

On Thursday we marked *Ascension Day* when Christ entered into heaven after appearing for 40 days to his disciples after the resurrection. Jesus appeared on numerous occasions to his disciples showing himself alive after his death on the cross, confirming the resurrection and talking about the Kingdom of God. When he was about to ascend to the Father he told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them. Jesus was going back to the Father but he was not going to leave his followers alone. He was going to send them the promised Holy Spirit who would remain with them forever. The ascension of Jesus is a sign of our glorious destiny.

Jesus now prays to the Father and talks about the hour that has come in John's gospel chapter 17. The hour is indicative of the death of Jesus through which he was going to be glorified. In John's gospel glory comes through the suffering and death of Jesus. The glory of the Son proceeds from the Father and is a consequence of the Son's obedience. God had given Jesus authority over all people so that he in turn could give eternal life to those whom God had given him. Just as Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection and ascends to the right hand of the Father, we too experience this ascension as we are 'In Christ'.

Jesus then goes on to explain about what eternal life is. He says that knowing God the Father and knowing Jesus is eternal life. So the question is whether we know Jesus and the Father. Knowledge of God and of Christ gives life; but the same results from believing. Knowledge and believing go together. So we are called to have not just intellectual knowledge but personal experience of Christ.

Jesus then prays for the disciples. He says that he had revealed the Father to those whom he gave to Jesus. Jesus prays particularly for the believers saying, "Holy Father protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them I protected them and kept them safe by the name you gave me." Jesus is particularly praying for those who believed in him and belong to the Father. There is a mutuality of interest and possession between the Father and the Son. Jesus will be glorified by the faithful fulfilment of God's mission by the disciples. Jesus will no longer remain in the world, but the disciples are going to be in the world. Therefore he prays for their protection.

When Jesus prays for the protection of the disciples, he is praying that they would be protected from the attacks of the evil one. The name stands for the character and power of Yahweh. Just as Yahweh had revealed himself in the Exodus events to show that he was the great 'I AM' so also now he will protect his chosen people from the forces of darkness, from Satan and all his hosts. The prayer for the disciples is also that they would be sanctified. He says, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me to the world, I have sent them into the world." Jesus wants the disciples group to be set apart and sanctified by his word. As believers we too will be cleansed of all our sins as we allow the word to penetrate within our hearts and minds.

Just as Jesus was glorified after his resurrection and ascension, so too we will be glorified when Christ will come back again. Our mortal bodies will be transformed to immortality and the perishable to imperishable. This will be our glorious destiny as we spend our lives with God and Christ.