

ASCENSION AND THE NEW I EXPERIENCE



This article was originally written during the covid lockdown in NYC at Ascension 2020. It is now three years later and one can consider how the consequences of those times are playing out in the present. It was a time when isolation and separation and fear were the dominant themes, while at the same time, the phrase "we are all in this together" was repeated constantly in the media. So, I share this article again, slightly updated, at this Ascension time, both as a reminder of this most important and often unrecognized event in the cycle of the year, as well as to revisit its theme which is more called for than ever. During this time in 2020 (March-May) we had Saturn and Jupiter and Mars conjuncting Pluto. We now have a new Jupiter, Pluto, Mars relationship/aspect approaching, which I will speak to in the coming days in another article, focusing on the Jupiter sphere and our needed consciousness of what it carries for humanity and its relationship to the new Christ experience.

In living with the cycle of the year and the seven Christic festivals, we now come to Ascension, 40 days after Easter. This is one of four cycles of 40-day rhythms between Christmas and the present festival, with this being the fourth cycle. The other three are: 40 days from Christmas to Candlemas (Feb 2.) which is a significant Cross Quarter day and the time of the Purification of the Mother and the flowing of the waters, a transition to Spring; 40 days from Epiphany (Jan 6) to Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent which can be related to the 40 days of Jesus in the Wilderness after Epiphany, the date of the baptism/incarnation; and 40 days from Lent to Easter, a time of inner preparation for Easter. This cycle of 40 days brings us to the time after the Resurrection when for 40 days the disciples had experienced the teaching of the resurrected One. It is profoundly moving to contemplate what this must have been like, for which the gospels are silent. These cycles of 40 are found often in the Bible in reference to the completion of initiatory cycles, or times of travail and preparation for a transitional event. Moses spent 40 days on Mt. Sinai "with God" before receiving the "Law". Elijah spent 40 days walking to Mt Horeb where he struggled to hear God and then came to a new encounter with the Lord in "the still small voice". Noah and the Ark endured 40 days of rain before the appearance of the rainbow and the transition to a new beginning. The Hebrew people wandered for 40 years in the desert before entering "the promised land". The newly incarnated Christ wandered for 40 days in the wilderness culminating in the three temptations through which He experienced being a human and

"began his ministry". So, we have in these cycles of 40 something of a journey, a path, a wandering which culminates in a new stage of spiritual awakening or purpose. At Ascension comes then the conclusion of the 40 days of profound teaching with the Resurrected One. Christ then tells his disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait...wait for the Father to send them the power of the Holy Spirit. Ten days of waiting and silence occur before Pentecost, the new awakening. After telling them to wait, Christ is then taken up into a cloud and vanishes from their sight. After he vanished "two men dressed in white" stood beside them and said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

The Ascension event points our attention in two directions: first, to the Christ vanishing from sight into the realm of the clouds, or the etheric sphere around the Earth, and second, to the two men asking why do they look into the sky, for He will return again in the same way. For our time, Ascension brings us, not to focus on the disappearance from sight, but rather on the reappearance of Him in that realm of life as is pointed to by the two men in white. Rudolf Steiner identifies this reappearance of the Christ in this life realm, as beginning in 1933, 1935, 1937 (in one instance specifically stating beginning 1935 and on into the future). It is that event, often misinterpreted, which is called the "Second Coming". So why these years as the beginning of the reappearance of Christ, 1900 years after the Ascension event?

Willi Sucher, who developed a new star wisdom out of the work of Rudolf Steiner, asked this question. He began to research this date out of an understanding of the starry rhythms and a spiritual understanding of the stars, and came to an answer. Christ had said to his disciples, a little while you will see me and then you will see me no more for I go to the Father. In the starry heavens, the sphere of Saturn is associated with the Father, for it is that sphere which carries the memory of the origins of human existence and the divine evolutionary plan for humanity. Saturn is often called Father Time, for in this sphere is all the memory, the record of evolution, the intentions of the Father. One way of working with the Saturn sphere is through "time conversions", meaning to translate earthly time into Saturn time as a picture of karmic understanding. So how did Willi Sucher work with Saturn as a tool for understanding world time and for answering the question of the dates for the return of Christ?

Normally at death the human ether body expands and dissolves into the cosmic ether, handing over the experiences of life, the human biography, into the general cosmic ether, where in the life after death it becomes the foundation for the karma of the next incarnation, to be laid down in the plan for future karma in the Saturn sphere. However, as Rudolf Steiner points out, this was not the case with the Christ, who held his etheric body in tact so that it remains as a life force in the sphere around the Earth in the tableau of his deeds for the Earth, to be accessed by humanity. Yet the deeds of Christ, the tableau of His life also expanded, though not dispersing, into the whole etheric cosmos out to the Saturn realm of the Father (for the purpose of this article the newer outer planets are not considered as they are not built into the human organism in the same way as are the classical planets). It became a new cosmic force in the entire universe of our Logos.

But this expansion to the periphery took time and Saturn is the cosmic time keeper. Willi Sucher translated this cosmic time frame into Earth time in order to understand this expansion of the life body of the Christ into the cosmos, as well as its return, so to speak, to

the aura of the Earth as a presence accessible to humanity in a new way. How does this conversion work? One year in Earth time, the time for one revolution around the Sun, must be transposed into Saturn time. One Saturn year then is the equivalent of 30 Earth years, as it takes Saturn 30 years (29.4577 to be exact) for one revolution around the Sun. So, we build on this ratio of Earth time to Saturn time. If we begin with the end of December, in the year 0, the turning point from BC to AD as the date of the birth of Jesus and go on to April 3, 33 AD, as the date given by Rudolf Steiner for Golgotha, we come to a life span of Jesus of 32.28 years. This is the "time being" of the biography of Jesus contained in the etheric body. Now we must convert this time organism from Earth time to cosmic time, to Saturn time, which is about 30 times longer than Earth time. We do this by multiplying the 32.28 Earth years of the biography by 29.477, the Saturn year, and we come to 950.895 years in Saturn time. That is the time it took for the ether body of Christ Jesus to expand to the periphery, to Saturn, to "the Father". Then that ether body begins the contraction to return again to unite with the aura of the Earth, taking another 950.895 years. That is a total of 1,901.79 years for the expansion and return of the ether body of the Christ Jesus after "going to the Father". We then add these years to our starting point in the calendar of the year 33 AD, plus about a quarter (April 3, the death day) of that year, which is 33.25 AD. The year 33.25 AD plus 1,901.79 years bring us to the year 1935, in early January.

$$33.25 \text{ AD} + 1901.79 \text{ years} = 1935.04 \text{ AD}$$

Thus, according to this time conversion, worked out by Willi Sucher, the etheric body of Christ returned to the Earth aura in 1935, having offered the content of the deeds of Christ to the entire planetary spheres up to the Father of the macrocosm and also now empowered with cosmic forces from the Saturn sphere, the sphere of the Father to be present in a new way for humanity.

Rudolf Steiner speaks about how, starting around 1935, some human beings will begin to experience this Etheric Christ starting in these years and continuing on into the middle of the century. As the Christ comes to the "edge" of the physical plane, in the etheric sphere around the Earth, a new form of natural clairvoyance will become more and more evidenced. He goes on to speak of how this experience will become more and more common for humanity in a natural evolutionary way over the following 2500 years, which will bring us to the 6th Age, the age of Aquarius. He also characterizes this experience as a kind of "Damascus experience". He speaks about the event which happened to Paul, changing him from Saul to Paul, on the road to Damascus, when the Christ appeared to him in a vision, as the first etheric Christ experience, a kind of forerunner for the future. Thus in the Ascension event we also have the imagination of the Paul Damascus event, the first of what the two men in white proclaimed as Christ coming again from the realm in which the disciples saw him vanish.

But if we look now at these years, 1930 and on into 1945, we can clearly see other forces which would oppose this event at work in the world. We can wonder how events in the 1930's and 40's interfered with or blocked this emerging new experience. In 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and unleashed the dark cloud of nationalism, the horrific destruction of Europe and immense suffering and genocide. Japan unleashed war in the east. In 1945 two nuclear bombs were detonated over Japan. Som for 12 years, one Jupiter cycle, 1933 to 1945, the world experienced a tumult of destruction and suffering unknown in history culminating in nuclear destruction. Those years witnessed the deadliest military conflict in history and the first

conflict to use advanced technological forces, including accelerated research into mass weapons, which led to the development of the nuclear bombs. One can think about the fact that an estimated 70-85 million people died in WWII (20 million of whom were in the Japan/China conflict). This does not include the estimated additional 20 million killed by Stalin (and that is only a very wild guess landing between the estimates of from 8 million to 60 million, given by Solzhenitsyn) before Stalin's rule ended in 1952. Is there a correlation between the timing of the return of the Christ in the etheric realm and this supreme effort at darkness and destruction by Ahriman and the new activity of the Asuras, with the nuclear explosions and the evil of genocide. What must these events and the millions of souls cast into the spiritual world, through immense suffering and even prematurely, have done in the etheric realm? How did this hurricane of suffering work to prevent this germinating new spiritual vision of the Christ on Earth? This can lead us to wonder what all of these events at that time have done to this new Christ experience in our time?

In Lecture V of *The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric*, in 1910, Rudolf Steiner speaks about the years from 1935 and moving into the 3rd millennium, as the beginning of a kind of renewal of the Age of Abraham but in a reverse direction. The Age of Abraham brought the loss of a natural clairvoyance and the development of a consciousness of God arising more out of thinking bound to the brain. He addresses the ongoing challenge of recognizing and cultivating the new clairvoyance which should come into humanity into the 3rd millennium as the old forms of cognition will no longer serve. This 3rd millennium is now!

Everything that humanity could acquire from this consciousness of God that is bound to the human brain has gradually been drained off, and only a little still remains for human beings to acquire by means of these human faculties — indeed, little more. On the contrary, we are going in exactly the opposite direction in the new age of Abraham. We are taking the path that will lead humanity away once more from merely physical, sensible contemplation, away from the combining of physical, sensible signs...We are going along the path that allows human beings to enter into conditions of natural clairvoyance, of natural clairvoyant powers...

There are two different possibilities of what might happen, however. One is that human beings will have the aptitude for this clairvoyance but, during the coming decades, materialism will triumph and humanity will sink into a materialistic swamp...if materialistic consciousness goes so far as to declare that spiritual science is folly and to stamp out all consciousness of the spiritual world, people simply will not understand these first capacities. It will depend upon humanity itself whether what then takes place turns out to be a blessing or a curse, since what is really to occur might pass by unnoticed.

The other situation might arise in which spiritual science will not be trampled. Then one will understand that such qualities are not only to be cultivated in the secret schools of initiation but also to be cherished, when they appear toward the middle of our century, as delicate saplings of human soul life in this or that person...

All of this will depend upon whether an understanding is awakened for spiritual science or whether the materialistic counter-current succeeds — whether Ahriman succeeds — in repelling what spiritual science does with good purpose.

We are now 23 years into the 3rd millennium. Are we seeing signs of this "delicate sapling" in humanity? Or are we witnessing the triumph of materialism in the merely physical contemplation of life? Did the corona pandemic serve perhaps as an opportunity to stop and

turn within and ask what we have made of our world? Was that time of pandemic shut down and isolation a "40 days" for humanity that will lead to a kind of initiation? What has happened to the phrase used in the pandemic, "we are all in this together" as a kind of rallying cry? It seems we are less all together now than ever before. We read now about the long term consequences of the isolation in high rates of depression and an epidemic of loneliness, particularly in young people. We see in the USA an eruption of violence and polarization that seems inexplicable. What can anthroposophy offer now both in spiritual understanding and in practical ways that will serve a new vision for the future that arises out of a true awareness of who we are and how we are to live together? I find myself living with these many questions now in this post-pandemic time. Some of these same questions were posed cosmically in the planetary configurations with Pluto, Saturn and Jupiter in Sagittarius during the pandemic start in 2020. (See my two previous articles, The Corona World, Parts I and II (available here <https://www.astrosophy.com/currentarticles>)). The great question posed cosmically then was whether we can come to a truly spiritual image of the human being, or continue to create a system of life based on materialistic conceptions of the human being.

As I think about these questions at this time of Ascension, the time to contemplate the reappearance of the Christ in the etheric realm, the new Damascus experience, I return to an image of the nature of the etheric in contrast to the physical. It is the image of the self that arises from the distinction between the physical-centric (centripetal) force that is bound to the nature of the physical world, and one can say is connected to the first Abraham age of descent into the brain, as juxtaposed to the etheric-peripheral or centrifugal, that strives outward to the periphery, to the Sun and is connected to the reversed new Abraham age which Steiner describes as our time. This centric focus of gravity, of earth vs. the periphery focus of levity, of light, of the etheric can be applied to the experience of our Self, our "I". The new thinking, or new clairvoyance which Steiner speaks about which leads to the new Christ experience begins with this "I" experience. We now have brought the separation of individualism to an extreme culmination in our materialistic world view; the crisis of me-ness, as it has been called; the point in the center which is alone, separate from others. It seems now this separateness and aloneness are increasing. The path towards "not I, but Christ in me" is not just a mystical contemplation, but can be applied to life. It is the cultivation of the knowledge that that my "I" is truly found in others, in the periphery around me, not in the point of my separate self. In his book, *The New Experience of the Supersensible*, Jesaiah Ben-Aharon devotes a chapter, "Christ's Appearance Between 'I' and 'thou'", to develop this great social question for the future. Central to his point is a quote from Steiner from Chapter 9 in *Riddles of the World*:

It is a fundamental maxim for esotericists to see the other person as the revelation of one's own Higher Self [which is the Christ], because he knows that he must find the other in himself [and himself in the other].

Earlier it was mentioned that Steiner spoke of the potentiality of the experience of the etheric Christ unfolding over the next 2500 years. This takes us into the 6th Cultural Epoch (or Age). In a lecture titled *Preparing for the Sixth Epoch*, June 15, 1915, Steiner describes the nature of the forward moving portion of humanity in that Age. What he describes has a direct relationship to this current challenge of the new "I" experience, as well as the new spiritually informed culture that will eventually replace the materialistic world view. He states:

In the sixth epoch, the most highly developed will not only feel pain such as is caused today by the sight of poverty, suffering and misery in the world, but such individuals will experience the suffering of another human being as their own suffering... The moral characteristic indicated here is that, unlike conditions in the fifth epoch, in the sixth epoch the well-being of the individual will depend entirely upon the well-being of the whole.

And:

The third characteristic will be that men in the sixth epoch will only be considered to have real knowledge when they recognize the spiritual, when they know that the spiritual pervades the world and that human souls must unite with the spiritual. What is known as science today with its materialistic trend will certainly not be honored by the name of science in the sixth post-Atlantean epoch. It will be regarded as antiquated superstition.

Perhaps in this time of social upheaval and despair in so many souls, can emerge the possibility that we can discover this truth -- that we are not separate centric egos bound to and identified with our bodies, but that it is through and in the "other" that we find our True Self, the Self of the periphery, which is the Christ, the Universal Human. Perhaps it is a truth that begins to resonate among human beings. Anthroposophy can bring a deeper understanding of this truth so that it does not wither as simply an abstract concept, but can become a force in life, a revelation of the true nature of the I, and thus of the true nature of the Christ in each human being. This can be a foundation for the "new normal" and a true meaning of "we are all in this together". Then can a new future be created to prepare the way for the coming Age.

Jonathan Hilton

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