

Christ Has Ascended

✝ **No standing around.**

✝ **He will come back.**

In the name of our victorious crucified, risen and ascended Lord Jesus, dearly loved of God:

Speaking of victories, have you ever seen *The Last Dance*? We're not talking weddings or proms, but a 1997 miniseries, when Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls allowed a film crew to follow them as they went for their sixth NBA title in eight seasons. *The Last Dance* covers the 1997-98 season and the rest of Jordan's remarkable career, from high school to worldwide marketing force and cultural figure. Bulls coach Phil Jackson coined the name for the final run by core members of that 1990s Bulls dynasty.¹

In another sense it's a documentary on earth's fading glory. Stars come and go. Sports can die on politics and plagues. Is there life beyond? No one can predict the rise and fall of sports legends. But the victory we celebrate forty days after Easter was predicted 1000 years in advance, making the follow-up prediction absolutely certain too. Lasting victory! **Christ Has Ascended.** Our King commands...

✝ **No standing around.**

One of our skeptical guests might ask why we prayed: "Be pleased to rule my life as you rule all things for the good of your Church." If Christ is ruling, how can there be plagues, chaos, wars and suffering? How can we "Crown him the Lord of heaven," if we can't see the "thrones before him fall"?

Before time began, God was not **standing around**. He spoke the universe into existence in six days by His almighty Word. "**By faith we know that the universe was created by God's word, so that what is seen did not come from visible things.**" (Hebrews 11:3 EHV²) We can not prove it to human reason, nor can anyone go back and recreate the "Big Bang." It really comes down to who are you going to believe? God gives an eyewitness account of man's Fall into sin through Adam. God chronicles the great rescue mission He planned and executed with absolute precision. Every time I do something stupid or forgetful, like leaving my coffee cup or my socks turned inside out, I'm reminded of God's ability to not just think right things, but announce them, then do them. 1000 years before Christ, in "Prophetic Perspective" as if already done: "**God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.**" (Psalm 47:5f NIV84)

All my skepticism melts away when I see God planned for Jesus to be the Lamb who was slain for me and my sin, then to reign as God for all eternity. Who would do such a thing for me like take away all my guilt? Who could give me such a gift as peace in my heart and life? Who could be so awesome and wonderful to die for every single soul without exception, knowing that most would reject God's love? Such a sacrifice deserves all honor and praise, plus disciples on fire for God. **No standing around.**

Like any good documentary, *The Last Dance* details team chemistry, the strain on relationships, fickle front office and crazy fans – all depending on the scoreboard. The fact that **Christ Has Ascended** is "God's exclamation point!" on Jesus' birth in poverty, ministry to misery in suffering, death, then resurrection to life eternal. God took Him back victorious – His own Son as trumpets in heaven sounded. We did not see or hear it – *The Last Dance* or Christ's ascension. Who are you going to believe? Companies make films; God writes His Word for what was coming, what has been, and what will be.

¹ <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=the+last+dance&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>

² EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

We don't want to be **standing around** like the first disciples, but what is it that drives us? What grabs your heart more than anything else? Is it sports, hobbies, work, family, up at the lake? Do our hearts turn away from Christ our Savior and King? Jesus is so patient, kind and forgiving with us too!

Wouldn't we have done the same thing? Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power on Pentecost, just ten days later. Jesus blessed them like the little children along the way. But who had ever seen someone rise up into the sky? How could they not keep looking when a cloud hid Him from their eyes? Good thing the angels were on duty to chuckle perhaps and say, ***“Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*** We want to stop **standing around** in our faith and ministry too. Things are opening up post-COVID and pre-J-Day. Hurting souls need to know that **Christ Has Ascended**. We need His Holy Spirit to empower us as true and faithful disciples, to witness clearly and courageously now because we are confident that...

✠ **He will come back.**

The big comeback for sports heroes usually happens in their dreams. Beat up bodies coupled with aging muscles can't recreate that sky-high jump or blazing speed for the best of them, much less for the rest of us who were mostly just dreaming in the first place. But Christ's glorified body can never grow weak and tired, suffer or die again. He can eat, as He showed His disciples many times during the forty days between Easter and Ascension, but He does not have to. Since Jesus came the first time as promised to suffer and die, now that He is risen indeed, what could possibly keep Him away? **He will come back.**

This is not like General Douglas MacArthur, escaping from the Philippines while leaving behind his troops to suffer and die in enemy prison camps. Nor is it **Terminator 2** in *Judgment Day* (1991) – “Stay here, **I'll be back.**” The Judgment Day we expect is Christ's return to raise the dead and judge all souls by whether they put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Sadly, too many today are like the disciples asking about the restoration of King David's earthly kingdom. They wanted to go into politics on the basis of bad theology, national pride, and personal preference. Jesus had to tell them again that God's timing is not for us to know, but God's power is ours for witnessing to the ends of the earth. How much time do we have to reach everyone for Christ? Less than when we first believed.

God wants every day of our life to be a new celebration of our restored relationship with Him. Since **Christ Has Ascended**, we have every reason to give grace to each other as we anticipate the full restoration of all things in earth's dominion. God's justice has been satisfied on the cross; we are free to demonstrate God's gift of righteousness by faith in Jesus. ***“Blessed is everyone who has the God of Jacob as his help. His hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything which is in them. He is the one who stays faithful forever. He obtains justice for the oppressed. He gives food to the hungry. The LORD releases prisoners. The LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down. The LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the aliens. The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but he turns aside the way of the wicked. The LORD reigns forever. Your God, O Zion, rules for all generations. Praise the LORD.”*** (Psalm 146:5–10)

Shall we praise Him only with our lips? He wants our lives to shout His praises too. Jesus ***“took captivity captive....He gave gifts to his people”*** in the ***“apostles...prophets...evangelists...pastors and teachers.”*** Their call is not for solo play, but for ***training the saints for the work of serving, in order to build up the body of Christ.*** It was a major turning point for the Bulls when Michael Jordan started depending on his teammates. Christian maturity scores by sharing God's divine nature in Christ (2 Peter 1:4), building up Christ's body, the Church. We share with all comers God's peace and joy, a fulfilling relationship with God and each other. (Ephesians 4:7-16) Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all in for us to win the greatest championship ever. No higher score or longer air time than the **Christ who Has Ascended**. How can we be more earnest, eager, able and effective in preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins? How can we share the joy of Jesus with more? Lord, show us. Empower us. Be with us. Amen.

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