

# Ascension Errors

By Lloyd Dale

What is actually meant by “physical resurrection”? We have been unable to find that particular combination or arrangement of words in the Bible. As this particular arrangement of words is not in the Bible; is it possible that certain Bible teachers have attempted to add “physical” to “resurrection” in their systematic theology without a Biblical basis?

Kenneth Gentry wrote, “Acts 1 clearly defines Christ’s Second Advent in terms of His ascension, which was physical and visible.” We would agree with Gentry that ““Acts 1 clearly defines Christ’s Second Advent in terms of His ascension,” but certainly **NOT AS “PHYSICAL AND VISIBLE.”** In that conclusion Gentry greatly errs! His view is neither hermeneutically nor exegetically accurate.

Could any truly “physical person” travel through high altitude (let alone space) without the aid of a breathing device and cold protection? The development of flight and the space program have unequivocally demonstrated that the correct and only answer to that question is a resounding **NO! Therefore, Jesus Christ’s ascension as described in Acts 1 was not “physical” by Gentry’s standard for that word, nor was it “visible” by Gentry’s standard either.** (We will discuss its non-visibility below)

Notice how Gentry writes about this text:

...Luke is careful to say the disciples were “beholding” Him as He ascended; He was received “from the eyes of them” (v. 9b); they were “gazing” as He was “going” (v. 10); they were “looking” (v. 11); they “beheld” (v. 11). Clearly His ascension was a visible and glorious phenomenon involving His **tangible resurrected body** (emphasis ours). And there was an actual visible cloud **associated** with it (v. 10).

One thing we can learn from this is that Gentry has a very fertile imagination. Another is that, at least in this case, he has a very creative hermeneutical exegesis and his analysis is based almost entirely on his presupposition that Jesus’ Parousia would be both visible and physical to earthlings.

Notice that Gentry’s “physical” body has now become a “**tangible resurrected body.**” Why did he do this? We think he made that change because Gentry knows full well that Jesus’ “**tangible resurrected body**” was not a physical body in any normal sense of the word, not-with-standing his argument for a “physical body” ascension.

Now compare Gentry’s statement about the ascension text, with the actual ascension text shown below:

And when He had spoken these things, **while they seeing (or with them seeing), He lifting up; and a cloud receiving Him away from their sight.** And while **they looked intently into heaven as He went up,** behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also saying, ye men of Galilee, **why stand ye gazing up into heaven?** 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 1:9-11, emphasis and comments added)

How was Jesus taken up? In context, He was **taken up by a cloud** which “had received Him **out of their sight**” upon ‘lift off’ while the disciples stood and “**looked intently into heaven.**” The messenger asked them “**why stand ye gazing up into heaven?**”

Now look carefully at the difference. Gentry wrote, “Luke is careful to say the disciples were ‘beholding’ Him as He ascended.” The text states that “they (were looking) intently into heaven – not one word about “beholding Him as He ascended.” It does not say that they were looking at Him as He ascended. Gentry would have us believe that they were gazing at Him as He ascended away up into the heaven before He was received out of their sight by a cloud. However, the messenger states that they were “gazing into the heaven” as the cloud which withdrew Him out of their sight ascended into heaven. That is a huge difference.

The conclusion is inescapable: A cloud withdrew Jesus from the sight of the disciples and the cloud took Him up into the heavens. In the ascension the only thing that was visible to the disciples after ‘lift off’ was the cloud! As we shall demonstrate below this was in perfect keeping with the prophecy recorded by Daniel, and the statements of Jesus Christ Himself.

Contrary to Gentry’s assertion, there simply is **NO** “Biblical warrant to expect a visible, bodily, glorious return of Christ paralleling in kind the ascension –because the ascension was not “physical body, nor was it visible after ‘lift off!’” It all took place in a cloud very similar to the Parousia of Jesus as described in 1Thessalonians 4:16-17:

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a command, with the voice of a first messenger, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are remaining alive, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord** in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” (1Th 4:16-17)

Now note and remember – after the ‘lift off’ they, who had just been “lifted off,’ met Jesus the Lord **IN THE AIR!** What a remarkable coincidence, the ascension took place in the cloud and the Parousia took place in a cloud and it was neither “bodily” nor visible to any outsider that might have been looking on from the ground. Gentry’s (and all who think like he does) eschatology is very badly flawed!

The relevant portion of the Greek text of Acts 1:9 clearly and unambiguously states, of Christ ascension, that “a cloud withdrew Him from their eyes” (Berry). Therefore, contrary to all other assertions, **the “manner” in which Christ ascended was “in a**

**cloud.”** That is exactly how Yahweh prophesied that Christ would ascend from the earth to receive His kingdom:

**...the Son of man came (from the earth) with the clouds of heaven (cf. Acts 1:9), and came to the Ancient of days (Yahweh), and they (heavenly hosts) brought him (Christ) near before him (Yahweh). And there was given him (Christ, by Yahweh) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)**

And that is exactly how Jesus told his disciples, and Caiaphas, the high priest that he would “come” on “the day of the Lord<sup>1</sup>.”

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes<sup>2</sup> of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of man **coming in the clouds of heaven** with power and great glory. (Mt 24:30, emphasis added)

And then shall they see the Son of man **coming in the clouds** with great power and glory. (Mark 13:26, emphasis added)

Jesus said unto him, you have said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and **coming in the clouds of heaven.** (Matthew 26:64, emphasis added)

And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and **coming in the clouds** of heaven. (Mark 14:62, emphasis added)

Nothing could be clearer! No other hermeneutic will do! All other assertions are nonsense! We challenge Gentry and any others to produce even one (let alone four) Scripture that so clearly aligns with the view he stated:

We have express Biblical warrant to expect **a visible, bodily**, glorious return of Christ paralleling in kind the ascension (Gentry, emphasis added).

**It is Gentry’s (and all like him who insist on a *visible, bodily return*) position that “goes contrary to this clear teaching of Scripture!”**

Acts 1:8-11, however, should not be discussed apart from its Old Testament counterpart:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like **the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days**, and they brought him near before Him. (Daniel 7:13 AV, emphasis added)

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<sup>1</sup> Day of the Lord: Ac 2:20; 1Co 1:8; 1Co 5:5; 2Co 1:14; 1Th 5:2; 2Pe 2:9; Re 18:8

<sup>2</sup> In this case “all the tribes of the land” would be Judah, Benjamin, and Levy as the other tribes were not present in the land in the first century AD. This is documented in this writer’s book The Olive Tree Mystery.

That text clearly and without ambiguity states that “the Son of man came **with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days**”. This is brought out even more clearly in the RSV:

I saw in the night visions, and behold, **with the clouds of heaven there came** one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. (Daniel 7:13 RSV)

This passage is not a prophecy about the “second coming” of Jesus Christ *to the earth* as many Bible teachers contend. It is very clearly a prophecy about Jesus Christ **coming from the earth** (His ascension) to the Father (Ancient of days) on the clouds of heaven to be presented to the Father to receive His kingdom as is expressed very clearly in the following verse:

**And there was given Him dominion and glory and a Kingdom** that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him (this is what we are moving towards now). **His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.** (Daniel 7:14, emphasis added)

How can “an everlasting” kingdom have a “last days?”

The New Testament record of **the fulfillment of this prophecy** is found in Acts 1:9-11:

...as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and **a cloud** (of heaven) took Him out of their sight. ...Jesus, has been **taken up** from you **into heaven**, (Acts 1:9 & 11b RSV, emphasis and comments added)

When Jesus Christ was **lifted in a cloud** up from the earth that day in the first century, He was **taken by the clouds of heaven into the presence of the Father** (the Ancient of days) where He was seen “standing” in the presence of the Father by Stephen:

But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and **Jesus standing at the right hand of God**, and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and **the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.**" (Acts 7:55-56 KJ21, emphasis added, see also Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, & 1Peter 3:22)

Please notice how that here Stephan even used Daniel’s “the Son of Man” in his statement about seeing Jesus standing in the presence of God. Why do you think that Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit included this information here – if not **to confirm the fulfillment of Daniel 7: 13?**

In relation to the above, many ask, “why did the messenger tell the apostles that ‘this same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’ (Acts 1:11)?” Please let me explain.

According to this text, how did the disciples see Jesus go into heaven? *Contrary to popular Christian misconception, they did not see Jesus go into heaven.* The text clearly

states that “**a cloud received Him out of their sight**” and that “they stood staring into heaven” **watching the cloud** taking Jesus from them into heaven.

Several days (ca. 43) before these events took place, Jesus had told Caiaphas, the high priest:

"You (Caiaphas) have said (that I am the Christ the Son of God); nevertheless I say unto you (Caiaphas), hereafter **you** (Caiaphas) **shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.**" (Matthew 26:64, comment and emphasis added)

Please note very carefully, here **Jesus** clearly and without ambiguity **told Caiaphas**, the high priest, **that he** (Caiaphas) **would** “see the Son of Man...coming in the clouds of heaven” after he (Caiaphas) had seen Him (Jesus) “sitting at the right hand of Power.” The New Testament progression of these events is clear:

- The crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus Christ (Fourth Gospel 19)
- His resurrection after three days and three nights in the grave (Fourth Gospel 20:1-16)
- His ascending to His father to carry His blood to the Mercy Seat in heaven for the atonement (Fourth Gospel 20:17, see also Fourth gospel 16:28)
- His reappearance to the women and later to all the apostles and 500 other disciples (John 20:18-21:22; 1Co 15:6; Cf. Acts 1:3)
- The forty days on earth showing infallible proofs and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3)
- His lifting up and disappearance into a cloud and transport to heaven “within the Cloud of heaven” (Prophesied in Daniel 7:13 and recorded as fulfilled in Acts 1:9-11)
- His “Day of the Lord” “coming in the clouds” for the destruction of Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>
- His descending in the cloud and receiving the disciples unto Himself in the cloud in His Parousia, (1Thess 4:13-17; 1Cor 15:23c, 51-54; see also Fourth Gospel 14:1-3 and 17:24)
- The establishment of the kingdom by populating it with the resurrected saints in His Parousia (1Cor 15:23c, 51-54; 1Thess 4:13-17; Dan 7:14, 18, 27; Rev 4:20d, 10:7, 11:15-19)

Many think that, “It is clear and plain to all that Christ has not come back like the messengers said in Acts 1:11.” While it is true that many think that “Christ has not come back like the messengers stated in Acts 1:11,” it is simply not true that “**all**” think that way. There are very many Christians, like myself, who understand that Christ did in fact come exactly as stated in Acts 1:11 and Matthew 24:64 “in the clouds of heaven” in the “day of the Lord” 70 AD destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

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<sup>3</sup> His “sitting on the right hand of Power” according to His prophecy to Caiaphas (Matt 26:64a), receiving His kingdom (Luke 19:12 & 27; Dan 7:14), coming in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 AD “in the clouds of heaven”(Matt24:64b)

He also “appeared<sup>4</sup>” in His Parousia<sup>5</sup> to gather His people unto Himself in as “cloud” and into “His heavenly kingdom<sup>6</sup>” as recorded

Contrary to the erroneous teachings of the church, there was no delay, especially not “a 2,000-year delay.” He did not tarry, but came exactly according to prophecy and fulfilled everything He said He would **right on His schedule as given in the New Testament.**

*For Christ is...entered into...heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but **now once in the end of the age He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.** And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him, **He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation...For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and WILL NOT TARRY.** (Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:37)*

Dear ones look at those verses again! They clearly and unambiguously state that “**Christ appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Then He entered into heaven to appear in the presence of God for those first century Hebrew Christians (and us), and He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation...FOR YET A LITTLE WHILE, and He that shall come will come, and HE WILL NOT TARRY!**”

That Scripture clearly states from the time that the above statement was written, it would only be “**A LITTLE WHILE**” until Jesus Christ would “**APPEAR AGAIN A SECOND TIME**”, and “**HE WILL NOT TARRY!**”

It is very inconsistent, if not directly contrary to Scripture, to think that the Lord “tarries” when the Scriptures plainly states that “**He will Not tarry!**”

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<sup>4</sup> His appearance: 1Ti 6:14; 2Ti 1:10; 2Ti 4:1, 8; Tit 2:13; 1Pe 1:7; 1Pe 5:4; 1Jo 2:28; 1Jo 3:2

<sup>5</sup> His Parousia, not coming, but presence on His throne in “His heavenly kingdom” [1Tim 4:18] Mt 24:3; Mt 24:27; Mt 24:37; Mt 24:39; 1Co 15:23; 1Th 2:19; 1Th 3:13; 1Th 4:15; 1Th 3:13; 1Th 4:15; 1Th 5:23; 2Th 2:1; 2Th 2:8; Jas 5:7; Jas 5:8; 2Pe 1:16; 2Pe 3:4; 2Pe 3:12

<sup>6</sup> His Kingdom: Ro 14:17; 1Co 4:20; 1Co 6:9; 1Co 6:10; 1Co 15:24; 1Co 15:50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; Col 4:11; 1Th 2:12 ; 2Th 1:5; 2Ti 4:1; 2Ti 4:18; Heb 1:8; Heb 12:28; Jas 2:5; 2Pe 1:11; Re 12:10