

The Ascended One: Acts 1:1-11

We continue this morning by focusing on another of the Special Sundays of Spring. We are turning our attention to the Ascension of Jesus Christ. But we don't want to simply study the events of this moment, we also want to make sure we leave here with a better understanding of why the Ascension of our Savior is important for Christianity and for our relationship with Him. Thursday was Ascension Day, the day which marks the 40th day after the Resurrection. This day each year also commemorates the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and simultaneously marks the beginning of the ten-day waiting period between Jesus' return to the Father and the arrival of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

According to the doctrines of our faith, to include the Apostles' Creed, the Ascension represents the completeness of Christ's deification. It was this moment where Jesus left earth as the Godman, as the second Adam, and took His rightful place, seated on the throne at the right hand of the Father. Unfortunately, this day, as well as Pentecost Sunday, which is next week, have been minimized in the hierarchy of important days in Christianity.

One of the places you'll find the story of Jesus' Ascension is in Acts. **Let's read together Acts 1:1-11**, paying special attention to verses 6-11.

*At Christmas, Emmanuel arrives on the scene. God the Son in human flesh as Jesus the Messiah, the Christ.

*At Easter our hearts and minds reflect on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and what that means for our past, present, and future.

*Ascension Day and Ascension Sunday should be looked on with the same manner of importance because these days remind us about the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Let's consider a few things before we go further. The crucifixion, for instance. We usually think about the brutality of the event and concentrate on how special it is that Jesus would go through all that agony on my behalf. His work of redemption for all of mankind is special. No one will argue against the overarching importance of Jesus' work on the cross, especially given its significance as a doctrinal truth of our faith.

I wonder why it is then, we often fail to recognize His Ascension in such a way? Timothy Keller, one of the most influential American Pastors, and best-selling author in his book, *“Encounters with Jesus: Unexpected Answers to Life's Biggest Questions”*, said this concerning the Ascension. “The ascension, when understood, becomes an irreplaceable, important resource for living our lives in the world—and it's a resource no other religion or philosophy of life holds out to us.” Basically put, we need a better understanding of the

Ascension because it will help us as we navigate this treacherous world. It will also help us better understand our relationship with Jesus.

Why does the Ascension matter?

- In John's account of the crucifixion, he chose to use the word, *tetelestai*, in describing the final moments of Jesus' life. **Read John 19:30.** "*When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*" It is finished, *tetelestai*, or perhaps the better translation, "paid in full". These words bare significance for us in relation to His Ascension. Jesus was letting us know that He had received the full portion of God's wrath and because of His sacrifice, a permanent connection was established between the forgiven man and God. The Ascension of Jesus put the final seal on the work necessary for our salvation. Jesus had accomplished His mission to rescue, ransom, and redeem sinful and separated man. The ascension should remind us that if there's nothing left for Christ to do to accomplish our salvation, then there's nothing more we can do to earn it. Salvation for all who accept it is complete with the finished work of the ascended Christ.
- Satan is our greatest accuser because he is God's biggest enemy. **1 Peter 5:8** says, "*Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" He is relentless in his accusations of believers to discredit us before a Holy God. Our protection from these attacks is found in the Ascended King, Jesus Christ. Remember the words found in **1 John 2:1-2**, "*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. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*" Jesus is our advocate and presents our case before God based on His sacrifice and His perfect life. Because of Him and only Him we can find confidence in knowing that He has us covered!
- Jesus, on two separate occasions informed the disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit. In **John 14:7** we read, "*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.*" And in **John 16:7**, we read, "*Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*" You see, the Ascension was necessary for us to be able to receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus went back to the Father and by doing so fulfilled this promise. Every true believer receives the indwelling presence of God's Spirit, forever! How awesome is that?

- Finally, because of Jesus' Ascension, our access to the Kingdom of God is guaranteed. Without Jesus having ascended, then He would not be able to return once again. Our hope is in His return. **Revelation 19:6-9** –
- “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” —*
- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*
- And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”*

The ascension of Jesus reminds us that we'll spend eternity with Him in heaven.

How can we apply these things in a practical manner?

1. **The Holy Spirit is our line of communication with the Father** – Let's go back to **John 16:13** for help with this. *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”* Also consider the words of **Romans 8:26-27**, *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”* It is because of this connection that our relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is personal. If you've never spoken to either of Them, I encourage you to start today. God loves to hear from His children. And you need to hear from Him. Prayer is essential to a healthy relationship with your Savior.
2. **Your salvation is complete** – So many Christians doubt their salvation. According to the Barna Research Group, from a study posted in March of this year, 65% of Christians have experienced a prolonged season of doubt. Perhaps an even more staggering number is that when considering only Pastors, 26% have doubts concerning their faith. This breaks my heart because I know, if you put your trust in Jesus Christ and all His work on your behalf, then there is nothing more you need to do, or can do in terms of salvation. There is nothing the devil can do to you either. Remember, *tetelestai*, “It is finished”, the ransom for your salvation is “paid in full.” When Satan stands before God as your accuser and God looks at you, all He sees is the beauty of Jesus Christ, your advocate, your mediator, your

protector. It reminds me of a promise found in **2 Thessalonians 3:3**, *“But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.”*

3. **It creates a longing for His return** – Look back at verse 11 of Acts chapter 1.

Read Acts 1:11. It wasn't Jesus' Spirit that ascended into heaven. It was his flesh. This means He will return to us some day in the same manner that He left. Paul explains this great moment in **1 Corinthians 15:22-27**.

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.” When Jesus ascends in the same way He ascended then everything that is flawed and broken will be made better. Darkness will no longer exist and all “evil” will be destroyed. It's this longing that gives us courage and strength every day. **Nehemiah 10:8** says, *“do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”*

Jesus didn't simply disappear after being brought to life. No, he went away for the benefit of the believer. Every believer receives grace, mercy, forgiveness, power, strength, and a lasting hope that comes from believing in and understanding the Ascension of Jesus Christ, our Lord. My prayer for you today is that you allow yourself to experience these things. That you give your heart back to its creator. That you allow Jesus the opportunity to correct your wrongs and make things righteous between you and a Holy God.