



The Significance of the Ascension of Christ and Its Implications for Worship

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Digital Object Identifier (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.33856/kerugma.v6i1.279>

Article history

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
24 February 2023	13 March 2023	11 April 2023	11 April 2023

ABSTRACT

The observance of the Ascension of Christ is not really a prime celebration in most Protestant churches. Even examples of congregational practices related to the celebration of Ascension Day throughout Christian worship history are scarce. Most Christians go through this celebration without much consideration on how the ascended Christ influences life in the here and now. Most would probably view Christ as the heavenly king and unconsciously ignore the fact that Christ ascended as the high priest who can empathize with his people. Although Indonesia treats this Christological event as a public holiday, the preparation leading to the celebration is not as significant as other commemorations like Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas. The consequence is that Christians do not have a meaningful worship experience that may inspire them to endure the life of daily discipleship. Thus, the focus of this article is on understanding the significance of Christ's ascension and how the church can celebrate Ascension Day in ways that help Christians live according to Christ's teaching and hope for the future. This article will reconsider the biblical and theological foundations of the ascension to develop worship that strengthens the identity of Christians for daily discipleship.

Keywords: significance, ascension, worship, daily discipleship, continual resurrection

Citation Style (APA): Lim, B. (2023). The Significance of the Ascension of Christ and Its Implications for Worship. *Theological Journal Kerugma*, 6(1), 11-20. <https://doi.org/10.33856/kerugma.v6i1.279>

INTRODUCTION

The observance of the Ascension of Christ is not really a prime celebration in most Protestant churches. Even congregational examples from the history of Christian worship on the celebration of the Ascension Day are scarce. Peter Orr has noted that even a biblical theologian seems to downplay the ongoing significance of Jesus' ascension and its implication for the here and now (C. Orr Peter, 2019). Patrick Schreiner also admits the ascension is often overlooked although it is a key moment for the continuation of Christ's threefold work as prophet, priest, and king (Schreiner Patrick, 2020). Most Christian perhaps go through this celebration without many considerations on how the ascended Christ influence life in the here and now. Robert Webber observes that the Ascension Day goes away without much notice in most churches in our day (E. Webber Robert, 2009). This

article will focus on understanding the significance of Christ’s ascension and how the church celebrates the Ascension Day. Biblical and theological examinations on the ascension account are numerous (Wasiak, 2022), however, those studies seldom show its implication for the gathered worship.

RESEARCH METHOD

The article will present a biblical and theological understanding of the Ascension of Jesus Christ by studying the New Testament accounts in Luke 24 and Acts 1. The examination will pay attention on Luke’s terminology of the ascension and its relationship with some Old Testament passages. This study will obviously consult the narrative dynamics of this Lucan material as shown by Wasiak (Wasiak, 2022) because terminological analysis cannot be separated with the overall narrative. The second part focuses on the observance of the Ascension Day in the history of worship. The author will examine one historical example about the observance of the Ascension Day that perhaps might give insights as to how its commemoration might affect the spiritual health of the congregation.

This historical example will be taken from post-reformation era, in particular the era that relates to the Presbyterian (Reformed) heritage. Finally, on the ground of the biblical-theological and historical studies, this article will close with a reflective proposal on how a deeper understanding of Christ’s ascension can influence daily discipleship culminating in the Sunday gathered worship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biblical and Theological Foundation

Strictly speaking, the account of the Ascension of Christ appears only in the Lucan materials (Fitzmyer, 1984): Luke 24:44-53 and Acts 1:1-11 (Alan Cole et al., 2010). It is interesting to look closely at these two accounts because it provides the clearest description of the event that guides our theological understanding of the ascension.

Luke 24:1-53	Acts 1:1-11
Luke views the resurrection, appearances, and ascension of Jesus as one important event that cannot be separated.	Luke writes his second volume as the sequel of what Jesus has done and taught in the first volume, the gospel of Luke. (F. F. Bruce, 1988)
It apparently happens in Bethany (50).	It apparently happens on Mount of Olives (12).
It seems to be happening on the resurrection day (Darrell L. Bock, 1996). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24:1 – Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week at early dawn. • 24:13 – Jesus appeared on that very day to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. • 24:33 – Two disciples returned to Jerusalem and announced Jesus’ appearance to others. • 24:36-49, Jesus appeared to his disciples. • 24:50-53, while lifting his hands, Jesus blessed the disciples and ascended into heaven. 	Acts 1:3 states a period of 40 days for Jesus’ various appearances after the resurrection until he was taken up to heaven. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 - ...all that Jesus began to do and teach • 1:2 – until the day he was taken up (ascension), that is after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles. • 1:3 – to the apostles, Jesus appeared to them for 40 days and speaking about the Kingdom of God. • 1:4-5 – It unpacks what Jesus has commanded the apostles, that is they must wait for the promise of the Father (the Holy Spirit). • 1:6 – The question about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel is a link to 1:3 and a ground for Jesus’ final command (1:7-8). • 1:9-10 – Jesus ascended.
Terminology	Terminology:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • διέστη – It is an aorist active indicative (Peter Toon, 1984) verb meaning ‘to part, move on, separate from, go on’ (Walter Bauer & Frederick William Danker, 2000). • ἀνεφέρετο – It is an imperfect middle voice verb form with passive meaning (Walter Bauer & Frederick William Danker, 2000). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ἐντειλα(μενο^τ (v.2) – a participle verb (F.F. Bruce, 1954), which does not refer to the ascension. • ἐπήρθη (v. 9) – It is an aorist passive indicative verb. • ὑπέλαβεν (v. 9) – It is an aorist active indicative verb.
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Based on two terminologies in Luke 24:51, Luke describes the physicality of the ascension without giving any further detail. Although Luke seems to cast two slightly different stories of the ascension, what seems to be important in both passages is the tension between the active and passive verb. This tension is also present in the account of Acts. This is an important aspect to understand the way Jesus ascends to the Father. Gerrit Dawson’s conclusion is accurate that “Jesus ascends in active passivity, exercising his will and power in perfect cooperation with the actions of the Father and the Holy Spirit (Gerrit S. Dawson & Jesus Ascended, 2004). The fact that Luke provides two accounts of the ascension event leads us to reflect on his purpose and intention. Thus, it is critical to further investigate these two accounts because the result may contribute to an important breakthrough for the ministry of the church and how it relates to the whole created order (Douglas Farrow, 1999). Lucan’s materials have been interpreted in several ways:

- Douglas Farrow rejects the ascension happening on the same day as the Easter morning, because he thinks it contradicts Luke’s intention and it does not seem to take the description of the ascension seriously (Douglas Farrow, 1999).
- Peter Toon (Peter Toon, 1984) has argued for a secret ascension of Jesus on Easter morning and over the next forty days he appears in the resurrected body to prepare his disciples until his last departure. The description of ascension in Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:1-11, should thus, be taken as symbolic, a visible representation of the visible, a secret Ascension that had already taken place on that Easter morning. In short, there are two or more secret ascensions and a final ascension.
- Gerrit Dawson does not take any of the above positions. He argues that the question of the time of the ascension is neither our concern nor our priority (Gerrit S. Dawson & Jesus Ascended, 2004). Dawson’s conclusion seems to be view that Luke does not intend so much to describe the Ascension in the precision of time than to present a historical fact that it happens.

Based on the description found in the gospel accounts and opinions given by some biblical scholars cited above, the author come to several understandings of the event of the ascension. First, the ascension is a real departure of our Lord Jesus Christ to where God, his Father, is. Although Luke’s description in the gospel implies Jesus’ ascension took place on the same day as the resurrection, it does not require that as the only conclusion. It is rather a logical deduction from Peter Toon to suggest a secretive ascension on the resurrection morning. This thinking is strengthened by the testimony of the gospel of John 20:17 (Gerrit S. Dawson & Jesus Ascended, 2004) (Mat. 28:9-10), which strongly implies Jesus’ ascension right after he meets with Mary on the same morning. It is not necessary to read between the line in John 20:17 that Jesus ascends to heaven secretly on the same morning. The fact that Jesus commands Mary to announce his ascension to the other disciples is a trumpet call for readers that resurrection and ascension are inseparable (George R. Beasley-Murray, 1999). Dawson and Murray agree that the time of ascension is not to be located at any date or hour. Thus, it is not necessary to view a secretive ascension on the resurrection morning, though possible. The lifting up of Jesus’ hand at the time of his real departure from his disciples provides further insight. Luke 24:50-53 notes the gesture of lifting hand to bestow

blessing and ascent to heaven. The blessing is a crucial part in this section because it brings readers back to the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6. Kelly M. Kopic interprets Jesus’ gesture in Luke beautifully. Kopic concludes that “those (disciples) who saw the ascension witnessed the personification of Aaron’s benediction in Jesus Christ! (Kelly M. Kopic, 2005)” If we understand the ascension not as a real departure, it will influence our view of the reliability of Jesus’ blessing to his disciples, that is the church.

Second, Luke’s intention to give two descriptions of the ascension is for the purpose of continuity of his account about what Jesus has done (Luke) and continued to do through his body, the church (Acts). Kelly Kopic and Wesley Lugt have concisely written that “the ascension in both passages is the essential fulcrum linking the life of Jesus to the life of the Church (Kelly M. Kopic & Wesley Vander Lugt, 2007) and to this, Peter Toon (Peter Toon, 1984) agrees that the completion of the resurrection event can only happen in the ascension. One cannot stand without the other. Wasiak affirms this conclusion by assessing the continuity of the mission of Jesus (Luke 24) and his disciples in Acts (Wasiak, 2022). Third, Luke’s description of the ascension event leaves a dialectical tension between God’s perspective and disciples’ point of view of the situation. Hence, Luke’s description of the event of ascension is not contradictory but complementary.

Another important aspect in Luke and Acts that will give further depth to theological reflection is the vivid imagery of cloud in Acts 1:9. This imagery leads us to the cloud of glory in the Old Testament. Peter Toon views the cloud as the same cloud - the Shekinah -which descended upon the Tabernacle (Peter Toon, 1984). Looking closely at the Sinaitic event in the book of Exodus, we can draw some similarities with the accounts in Acts:

Exodus	Acts
God came in a thick cloud (Exod. 19:9, 16, 20:21 ‘a thick darkness’, 24:15-18).	A cloud took Jesus away from his disciples.
God came down and Moses went up on the Mountain (Exod. 19:20, 24:12-15 ‘Moses entered the cloud and went up’).	God has come down to man in the person of Jesus. Jesus has gone up to God the Father presenting his humanity and those who are united with him.
Exodus 32 records the consequence of Moses’ absence from the people in the presence of God. There is a tension of absence and presence as a test for the people.	“...out of disciples’ sight” (1:9) The tension of absence and presence of Jesus is evident throughout the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament or the church era.

Those three important descriptions in the book of Exodus may serve as a typology of the Ascension of the Son of Man. Douglas Farrow takes this understanding further. He theologizes Moses’ ascension into that impenetrable cloud hanging over the mountain as Jesus’ ascension, which the church acknowledges through the Eucharist (Douglas Farrow, 2011). Indeed it is not a mere cloud as Peter Toon (Peter Toon, 1984) has commented. It is the Shekinah, the radiance, glory, and presence of God coming to his people, which we can read the pinnacle of it when the Tabernacle was completed (Exod. 40:34-35). As Moses went up into the cloud, before the presence of the LORD God, on behalf of the people, Jesus ascended to the Father God to represent the whole humanity as the first fruits of his people (Peter Toon, 1984) to guarantee the final redemption and sanctification of those in union with him. If Jesus enters the transcendent, metaphysical sphere of reality, where God is wholly experienced and encountered (Peter Toon, 1984), then those who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior will taste the same reality. The ascent of Moses foreshadows the ascent of Jesus. Furthermore, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai is another foreshadow of the giving of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Quoting Augustine, Patrick Regan draws this important parallel: “A lamb is slain, the *Pasch* is celebrated and after fifty days the law, written with the finger of God, is given in fear: Christ is slain, ... the true *Pasch* is celebrated and after 50 days the Holy Spirit, who is the

finger of God is given in love (Patrick Regan & Maxwell E. Johnson, 2000)”. Given this understanding, then it is rather important not to commemorate Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension and the Pentecost as separate events.

This parallel is also present in the monarchial period at the end of the life of Elijah the Prophet. 2 Kings 2:9-12 records how God takes Elijah from the sight of Elisha also from the earth and two-third of his spirit is given to Elisha, his successor. If Toon only glosses this episode as foreshadow of the ascension of Jesus (Peter Toon, 1984), Farrow and Wasiak takes the significance of that Elijah-Elisha story one step deeper. Farrow views it as an interpretive template to understand the connection between the ascension and the Eucharist (Douglas Farrow, 2011). Wasiak views the connection with the outpouring of the Spirit (Wasiak, 2022). Without the physical absence of Jesus through the ascension, the continuing presence of the Spirit will not come to reality. Again, it highlights the tension of absence and presence. The ascension makes the continuing presence of the Spirit possible. Without it, John’s theology of God as the Spirit and its worship theology (John 4:24) does not make sense.

What then is the theological significances of the previous discussion and analysis of the description of the ascension? There are three important theological understandings:

The ascension event is the continuation of the life of the resurrected Lord Jesus as King and High Priest. The resurrection and ascension are indeed inseparable. Laurence Stookey has rightly commented that the ascension is observed separately for the sake of closer contemplation, not because it is independent of the resurrection (Laurence H. Stookey, 1996). Thus, the ascension is not so much highlighting the absence of God but the continual presence of God through the resurrected Christ Jesus. Torrance succinctly states, “Jesus had to go away in one mode of presence that he might come again in this mode of presence, leaving us in the mode of man’s presence to man and returning to us in the mode of God’s presence to man, and thus not leaving man bereft of himself (Thomas F. Torrance, 1976).” The meaning and promise of Imanu-El in Is. 7:14 (quoted in Mat. 1:23) become so real with the ascension. The depth of this theological understanding can be viewed from another perspective. The fact that through ascension, the resurrected Jesus continues to live and watch over his church means that he has taken authority as King over everything (Thomas F. Torrance, 1976). The verb *anabaino*, which often renders the Hebrew *alah*, with a powerful cultic significance (for example: Psalms 2, 24, 68, and 110), presents three aspects: the ascent of the king (YHWH as King of Glory), the ascent to the Temple (presence of God) for his priestly service and the ascent to God of the whole burnt offering (Thomas F. Torrance, 1976). Hence, the real departure of Jesus does not violate his living presence among the church. This is a tension that cannot be resolved. The truth of Jesus’ kingship signified by the ascension is strongly emphasized in several references, such as Acts 5:30-31, 7:56, Rom. 8:34, 10:6, Eph. 1:20, 4:7-11, and Col. 1:18-20, 3:1. Among those references 1 Tim. 3:16 provides a progression from Jesus’ incarnation to Jesus’ exaltation to glory. From the Old Testament perspective, this aspect is presented in the enthronement psalm, chapter 110, verses 1-4. As king, Jesus rules in a real sense for the whole created order. Gerrit Dawson eloquently says that Jesus’ ascension is his continuing incarnation (Gerrit S. Dawson & Jesus Ascended, 2004). This theological understanding presents two implications:

A. If Jesus’ ascension highlights his continuing incarnation or presence on all reality (physical and metaphysical), then believers’ communication with him through prayer is guaranteed. The ground is that Jesus continues to work as the High Priest (Gerrit S. Dawson & Jesus Ascended, 2004) who receives our prayers and offers it to the Father. The epistle to the Hebrews (Douglas Farrow, 1999) testifies this truth poignantly. Heb. 7:22-27, 8:1-6, 9:11-28, 10:12-18 provides the basis for Christ’s continuing ministry on behalf of believers who prays without ceasing. Heb. 10:19-39 presents a practical implication on how believers ought to live the redeemed life.

B. Jesus' ascension as continuation of his life is pastorally uplifting. There is no reason for believers to doubt that Jesus continues to accompany us in every circumstance of life.

The ascension is a necessity to let God's promise of the Holy Spirit be realized in the life of the church in a new way. This is the highlight of the whole book of Acts beginning with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. The Holy Spirit is always present throughout the redemptive history. However, after the ascension of Jesus, his presence takes a deeper root inside the people who are united with Christ Jesus. If some scholars (Douglas Farrow, 1999) have rightly observed the ascension and the giving of the Spirit as an ascent-descent motif that runs throughout the Bible, then I believe this second theological significance underscores the descending part. Kopic and Lugt have explained in their article how the motif of ascent and descent is so pervasive in the thinking of the Church Fathers (Kelly M. Kopic & Wesley Vander Lugt, 2007). Jesus must ascend to where God his Father is. By that event, the Holy Spirit can pour forth gifts on humanity. This gift is described in connection to the life of the church in Ephesians 4. Eph. 4:7-11 quotes Psalm 67:19 and takes Jesus' ascension as the foundation of the giving of gifts to the church for the sake of building it up. Without the gifts of the Spirit, the church will not be able to live out her calling amid this world. Simon Chan emphasizes this theological truth when he states "the Spirit's coming constitutes the church by uniting the church to its Head, making it the body of Christ (Simon Chan, 2006). This theological understanding finds its older proponent in the writing of Torrance where he stated "the ascension means the establishment of a Church in history, within space and time on the historical foundation of the Apostle and Prophets (Thomas F. Torrance, 1976). An implication of this theological significance is expressed in the ministry of the church and the celebration of the Eucharist. The role of the Holy Spirit is crucial to develop a conviction that in communion the believers are united with Christ (Thomas F. Torrance, 1976). This communion is only possible because believers are the adopted children of God through the work of the Spirit (Julie Canlis, 2010). This theological understanding presents two implications:

A. The involvement of every Christian in the church ministry is possible and empowered only by the Holy Spirit. Without understanding the ascension of Christ and the Spirit's role for pouring out gifts for the church, volunteerism in the church is no different from any other social activities.

B. Moreover, the ascension of Jesus and the indwelling of the Spirit are the crux of the presence of Christ *at* the table, not *in* the element of bread and wine. The Eucharist signifies the heavenly priesthood of Jesus that only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The ascension is a final assurance of our redemption in Christ Jesus. By ascending to his Father, Jesus the first fruits of all who believe in God's way of redemption, has provided a final guarantee that those who believe will experience the same fate. This theological understanding is very significant. Simon Chan, (E. Webber Robert, 2009) and Nick Needham are in agreement with each other when they conclude that "Jesus' ascension is the pattern and guarantee of the glorified humanity which awaits us (Gerrit S. Dawson & Jesus Ascended, 2004). Julie Canlis describes this truth from the understanding of *koinonia* as participation of believers into the life of the ascended Christ for "Jesus has entered into heaven and He bears us there (Julie Canlis, 2010). This last point brings the ascension of Christ into the ultimate purpose for believers.

The implication is Christian can live with a great assurance and confidence that whatever challenges presented in daily routines cannot destroy this security in Christ. Sunday worship gathering is a declaration for that security.

Thus, the gathering of Christians is an opportunity to affirm security and hope beyond the physical life on earth. Living with eternal vision like that can influence daily discipleship culminating in the Sunday gathered worship.

Historical Insight for Worship Design

Congregational examples from the history of worship practice on the celebration of the Ascension Day are scarce. Searching such example in the Presbyterian heritage is even almost impossible. Dawson has noted that “the ascension is left out of recent confessional document such as the 1983 Brief Statement of Faith as well as the Confession of 1967 of the Presbyterian Church (USA)” (Gerrit S. Dawson & Jesus Ascended, 2004). Webber follows Donald D. McKim who comments that the Ascension Day as a Christian feast comes and goes without a trace – not even a bare word of recognition (Donald K. McKim, 2014). It is also striking that book on the origin of the Christian feasts does not include sufficient discussion on the Ascension (Paul F. Bradshaw & Maxwell E. Johnson, 2011). The scarcity of historical examples is understandable at least for several reasons. Perhaps, the observance of ascension is not highlighted with intensity because the biblical texts tend to give more descriptions on the resurrection than on the ascension. Another reason is the early church considered ascension as part of the celebration of the Pentecost. Several liturgical scholars attest to this historical fact (Paul F. Bradshaw & Maxwell E. Johnson, 2011). Although, the celebration of the Ascension Day on the fortieth day is explicitly mentioned in Apostolic Constitution (James F. White, 1992), also in the sermon of Gregory of Nyssa in 388 (Thomas J. Talley, 1991) as a separate celebration with the Pentecost, it did not make the Ascension Day as the prime celebration despite its crucial theological implication for the church. Viewing Christ’s work as one, we tend to ignore the distinct theological underpinnings of every feast. Taking Christ’s event and celebrates it as a different feast, we may forget that it is a holistic enterprise of God’s plan through Christ. The negligence of the ascension is perhaps also the result from a lack of direct correlation to any Jewish festival.

The impression that the observance of the ascension of Christ is not really a hallmark for most churches is even stronger when it is difficult to find significant discussion of it in several resources from the Reformed/Presbyterian circle (Howard L. Rice et al., 2001). Howard Rice and James Huffstutler in *Reformed Worship* do not have any specific discussion on the ascension (Howard L. Rice et al., 2001). A very general description of the ascension without explanation of its significance to the church is also present in *Presbyterian Worship* by J. Dudley Weaver JR (J. Dudley Weaver JR, 2002). Lastly, Dean Chapman has written a distinctively Presbyterian perspective on worship and has helped readers to focus on the awareness about believers’ position in the world as priests. However, throughout his explanation, he does not refer to Christ’s ascension as the foundation of his presence at the Holy Communion (Dean W. Chapman, 2001). This fact is overwhelming. Perhaps the attitude of the Reformers toward the liturgical calendar at the dawn of the reformation may have played a major role. We can read many liturgical scholars (Hoyt L. Hickman et al, 1992) who describe how the Protestants, in particular the Scottish, view the church calendar with a great skepticism.

Julie Canlis gives a helpful analysis for this scarcity of discussion. She focuses on the comparison between Irenaeus, Augustine, and John Calvin. It is about the conceptual understanding of the ascent. She describes four probable reasons, which can be summarized as the following.

“There has been a common prejudice that ascent is an *anathema* to the Reformation, which privileges God’s gracious descent to us – not our ascent to God. Human beings cannot raise themselves toward God because it is a supreme sin. Second, the concept of Calvin’s depravity precludes a theology of ascent. Next, there is another prejudice that ascent is a preoccupation of Platonism. Lastly, recent scholarship views Calvin as an heir of a rich medieval

mystical and theological tradition that had inestimable impact on him. This attention has not been explored before by most of Calvinism scholars (Julie Canlis, 2010).

Canlis' analysis given from the perspective of historical theology is not easily unpacked here. Yet Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion* is helpful in helping to understand his thinking about the significance of the ascension. This understanding is important because Calvin is one of the prominent influencers of the Scots, who then founded the Presbyterian denomination. Canlis' *Calvin's Ladder* expositis in greater detail based on her understanding of Calvin's doctrine of ascent presented in Calvin's *Institutes*. Three benefits of the ascension (John Calvin & John T. McNeill, 2006) are foundationally theological. Though theological understanding is crucial, the expression of it in the life of the congregation through its worship practice is really evident. Even though beyond Calvin, we have at least two historical examples from the Puritan scholars Thomas Goodwin and John Flavel (Kelly M. Kopic, 2005) who have a marvelous understanding of the ascension. They resort merely to the theological explanation without showing the practicality of it in the congregational context.

Webber's vision to understand how the Christian calendar helps form congregational spirituality has brought him to link theological understanding of the ascension and its expression in the practice of church worship. Though, it is difficult to find a similar example from the resources that have been read, Webber's example provides a valuable illustration. In *Ancient Future Time*, he describes a 30-minute worship experience to celebrate the Ascension Day in chapel at Northern Baptist Seminary (E. Webber Robert, 2009). He designs the worship in this way:

- Processional Hymn – to underline the festal tone of the Ascension Day. This is appropriate to celebrate the crowing of our Lord Jesus as the heavenly king and high priest.
- Liturgical Dance – to highlight the joyous response of entering heaven. The bodily gestures emphasize the celebrative attitude of Jesus ascent.
- The author suggests a call to worship the king of kings as an additional substance for the worship service.
- Opening prayer. The prayer function as a plea for the Spirit to guide the reading of the scripture and the sermon.
- Scripture Readings. The reading can alternate with a short chorus declaring all glory for Christ.
- Sermon to highlight the theological significance of Christ's Ascension.
- Symbolic splashing of water to signify Jesus' climactic presence as the perfect high priest.
- A Holy Communion follows the symbolism of water cleansing. Both, the water and the communion underline two means of grace of God.
- A Confessional Hymn – to emphasize the Lordship of Christ.
- Congregational participation to signify Christ' presence in their body through making the sign of the cross on their forehead.
- Finally, the congregation is invited to recommit themselves to live as Christ' disciple and the leaders can offer personal prayer while other people continue to sing hymn and offer prayers for the world. After that, the pastor can proclaim the sending and give the benediction.

It is important to execute the worship so that the congregation will have a lasting memory of the significance of the ascension of Christ for their life. Through the presence of Christ in the Spirit, this kind of worship practice is transformational. The depth of theological understanding does not stay as an abstraction, but it is expressed in a concrete and tangible way so that it may merge into the life of Christians. This is an extraordinary example of the Ascension Day service that pays attention to both biblical-theological understanding and practical worship experience based on historical insight.

CONCLUSION

The ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ is a neglected doctrine in most churches. Though this article is limited in many ways, these are some concluding thoughts that may have a crucial guidance for pastoral ministry:

1. The presence of Christ has been boxed in the theological discipline as a mere intellectual discussion, during the post-reformation era in the context of understanding the Holy Communion and its debates. This is happening in many catechism classes where the author has joined in or led. The study on the ascension of Christ has forced many Christians to think through their conviction about God's presence in the daily reality of life.
2. Continuous effort to encourage Christians coming together as a community to worship and pray is one of the pastoral applications. The ascension of Christ guarantees ongoing communication with him through prayer. Without the ascension of Christ, Christian spirituality and spiritual formation are a useless effort because we may not have any final assurance.
3. Jesus' ascension as continuation of his life is pastorally uplifting. There is no reason for believers to doubt that Jesus continues to accompany us in every circumstance of life.

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