

“The Ascension of Christ: A Significant Redemptive Historical Event”

Luke 24:50-53 // Acts 1:1-11 // John 14:1-7

Sunday 2nd July 2019 –Glenvista Baptist Church

A Once off Message as a result of Ascension Day

Luke 24:50-53 (ESV) The Ascension

⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.”

Acts 1:1-11 (ESV) The Promise of the Holy Spirit

¹ In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

The Ascension

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

John 14:1-7 (ESV) I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life

¹ “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Introduction:

- a) The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in its earliest days was accused of turning the world upside down with her relentless proclamation of the Gospel of her Lord; nothing could stop the fervor of the apostles; they could not be held back by any earthly authority that tried to hinder the Kingdom of God. What can the Church of the Lord Jesus do today so as to be more fervent in our efforts of making the Gospel known to the ends of the earth? What would it take to exponentially increase our efforts to get the Gospel to every nation? In light of this I want to consider with you this evening the significance of the ascension of our Lord Jesus as a major redemptive historical event and consider what effect this should have on the Great Commission.
- b) Now come with me, would you, to the very last verses of the Book of Acts. **Acts 28:30-31** **“³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”** This is the apostle Paul, and he is in house arrest in Rome for a period of two years. Even though Paul is under house arrest he is allowed visitors under the watchful eye of a Roman guard and many come to him for preaching and teaching. We are told that Paul's gospel efforts were **“with all boldness and without hindrance”**. An interesting way to end Luke's second account to Theophilus. However, it seems like a contrast is drawn between the commencement of Acts and its conclusion. At the end of Acts, you have Paul and the apostles, and they're preaching the Gospel and the Kingdom of God and the things about Christ, and we are particularly told they are doing so with **boldness**. At the outset however, in **chapter 1** we find the disciples together and they are initially made up of a band of eleven men and a few women. And yet when you look at the account you see that this little band of disciples seem to be frightened, alarmed and confused. They ask questions to try make sense of all the happenings; they seem disorientated and certainly not at this stage preoccupied with the preaching of the Gospel. There is a great contrast between the beginning of Acts and its conclusion.
- c) That contrast is even highlighted in **John 14** where Jesus is speaking to His disciples possibly shortly before His ascension and we find these men troubled and alarmed. And we find our Lord saying to them, **“¹ Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”** From trouble and heartfelt sorrow, we see a dramatic change as joy and boldness comes upon the disciples. What precipitated the sorrow is shown in **chapter 13** – Jesus told His disciples of His imminent return to the Father, in **John 13:33** – **“³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’”** This news brought great sorrow upon our Lord's beloved disciples, and it was met with this question in **John 13:36** – **“³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”**
- d) So, what then brought about this change? What marks this difference between the disciples' demeanor at the outset of Acts versus the ending of Acts? ***I would suggest to you it was the Ascension of our Lord, and His disciples recognizing the value of the Ascension.*** And I want us to see the value of the Doctrine of the Ascension of Christ tonight, for I believe we make way too little of this, and once we understand that the Ascension is equally as important as the resurrection, and as justification and sanctification and every other major doctrine, then, and then only I believe this glorious doctrine will find its rightful place in the Christian community.

Point 1 – “An Initial Response of Deep Sorrow”

John 14:1 (ESV) *“¹ Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.”*

- a) It was precisely our Lord's indication at the end of **John 13** that left His disciples in a state of deepened sorrow. In the Latin translation of **chapter 13** the famous phrase, “*Qou Vadis*” is used when Simon Peter asks him in **verse 36** “*Where are you going?*”. This question is asked by our Lord's disciples when He announces that He is going away and where is going they could not follow after Him now. And it is precisely in this context that our Lord in **John 14:6** tells them not to let their hearts be troubled. And our Lord's desire here is to imprint upon them the significance of His departure by helping them see why He needed to go away, where He would be going, and what He would be doing in that place to which He was going. And all this precedes a lengthy discourse in which Jesus speaks of His entering into glory, where the Father is going to restore to the Son the glory that the Son had with the Father from the foundation of the world. Jesus is anticipating the end of His humiliation and the moment of His triumphal entry – not into Jerusalem, but this time into the Heavenly Jerusalem.
- b) And so, Jesus comforts His disciples by telling them that He would be returning to His Father – that He is going to His Father's house. Well known theologian RC Sproul, who passed into glory last year, tells the following story of his own experience. He tells of a time when he was, but a toddler and his father was called to military service during World War II, and he would remember all the nights in which his mother sat behind the type writer typing daily letters to his father. Somewhere during military service his father returned home on furlough for a short visit. RC testified that he remembered vividly the day of his father's departure and he was but only three years of age. On the day his dad left home with all his belongings on his shoulder in a duffle bag. He kissed RC's mom goodbye at the door and took RC by the hand to walk with him to the bus that parked right in front of their home. RC's dad bent down, hugged and kissed him, and climbed on the bus, while young RC watched the bus drive off into the distance. He then remembers running back inside and falling at his mom's feet heartbroken and sobbing his heart out. Deepest of sorrow gripped his young heart as he thinks back of that dreadful moment of separation, understanding something of that sorrow. Shakespeare, said, “*Parting is such sweet sorrow and there is nothing sweet to me about that*”. All of us know something of that pain of saying goodbye to someone whom we love.
- c) And in **John 14** we see our Lord's disciples caught up in such sorrow when He tells them that He was about to leave. Now this departure and its subsequent consequences is described for us at the end of the book of Luke and at the beginning of the book of Acts.

Point 2 – “The Significance of this Redemptive Historical Event”

Acts 1:8 *“⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

- a) The Church in our day does not understand the significance of this redemptive historical event. We get all excited about the atonement, we get all excited about the

resurrection, we get all excited about the return of Jesus, but we hardly even celebrate the ascension of Christ. And because we so often don't see the significance of this redemptive historical event, we think we are less privileged than the saints in the Old Testament who had Jesus amongst them, and we feel sorry for ourselves that we no longer have Jesus physically present with us. And this was no doubt the position of the disciples here in Luke's accounts. They felt sorry for themselves that Jesus left them behind, and their hearts were gripped within deep sorrow.

- b) However, what we find in this one little verse in Luke's account **is that after Jesus ascended into heaven before their very eyes, the disciples returned to Jerusalem rejoicing, and they were found praising God all around the town.** Luke 24:52-53 – **“⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.”** Can you see the sudden yet drastic change from the picture that has been painted up until now? You see, the reason for their joy was simple; they came to understand why He left, where He was going and what He would do in that place to which He was going. ***The ascension of Christ was the last act of our Lord during His earthly ministry and the significance of the ascension of Christ is seen in His return to the right hand of God the Father to be enthroned in Heaven as the King of Kings.*** So, our Lord's ascent into heaven is an ascension to His coronation. He leaves for the ceremony of His crowning as Sovereign, at the right hand of God the Father. And this asserts the fundamental announcement of the New Testament namely that our King reigns – RIGHT NOW. He reigns in and through His people as He sets up His kingdom in the hearts and lives of those who love Him and represent Him here in earth. The Kingdom of God has come and has come to the hearts of His people and the ascension of Christ testifies to this great truth as Jesus is manifestly and visibly risen to the Father to take His seat of authority as Christ the King at His Father's right side.
- c) And now He has given unto His church the mandate to make His glory known through the proclamation of the Gospel as the Spirit of God resides in and enables each believer to do so. For Jesus said unto them, in **Acts 1:8 “⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”** It was John Calvin who said: “The task of the Church is to make the invisible reign of Jesus Christ visible.” And so, the Son had to return so that His Spirit could come and indwell all who believe. In doing so, the ascension of Jesus produced great joy in the disciples for they realized what amazing benefits would come to them as Jesus returned to the Father, for in the same way they saw Him depart they would also see Him return, and this time He would return to fetch them and all who believe that we may be with Him where He is. What comfort and joy the ascension of Christ brings to us!
- d) The ascension is the inauguration of our Lord's Kingship, but He is not finished yet, He will come back to consummate it in the same glory.

Point 3 – “Four Reasons the Ascension of Christ Matters”

Hebrews 10:12-13 (ESV) **“¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.”**

- a) Finally, then beloved, the ascension of Jesus matters and I essentially want to highlight four reasons why this is so:

1. When Jesus ascended and sat down at the Father's right hand, the Father verified the accomplishment of the life, death, and resurrection of His Son and confirmed that the final payment for sin had perfectly been made (Heb 10:11-14). **"¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet."**
 2. When Jesus ascended, He ascends to a ministry of intercession on behalf of His people and He acts as advocate on our behalf. Through this priestly and intercessory ministry, we are guaranteed to always have access to the Father through the Son as High Priest (1 John 2:1) **"¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."**
 3. When Jesus ascended His eternal reign over all His enemies is seen. For Peter writes, in 1 Peter 3:22, that He **"has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."**
 4. And finally, then the ascension matters because in it the Church is empowered to accomplish its mission. In Ephesians 1:22-23, the Apostle Paul writing about the resurrection and ascension of our Lord says, **"²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."**
- b) And therefore, beloved it is in this glorious knowledge that we go forward with hope and joy, because the King of Kings has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. And therefore, we build our confidence on this great fact of the finished and completed work of Jesus Christ. The resurrection as well as the ascension of Christ testify to the fact that Christ has done everything to save His people from their sin. Nothing more needs to be done!
- c) Do you believe this?

Amen!

Soli Deo Gloria (For God's Glory Alone)

Glenvista Baptist Church

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