

Contemplations on the Ascension

The Ascension gives the spirit of hope.

Who could think during the pains of the crucifixion, the insults, and humiliation that it would end with such glory in the Resurrection, in the Ascension, and in sitting at the right hand of the Father? Does this not fill us with hope amidst tribulations when we remember that after the afflictions of Golgotha followed the joys of the Glorious Resurrection and the glories of the Ascension?

Written by
His Holiness Pope
Shenouda III 117th
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This only requires faith, confidence, and patience.

Some people are swallowed by their afflictions and are locked up within them as if there is no escape! The life of such people ends at Golgotha in despair, without any hope. Had the life of the Lord Jesus Christ ended with His Crucifixion, we would have been the most pitiable of all people. Therefore, we rejoice, because the crucifixion was followed by the Glorious Resurrection, and the Glorious Ascension. In the Glorious Resurrection death came to naught as the Lord Jesus Christ remained on earth.

> Hence we have this hope that the Holy Cross is followed by the Resurrection and the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

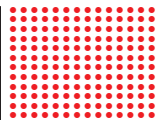
-His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Then in the Glorious Ascension the Lord Jesus Christ went up to glory in Heaven.

The miracle of the Ascension give us double hope.

Those who stumbled by the cross, the insults, and the passions of the Lord, would find comfort in the glory of the Resurrection and Ascension. Thus faith was restored to those who thought that everything had culminated at the Holy Cross. Hence we have this hope that the Holy Cross is followed by the Resurrection and the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. This hope accompanied the martyrs and the confessors in all generations.

Another hope is that the Lord Jesus Christ was an example for us. As He ascended in a glorious body, we also will have a glorious body (Philippians 3:21). As He was taken up by a cloud out of the sight of His disciples, He will come also on the Last Day and we will come with Him on the cloud, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (I Thessalonians 3:13); "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute the judgment on all" (Jude 14, 15); "Behold He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7); "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17). How great is such a hope!



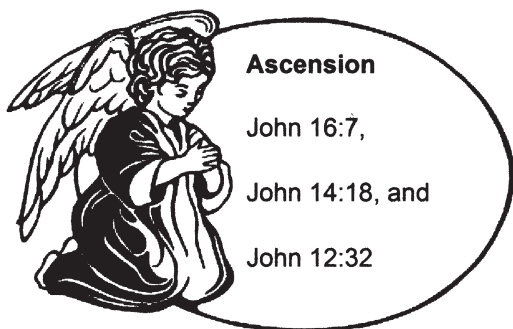
Such a hope teaches us to be patient and wait.

It teaches us to wait in patience the Lord's promises and the passions of the cross till the glories of the Resurrection and Ascension come. It teaches us to be patient towards the Lord's leaving us by the body till the words of the two angels on the Ascension Day to the apostles are realized, "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) It reminds us of the patience of the father apostles while waiting the sending of the Holy Spirit as the Lord promised them. It is patient in hope, and hope full of joy and confidence in the Lords' promises, as the apostles says, "Rejoicing in hope." (Romans 12:12)

The Lord's Ascension was accompanied by three promises.

The first promise was the sending of the Holy Spirit to be with us forever, for He said to them before the Ascension, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." (John 16:7).

The second promise He gave them was, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come



to you" (John 14:18); and He also said, "lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) This promise has been, and is still, realized. So, St. John the Beloved saw Him in the midst of seven churches (Revelation 1:13, 20). St. John saw Him holding the angels of the seven churches—their

shepherds—in His right hand (Revelation 2:1).

The third promise was when He said to His disciples, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." (John 12: 32) He will draw us to Himself up into Heaven, as He said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14: 2-3)

He promised to be with us, and we with Him both on the earth and in Heaven. He will be with us on the earth; for He said, "lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28: 20); "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20). He will be with us also in Heaven; for He said, "Where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3), and St. Paul said also, "We...shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (I Thessalonians 4:17) What a glory!

To His disciples He said they would be with Him, not on the earth, but in Heaven. On the earth they should prepare themselves to be in Heaven. When He emptied Himself He was with them, but when He came into His glory they would be with Him.

Whoever understands this fact, and believes that he will be with the Lord in the likeness of His glorious body, will certainly respect himself and keep himself from sin getting prepared to inherit the Kingdom.

This glory with the Lord in the clouds and in Heaven will not be inherited by those who stick to the dust, to material things, and to the earth or those who are attached to the world.

Glory be to God forever, Amen.

