

ASCENSION MATTERS

Ready for Pentecost #5, Luke 24:50-53

May 15, 2022

*When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany,
he lifted up his hands and blessed them.
While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.
Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.
Luke 24:50-53*

First observation: When in doubt, worship together!

Image #1: Jesus really is the victorious Lord

³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“ The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” ’

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Acts 2:32-36, Peter’s Pentecost sermon where he quotes from Psalm 110

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men.”

Ephesians 4, Paul is quoting Psalm 68

1. Both Hebrew and Roman culture knew how to celebrate _____
2. Peter and Paul (and everyone else, too!) were looking for a victorious Messiah
3. Jesus, “exalted to the right hand of God” is the final evidence of his Lordship

Image #2: the priest who intercedes

²³ Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶ Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Hebrews 10

1. Jesus, to be our priestly intercessor, has to be _____
2. Jesus' intercession is an essential element of our redemption – Jesus is not finished!

And no humiliation, therefore, can characterize his intercessory activity. But the fact that from the seat of exalted and undimmed glory and in the exercise of high priestly prerogative he interposes petition to the Father on behalf of every one of his own, to the end that they also may be glorified with him, should cause us to be filled with holy and adoring amazement at the condescensions of trinitarian love and grace. And the effect will then be that we shall be humbled to the point of being speechless, in a true sense exasperated, at the thought of the intercession which is interjected to save us from the doom which our continuing sinfulness and unfaithfulness deserve and saved to a glory which consists in glorification with Christ.

John Murray, "The Heavenly Priestly Activity of Christ"

What we learn about Jesus' return

- 1) Jesus is coming back in this same way

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they 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

- 2) Jesus is preparing a place

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

John 14 (see Spurgeon's great sermon, "The Ascension and Second Coming")

What Jesus' ascension means

1) Jesus ascends bodily to remind us that bodies still matter!

²³ Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶ Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Acts 2

2) Jesus ascends to provide gifts for his church

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says:

*“When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men.”*

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

3) Jesus ascends to guarantee our access to the Father

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith

Hebrews 10

Resources for studying Luke

Bible.org has some wonderful resources at <https://bible.org/book/Luke>

I. Howard Marshall's Greek commentary is my go to help (Eerdmans, 1978)

Spurgeon has a sermon that connects the ascension and Second Coming at <https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1817.htm>

J. C. Ryle has an interesting commentary at <https://gracegems.org/Ryle/124.htm> I have also included his classic article, "Repentance", at <https://www.monergism.com/repentance>

Bob Deffinbaugh has a very interesting sermon series on Luke at <https://bible.org/series/luke-gospel-gentiles>. His message on the end of Luke is at <https://bible.org/seriespage/invisibility-invincibility-luke-2436-53> Deffinbaugh has another sermon on the ascension, but I don't agree that the ascension "does not serve as a fitting conclusion" to Jesus life, at <https://bible.org/seriespage/ascension-luke-2431-acts-11-11>

Kevin DeYoung has a good Ascension summary at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-the-ascension/>

John Calvin's summary of the benefits of Jesus' ascension at <https://www.monergism.com/3-benefits-imparted-our-faith-christs-ascension>

John Murray, Rev. Muhr's favorite professor, has a wonderful but hard to read lecture on Jesus' intercessory work at https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_christ_murray.html

Tim Keller has some very interesting comments on the mission of the church at <https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/the-missional-church> and a contemporary look at repentance at http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/All_of_Life_Is_Repentance-Keller.pdf

If you want to equip yourself to explain why we believe in resurrection, Michael Horton has a wonderful, if a bit heavy, article at <https://whitehorseinn.org/resource-library/articles/risen-indeed-2/>