



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Glory of Jesus in Everyday Life

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Acts 1:6-11

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⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But 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." ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and 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."

(Pastor prays)

Today we find ourselves at a beautiful passage in Acts, a passage that, sadly, is not dealt with very often in the church. You just don't hear that many sermons dealing with the ascension. Jerry Vines, a great preacher of another age, preached one of his most famous sermons on this passage called "Our Ascended Lord." (I wanted to listen to it, but it was \$7 at his website and I didn't want to hear it *that* bad. I knew Kyler Smith had a copy of it, so I just borrowed it from him.)

There is such soul-satisfying, Christ-honoring truth here. And the truth in this passage needs to inform who we are and how we live our lives each day, especially during this quarantine. Let's set the context and talk about the passage and draw some truth for our lives.

Here's the story. Jesus is alive! He was crucified for our sins and raised for our victory. After His resurrection, Luke tells us He appears to His followers on and off for 40 days. We shouldn't be surprised at this and we need not overlook it because the ascension was foretold by Jesus,

described by Luke, written about by Paul and elaborated on in Hebrews. So, it must be important. This is about our ascended and exalted Lord. I'm hoping you will see....

An Exalted Jesus Means a Stable Life

Before we get to the significance of the ascension, let's go through the story of the ascension. Let's read through the passage and expand on some things. ⁶*So when they had come together,* - What we are doing this morning is not a good substitute for actually coming together. When we come together as a church, we put down barriers, focus on Christ and see that the common thing we have is that we have Jesus.

The text says that they came together. Jesus, the resurrected Lord, had been walking with them for 40 days and they had some questions for Him. They still didn't get it. *They asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* They were looking for something earthy, national, and political, but Jesus wants them to understand that His kingdom isn't here. It's different. So, Jesus answers them. ⁷*He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.* He is basically saying here that the secret things belong to God. Quit asking. And then He tells them how He will build His kingdom. 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."*

So, you have there the outline for the book of Acts and the resurrected Jesus tells them that the kingdom will be built by Spirit-filled witnesses. This is what we are to be doing. Now here comes the ascension in verse 9. ⁹*And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, witnesses. he was lifted up*—that is His bodily resurrection, ascending— *and a cloud took him out of their sight.* So now the God-man is in Heaven on our behalf to make intercession for me and you. Now notice the promise the angels say. 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."* So right now, we live in the hope of not just Jesus interceding on our behalf but the second coming of our Lord Jesus.

Now that we have picked out several things from the passage, I'd like to list a few encouragements and what is the significance of the ascension.

It means that the work of Jesus - worked

The whole story of the whole Bible is pointing to Jesus, but if it's just a story then it has no more power than Aesop's fables. The ascension of Jesus means that what Christ came to do has worked. His conception by the Holy Spirit; Him being born from a Virgin; His completely righteous life, keeping and fulfilling all of God's law as the perfect man, earned righteousness. His substitutionary death on the cross, dying in the place of sinners, and as He did saying the words "it is finished." Sins are paid for; guilt is swallowed and now judgment has been replaced by forgiveness. And that is given to any and all who simply believe.

And with his victorious resurrection, the last enemy of mankind is defeated so that we no longer fear death. Furthermore, resurrection is the promise that God has received the sacrifice of Jesus in the place of anyone who believes. And the ascension of Jesus tells us that right now, the God-man, is in Heaven interceding on our behalf. Come to Him and love Him and trust Him and be forgiven and restored and strengthened for life. The work of Jesus worked.

It means that one day we will be with Jesus

I'm so thankful for this truth. Look what the angels said in verse 11. *"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."* Isn't that what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17? *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.* And isn't that what Jesus himself said in John 14:3? *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.* That's a promise that makes this light momentary affliction bearable because it is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory.

The Ascension proves that Jesus is Lord

There are two things I want you to see here. One is in verse 9 and the other is in verse 10. In verse 9, He was lifted up in a cloud and in verse 10 angels were there. The cloud is significant. That cloud in verse 9 would be the visible manifestation of God. Shekinah glory. It is a symbol that God is here. We see it with Moses on Mount Sinai getting the Ten Commandments. The same cloud traveled with Israel by day and fire by night. The cloud lay over the Tabernacle and filled the temple. The same cloud that Ezekiel saw departing over the eastern gate is the same

presence that showed up with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.. This is proving that Jesus is Lord.

But that's not all. Verse 10 says there were angels there and that is important, reminding us that Jesus is Lord. Think about when the angels appear in the New Testament. Angels announced the birth of Jesus, hark the herald angels sing. Angels ministered to Jesus after 40 days of temptation by Satan. Angels stood with Him through His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. Angels waited at the empty tomb and proclaimed His resurrection from the dead and angels showed up to accompany Jesus in His ascension. All of these things point out to us that Jesus is King, Jesus is Lord. Surely He is worthy of your life and so much better than the sin you are holding onto so closely. I love the way Paul said it in Colossians 1: 17. *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Even when you're not holding it together, Jesus is holding it together and you are going to be alright because Jesus is Lord!*

The ascension reminds us to hold on loosely to earthly things

In verse 6, the disciples were asking about a kingdom on earth. The ascension is getting their minds on a kingdom in Heaven and we are so prone to get myopic and focus on the situation and trouble and now and future on earth, and I'm hoping this quarantine puts us in a detox from culture that we might learn to treasure Christ above all and hold loosely to careers and structures and politics. And He did what Paul says in Colossians 3: 1-2. *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* Hold onto earthly things loosely.

The Ascension means we can have confidence no matter what

If you keep reading the book of Acts, you find out when Christ ascended, the Holy Spirit came down and filled every single believer. Now, so that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in your heart is greater than what the Disciples had when Jesus was on earth. They had Christ *beside* them, you have Christ *in* you, which is the hope of glory. Isn't that what Jesus said in John 16: 7? *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.* We say, "come Holy Spirit." And Christ says, "go, Holy Spirit" and that indwelling gives us confidence that God loves us, He will protect us, convict us, prompt us, and fill us. He is our helper, comforter, emperor, and motivator. He will guide us into all truth, and God's word is truth. Be strengthened by the crucified, resurrected and ascended Lord.

There are other points here, especially in verse 8, where you will find our mission and motivation. But I want to leave you with one more truth here.

The Ascension promises that the battle is won and there is victory in Christ

There is a little something tucked away up in verse 3 that I think is worth talking about. *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.* 40 - I don't want to make too much of this because the Bible doesn't make too much. But it did get me thinking. Over 150 times 40 is seen in the Bible. And it's wrong to speculate but we can see that the number 40 is often used in the Bible during times of trial or testing or even in a time of judgment.

We hear echoes of something coming. Genesis 7 - the flood rained 40 days and 40 nights. In Acts, when Paul is writing about the life of Moses. Moses killed the Egyptian and was 40 years on the backside of the desert. In Exodus Moses spent 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, Deuteronomy 9 tells us that when God's people sinned, Moses interceded for 40 days. Numbers 13, the Israelites had 40 days to spy out the land. Deuteronomy 8 tells us that Israelites were not faithful; they wandered 40 years because of their sin and in 1 Samuel 17 Goliath taunts God's army 40 days!

Because God's people sinned so badly in Israel and Judah, Ezekiel laid on his right side 40 days bearing the iniquity of God's people 40 days. And all of that groaning points to some place far off for a hero to come. Jesus Christ, born of a Virgin like the scripture says, fully God and fully man, comes onto the scene. The Gospel writers tell us He goes into the wilderness to battle Satan and to be tempted on our behalf. He's tempted 40 days in the wilderness. That inaugurated His earthly ministry and to close out His earthly ministry, He spends 40 days celebrating victory and forgiveness and hope and grace and reassuring us that the battle is won!

Jesus is Lord! And this Jesus, this exalted Jesus, means real peace and real stability in life. Because of the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, when you are in Christ you are going to be alright. Come, and find nourishment and rest for your soul in the exalted Jesus.

(Pastor prays)