood. And what will be the state of mind of those who have rejected their Savior? “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen.” (Rev. 1:7) And yet, behold! those who, through faith, are His own, in spite of all, will know through the Holy Ghost that it is their beloved Savior coming in the midst of all these terrors, coming to deliver them from every evil work, and to preserve them unto His heavenly Kingdom. And quickly they will lift up their heads, and their fear will be turned into consolation, peace, and joy. How can you be afraid when – amidst all these fearsome things – you see your Savior coming? Only be ready at all times, and own Him as your Redeemer at all times – that on that yonder, great day, too – He may be your

beloved Savior. And you do not know when that great day will come..

PRAYER. – Jesus, my Lord, You are my beloved Redeemer. O indeed, I am not afraid of You; I trust in You and rely on You. You are my very best Friend. You have redeemed me and received me as Your own. You richly and daily forgive me all my iniquities. You heal all my diseases. You speak words of grace and love and comfort and life and eternal blessedness to me. O Lord Jesus, I know You. Keep me in the knowledge of You until You shall come, that I may rejoice in You and greet You, saying, “Jesus, Jesus, O my Savior!”. Amen.

Hymn 553, 4.

O Christ, who diedst and yet dost live
To me impart Thy merit;
My pardon seal, my sins forgive,
And cleanse me by Thy Spirit.
Beneath Thy cross I view the day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
And thus prepare to meet Thee.

TUESDAY.

The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. – John 5:28-29.

Thus says the Lord Jesus. He speaks of the hour of His second coming. Then all the dead, without exception, shall hear His voice calling them, and shall come forth from the grave, and from the dust, and from all mixture and fusion with the elements of the earth. True, death has an awful power, and no man, nor any other creature, can awake us from it. But the voice of Jesus is almighty, and even the dead

must hear it. – There is a difference among the dead. First, there are those who have done good on earth – poor sinners who believed in their Savior, and showed that their faith was true by resisting sin and serving their Lord. These shall rise unto eternal life and blessedness. Then there are those who have done evil on earth – who rejected the Savior, and lived according to their own thoughts and desires. These shall come forth to eternal damnation.

– Christians, how powerfully does this call and admonish us – that today, while we live – we turn in faith to our Savior and to His grace offered us freely and without price, and turn away from sin, and serve Him.

PRAYER. – Jesus, my beloved Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. Grant that I may live and die firmly believing in You, my Savior, and that I may not fall into the snares and pitfalls of unbelief and sin. O You – Love of my love – draw me to You that I may follow You! Grant me a blessed end and a joyful resurrection to eternal life. Keep me from the wrath of the Judgment to come, and from eternal damnation, O Lord Jesus! Amen.

Hymn 348, 7.

O Love, who once shalt bid me rise
From out this dying life of ours;
O Love, who once above yon skies
Shalt set me in the fadeless bowers –
O love, I give myself to Thee,
Thine ever, only Thine to be.

WEDNESDAY.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. – Mark 16:16.

Christ will come to judge the living and the dead. Do we know exactly how and according to what rule He will pass sentence? Yes, indeed. He will not pass sentence on us according to the law of Moses, not according to our works. If He did that, we would be lost. How, then, will He rule? According to faith and unbelief. Do you see His Word at the head of this lesson? If you – a poor, miserable, sinful being – do, in faith, accept the things which Christ does give you in His Word and does seal to you in Baptism – the salvation which He has earned, and which consists in the forgiveness of sins, in life, and salvation – then you shall be saved. If, on the other hand, you – a poor, miserable, sinful being – do in unbelief, reject the things which Christ does give you in His Word – the salvation which He has earned, and which consists in the forgiveness of sins, in life, and salvation – then you shall be damned. That is the great law – the law of mercy – according to which judgment shall be pronounced. Not according to the law of Moses, not according to our works, will He judge us. And yet, He will make His ruling according to our works too. But only in so far as by works He will publicly establish faith or unbelief. He that believes begins to serve Him with his deeds; he that does not believe does not serve Him with a single deed. Thus, by works, will He establish faith or unbelief. But that which turns the scales of judgment is faith or unbelief alone. – What a blessing that even now we know exactly according to what rule we shall be judged! There is no doubt nor uncertainty here.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, I, a poor sinner, believe in You. My soul longs – yes – even faints for Your salvation. I rely upon Your Word. O everlasting Father, You will not enter judgment with Your child; You, Good Shepherd, will not damn Your poor sheep. Look not upon my sins. You have atoned for them. Look only upon that new thing which Your Spirit has created within me. You will surely do this, O Faithful One. And so with joy and confidence will I approach the day of judgment. I shall not be damned. I shall be saved. Amen.

Hymn 133, 3. 4.

Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from heaven.
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all, to be forgiven.

So when next He comes with glory,
Wrapping all the earth in fear,
With His mercy He may shield us.
And with words of love draw near.

THURSDAY.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: – and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. – Romans 5:1-2.

We who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ are justified in the sight of God, and have forgiveness of sin. Because God forgives us our sin and justifies us, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. God has no further charge against us. He is with us altogether. Because we have peace with God, He will surely not condemn, or damn us. He will save us, give us eternal life and glory. This is so divinely certain that, even now, we greatly rejoice in such hope. – This is what Dr. Martin Luther expresses in the words of the *Small Catechism*: “Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.”

You – believing Christian – have forgiveness of sin. You know that God forgives you your sin. How, then, is it possible that you should still be damned, since it is only for sin that one can be damned: And that has been forgiven you. Nothing but sin could prevent you from obtaining life and salvation. And you have forgiveness of sin. You are absolutely sure of life and salvation, and need neither fret nor fear, if only you have forgiveness of sin. Where there is forgiveness of

sin, there is also life and salvation. Do but hold fast to the forgiveness of sin offered you freely and without price – for Christ’s sake – and life and salvation will come inevitably. Look cheerfully and confidently beyond death and the judgment, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

PRAYER. – Most heartily I thank You, Lord Jesus, that You have merited and given forgiveness of my sin to me. Now I have peace with God and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Amen, my God, so let me have life and salvation. O my God, You will surely do this, for You have forgiven me all my sin. Preserve in me – O You faithful God – true faith in my Lord Jesus Christ through whom I have forgiveness of sin. Amen, You will hear me. Amen.

Hymn 316, 5.

In Him alone my trust I place –
Come boldly to Thy throne of grace,
And there commune with Thee.
Salvation sure, O Lord, is mine,
And, all-unworthy, I am Thine,
For Jesus died for me!

FRIDAY.

Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. – Isaiah 65:17.

Thus God prophesies through the Prophet Isaiah. And again He says: “As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain,” Isaiah 66:22. And the Apostle Peter, when speaking of the passing of the heavens and the earth at the second coming of the Lord, continues: “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and

a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness,” 2 Peter 3:13. And John, the holy seer, writes: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away,” Revelation 21:1. And St. Paul writes: “The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God,” Romans 8:21. – These are the last and abiding things which Christ will bring at His second coming, to give unto us – to His beloved Church – to all those who from the beginning of the world to the last hour have believed in Him: a new heaven and a new earth. Then shall the former not be remembered, nor come into mind. These shall remain, even as the congregation of the redeemed. There righteousness shall dwell. The creature itself shall partake of the glorious bondage of corruption, and of their glory. There shall be everlasting joy and blessedness. Heaven shall descend to earth, and earth shall rise to heaven, and heaven and earth united shall be our paradise. O what great things has the gracious God prepared for us!

PRAYER. – O my God, you do enrapture me. Shall I see, and own, and enjoy, all these things – and forever? Indeed, You say it, and You – Faithful and Almighty One – will fulfill Your Word. For Jesus’ sake graciously grant me Your help, O Lord, that I may always remain in the company and congregation of those to whom You have given these great and wondrous promises, that I, too, may bless Your almighty grace in never-ending rapture. Amen.

Hymn 559. 1.

JERUSALEM, thou city fair and high
Would God I were in thee!
My longing heart fain, fain to thee would fly,
It will not stay with me;
Far over vale and mountain,
Far over field and plain,
It hastes to seek its Fountain
And quit this world of pain.

SATURDAY.

Surely, I come quickly, – Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. – Revelation 22:20.

When will the Lord Jesus come again in His glory and to our glory?

– “Of that day and hour knoweth no man,” says He, “no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only,” Matthew 24:36. But even John wrote: “Little children, it is the last time,” 1 John 2:18. And Peter: “The end of all things is at hand,” 1 Peter 4:7. And James: “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Behold, the Judge standeth before the door,” James 5:8-9. And St. Paul speaks of the Christians of his own time as such “upon whom the ends of the world are come,” 1 Corinthians 10:11. And the Lord Jesus Himself says to the Apostle John: “Surely, I come quickly.” Thus, nearly nineteen centuries ago the coming of the Lord was declared to be at hand, to be coming soon.

– But how about this? Have not centuries upon centuries elapsed since then? Has not generation upon generation returned to the dust since those days? Does not the old and wretched world still stand? How is this? Has God’s Word and Bible come to naught? God forbid! Peter writes: “Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day,” 2 Peter 3:8.

And furthermore, remember that death transports you in a moment into the presence of the Lord. In death your body knows of no time, though it is still within the bounds of time. And your living soul will then no longer dwell in time, but in eternity. And what on earth is a long time is but a moment in eternity. Thus, as I have said, death transports you in a moment into the presence of the Lord. How near at hand is the coming of the Lord Jesus! “Surely, I come quickly,” says He. And you, in joyous, blessed faith, say: “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

PRAYER. – Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Come in that glorious last Advent, or, if it so be that I shall not be among the living then, come to meet me at my blessed end. Ah, Lord Jesus, how quickly and speedily, as in a moment, shall You then transport me to that hour when all things shall become new, and a new heavens shall smile upon a new earth. Lord Jesus, grant me grace to be ready at all times. Surely, You will come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Hymn 549, 2.

Zion hears the watchmen singing,
And all her heart with joy is springing,
 She wakes, she rises from her gloom;
For her Lord comes down all glorious,
The strong in grace, in truth victorious,
 Her Star is risen, her Light is come!
Now come, Thou Blessed One,
Lord Jesus, God's own Son,
 Hail! Hosanna!
The joyful call, We answer all,
And follow to the nuptial hall.

* Notes:

A form of the word *diaspora* is written in several places in the Word of God. Diaspora refers to the Lord God's faithful children scattered throughout the world. The Holy Spirit caused the Apostle Peter to write the Good News of Jesus to the Diaspora . . .

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the **Dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His Blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from*

the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:1-5 - RSV).

There are four Sundays in the season of *Advent*. This first season of the Church year ends on the evening of December 24th with the Festival of the Incarnation of our Lord and the Christmas season.

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Soli Deo Gloria! – To God Alone be the Glory!