

The Ascension

Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:4-12

All Stand and Read Scripture

Luke 24:50-53 (NASB)

⁵⁰ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

⁵¹ While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple praising God.

Acts 1:4-12 (NASB)

⁴ Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," *He said*, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

⁹ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹ They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

As Christians we get very excited about atonement because of Christ's death on the cross for our sins, the resurrection, and the second coming, as we should. But we rarely celebrate the ascension of Christ. I believe that is because we fail to understand the full significance of Christ's ascension to be with His Father. I hope by the end of the message we can all appreciate the full significance of Christ's ascension.

Polls are frequently taken to discern Christian's most popular chapters in the New Testament. Nearly every poll lists the same two chapters as number 1 and number 2. The second most popular chapter is I Cor. 13, "The Love Chapter". The most popular chapter in the polls is the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John.

We are all familiar with this passage where Jesus told His disciples "Let not your heart be troubled." I am reading this from the **New King James Version** because it is written with the words we are most familiar with.

John 14:1-4 (NKJV)

14 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ 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. ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know."

As popular as these words are with the Christian community, I wonder if we understand **WHY** Jesus said these words in the first place? We tend to read the scriptures as they are broken down into chapter and verse. The original scripture was not broke down by chapter and verse and often we miss the context of a passage because we fail to consider the verses preceding it. Many times the preceding chapter will shed light on the next chapter.

I don't know for sure why Jesus said "**let not your hearts be troubled**" to His disciples. But I can make a good guess based upon what was written at the end of chapter 13.

John 13:31-38 (NASB)

³¹ Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus *said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³² if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. ³³ Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

³⁶ Simon Peter *said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." ³⁷ Peter *said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." ³⁸ Jesus *answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

Peter wanted to know "Where are you going"? He was concerned that he could not go with Him.

So let's go back to chapter 13. Jesus told the disciples in verse 33 **I am not going to be with you for much longer and where I am going, you cannot come for right now.**

It is in that context that Jesus tells them "**Let not your hearts be troubled**". He tells them that , yes, I am going away. Yes, in a little while you will look for me and you will not see Me. But you must understand the **significance** of My departure.

You must understand:

- **Where** I am going.
- **Why** I am going there.
- **What** I will be doing when I get there. And finally understand that
- You **will not** be left alone!

BODY:

I. Where Are You Going?

John 16:1-6 (NASB)

16 “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. ² They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. ³ These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. ⁴ But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

⁵ “But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, **sorrow has filled your heart.**

When Jesus announced His eminent departure from this planet, the initial reaction was sorrow.

John 14:1-4 (NKJV)

14 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ 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. ⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

Jesus is comforting His disciples by saying He is going to His Father's house and when you understand why I am going and what I will be doing when I get there you will no longer be sorrowed.

Actually what Jesus says here is one of the most comforting things He ever utters. **If it were not so, I would have told you.**

He is telling them "If you are living with a false hope of the resurrection". Or "If you are clinging to a mythological fantasy of life after death" , I would have told you so.

But, the reality is that THERE IS A HEAVEN! I am going there to prepare a place for you and there are many dwelling places there. And YOU will be able to go there someday!

IF WE could just fully understand this one statement of Jesus and have it absorb our whole being, it would turn this church upside down and it would turn the world upside down!

We wouldn't be able to wait to be there and our entire view of death would change!

So, we know that Jesus was going to Heaven and He is going to prepare a place for us in Heaven. But there is another reason WHY Jesus was ascending to Heaven.

II. Why Are You Going?

Let's look back at John chapter 13. Jesus gave a second reason as to **WHY** He was going.

John 13:31-32 (NASB)

³¹Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus *said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.

Jesus talks about His own "entering into glory". He is telling the disciples that God was going to restore to the Son the GLORY 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 in Jerusalem) but in the heavenly Jerusalem. He had spent His time on earth and had perfectly done His Father's will and provided a way for man to be reconciled back to God.

Now He was going to ascend to Heaven. The concept of ascension is not simply "going up a hill", "ascending to a city", or "ascending into Heaven. The meaning of ascension in the Greek has a deeper meaning than that. Instead of just "rising up", it suggests ascending to a particular **place** for a particular **reason**.

That particular purpose was to be enthroned in Heaven as the KING OF KINGS! So in essence, when Jesus ascended from earth, He was leaving for His CORONATION!

Remember the two men walking on the road to Damascus that met Jesus after He had resurrected and did not know who He was? Jesus noticed their **sadness** and asked them what they were talking about. They replied "Are you the only one who does not know what has happened in the last few days?"

Jesus replied "What things?"

The men said...

- We had hoped that He would be the Messiah.
- We hoped that He would redeem Israel.
- We hoped that He would be our King.
- But, He let us down.

Can you imagine the disappointment that finally Jesus had come claiming to be God and was killed. Their hopes were crushed. Jesus explained the scriptures to them and they finally understood. He had NOT let them down. He was ALIVE!

If you had an invitation to a coronation of Jesus Christ as the "KING OF KINGS" and the "LORD OF LORDS", would you WANT to see it? Would you want to go to it?

If you couldn't go, you would certainly want to see it on TV. You definitely would not want to miss it.

Jesus was ascending to Heaven for His deserved coronation as KING OF KINGS and to sit at the right hand side of God. It was a celebration in HEAVEN!

Remember, when Jesus first told the disciples that He was going away, they were sorrowful. When He actually descended to Heaven, we read that they returned to Jerusalem "in great joy".

So what happened between the time that Jesus told them He was leaving and the time that He actually left and their hearts were filled with joy?

How could anyone be happy?

The reason is simple. They finally understood...

- Why He left
- Where He was going.
- What He was going to do when He got there.

But, Jesus also gave one more reason why He was leaving. That reason was so the Holy Spirit could come and live in us.

III. We Will not be Left Alone.

When we fail to understand the significance of Christ's ascension, we tend to act like the Kingdom of God is something in the distant future. We forget the fundamental message of the New Testament that our King reigns.

That reign is invisible. It is not of this world. Our task is to make the invisible reign of Christ visible. We do that by...

- our love for one another
- our service to our Lord
- our celebration of His work for us
- our joy that we have that He is King of Kings and has sent His Spirit.

Jesus told the disciples that He would not leave us as orphans. He had to leave so He could send His Spirit to act as His presence during His absence from us. Because of the Spirit within us, we have been empowered to do God's work. What a reason for JOY!

Jesus once again told them as in the great commission

Acts 1:6-8 (NASB)

⁶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive power

when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

⁹ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹ They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

Jesus commands us to spread the word to the whole world until He comes again in all His GLORY and takes us to our prepared place in Heaven.

So, the disciples stood and watched the **GLORY** of the cloud transporting Jesus to His throne, not in sorrow, but in extreme **JOY**.

The angels came and said “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

Who wouldn't be gazing?

This was the inauguration of His Kingship in Heaven and He will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into Heaven.

Lord, Help us to absorb the significance of your ASCENSION!

CONCLUSION:

So we offer His invitation, realizing that there may be someone here who has never ever accepted Christ as their Savior. We plead with you. We appeal to you not to let this moment escape not to let this window of opportunity pass you by.

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, then come now, confess that you believe in Him, be faithful to Him in Christian baptism, arise to walk in the newness of life. God's invitation is offered to you. Will you come as we stand and as we sing?

He Is Lord!

He is Lord, He is Lord. He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord.