

## Acts 1:9-14 Living in the Light of Ascension 1/25/15

*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." **12** Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. **13** And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. **14** All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*

We find ourselves at a passage in Acts that is not dealt with very often in church. You just don't hear that many sermons dealing with the Ascension.

Jerry Vines, the great preacher of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., preached one of his most famous sermons on the passage, "Our Ascended Lord." I was going to listen to it, but it costs \$7 and I didn't want to hear it that bad. But I know there is good here, Christ-honoring truth that must inform who we are and how we live.

To set the context: Jesus is alive, raised from the dead. He appears on and off for 40 days to his people. In v. 8, He told them: you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And the Bible says in v. 9, that after He said these things, He was lifted up and He was gone. They were left alone. V. 10 tells us they stood there looking up, but their vision would soon be changed...like ours needs to be changed.

We can't spend our lives looking back with nostalgia. We must look outward into the life in front of us. You were made for more than an earthbound pre-occupation. The disciples had a commission on the table and now they are gazing at the sky looking for something to get them to the next something, something. Not knowing they were in it. Created, converted, called and commissioned to serve an exalted Jesus. The Ascension gives us the exalted Jesus.

### **An Exalted Jesus Changes a Normal Life**

He just changes it! He changes a normal life – let me show you how. What happens to you?

#### **You Pursue God's Glory**

You quit living for you and thinking of you all the time. When your life is crucified with Christ, you are no longer living but Christ lives in you. One of the greatest things you can learn to say as a believer is, "It's not about me – It's about him." It's what Luke is telling us about in v. 9 & 10. The Glory of Jesus, the second person of the trinity – God the Son – besides the fact that He is ascending, there are two elements in v. 9 & 10 that

point to His glory. In v. 9, it's the cloud and in v. 10 it's the two men (angels). In their last moments with Jesus they are granted a *theophany* (encounter with deity).

Remember the transfiguration in Luke 9 when Moses and Elijah appear and a cloud overshadowed them? This reaches all the way back to Exodus, when God came near in a cloud. Then in v. 10 the two angels are there. Think about this – 1. The angels announced and attended the birth of Jesus; 2. They ministered after the temptation of Jesus; 3. They ministered to Him at the suffering of Jesus in the garden; 4. Proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus 5. Accompany the ascension of Jesus. All of these things point to the Glory of God.

You were created for one purpose in life: to seek the Glory of God in all things. That doesn't mean you have to do great things, it means that you do *all* things for the Glory of the Lord Jesus. Let me ask you this: Is that what you are doing right now with your life? Pursuing the Glory of God in all things? When you hold that smart phone in your hand? When you have the remote control in your hands or your steering wheel? Job said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes." Are you pursuing the Glory of God with your eyes or how you serve or what you say? An exalted Jesus changes a normal life. You pursue God's Glory. Let me tell you what else happens.

## **You Cling to Gospel Hope**

In the text, Jesus is the person who gave the disciples reason to live and joy in living.

He's leaving in v. 9-10 and as He does, listen to what the angels say in v. 11: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking to Heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into Heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into Heaven." In other words, it's not over. Here is a guarantee, a safety net that your life on earth is inexplicably connected to the one who is now in Heaven. To bolster your hope, you need a Christian theology of history. There are seven major points for Christian history. I will just give you the words and you can research each if you like:

1. Incarnation – He pursues us.
2. Crucifixion – He redeems us.
3. Resurrection – He renews us.
4. Ascension – He secures us.
5. Pentecost – He empowers us.
6. Mission (church) – He employs us.
7. Second Coming – He delivers us.

We now live in the Mission stage. The Holy Spirit is here driving our lives for the Gospel and, if that is the case, then we have a great hope for each new day:

1. Hope for ourselves – because we are sinners and fall short – backslide – we get addicted to things – lust and lie and cut corners and are selfish – yet the blood of Christ daily cleanses us. Hearing the Gospel and becoming a Christian is not a one-time event. We wake up sinners in need of a Savior every day. It's why we cling to the cross.

2. Hope for others – we all have someone we know and love who struggles at some level either believing the Gospel or living the Gospel – because Christ is our ascended Lord who is personal and glorious and interceding. We can take those we love to Him in prayer and trust He will move according to His will.

Jesus changes a normal life – we pursue God’s glory, we cling to Gospel hope.

### **You stand with a Christ-centered Confidence**

This is very similar to my second point but I want to press it a little further.

Get the scene: The disciples have seen a whole lot in regard to Jesus: life, crucifixion, death, resurrection, teaching, healing, appearance, and now He is lifted up and two angels in v. 11 say, “This Jesus who was taken up from you into Heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into Heaven.” This delivers to us at least 2 things:

1. He is our assurance – regardless of what is going on – God has not forgotten. He is on the throne. He does have a perfect plan. In Christ, you are God’s child. Your sins are forgiven. Your trust is not misplaced.
2. He is our advocate – He ascended to the right hand of the Father and when we come to Him he speaks to God on our behalf. Our advocate – 1 John 2:1: “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.” He takes our feeble prayers of confession and makes them declarations of freedom. Jesus is for you but not just for your sake, it is for the Glory of God. The miracle of salvation purchased at the cross and displayed at the resurrection is applied in the Ascension and God receives most glory out of your life when you are most surrendered to Him, Christ.

An Exalted Jesus changes a normal life. One last thing...

### **You Don’t Do This Alone**

Verse 14 is probably worthy of a whole sermon, but look how Luke describes their prayer meeting. (V. 14): All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer. I note three things about this prayer meeting:

1. It was inclusive – notice the variety of people – apostles, disciples, women, mother of Jesus, brothers of Jesus – all coming together under the Lordship of Christ.
2. It was a prayer – v. 14. Devoted themselves – non-stop – keeping the fires hot – some of you need to force yourselves to pray

3. It was a selfless prayer – v. 14 says they were of one accord – one mind. For that to happen, people have to crucify pride, die to themselves, and seek the Glory of the Lord. Jesus Christ is exalted by God the Father and his lordship changes a normal life.

You were made for so much more than what you are doing now. You were made for God's Glory, and it starts at the Cross of Christ.

*The Lord's Supper follows...*