

The Ascension and Glorification of Christ

Acts 1:4-9

We are better able to understand the Ascension of Christ when we remember that He descended in His incarnation. God the Son condescended in humiliation to put on flesh and live under the curse of sin. Ultimately, He bore the fullness of God's wrath toward the sin of all those He would save when He died on a cross. Christ was degraded beyond compare, but He is vindicated and glorified in the resurrection and ascension.

*"4 And while staying with them he [Jesus] **ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father**, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**"*

- **Jesus tells them that He will baptize them; He will give them the Holy Spirit**
 - Jesus reminds them of the comparison between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism – John used water, and Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8).
- **Acts 2:1-13 – The promised Holy Spirit comes!**
 - *1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*
 - The promise of the Father and of the Son actually did come, and this is evidence of Christ's ascension to the right hand of power.
 - *5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem **Jews, devout men from every nation** under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because **each one was hearing them speak in his own language**. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And **how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?***
 - *9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—**we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.**"*

- Those who heard the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's disciples were able to understand the proclamation of the 'mighty works of God' in their own language or tongue.
 - Far from an unknown jibber-jabber, the 'tongue speaking' was clearly a group of people miraculously speaking in a known language to others around them.
 - *12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."*
 - Some in the crowd asked a great question! "What does this mean?"
- **Acts 2:14-21 – Peter answers their question:**
 - *14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, **let this be known to you, and give ear to my words...***
 - *16 But **this is what was uttered** through the prophet Joel: 17 "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...*
 - *19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below...*
 - *21 And **it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.***
 - Peter said that God was pouring out His Spirit – the Holy Spirit – just as He had promised, showing signs that salvation is at hand
- **Acts 2:32-36 – Peter goes on:**
 - *32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that **we all are witnesses.** 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, **he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing....***
 - *36 Let all the house of Israel therefore **know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.***
 - Finally, Peter says that he and the others are witnesses to Christ's resurrection, and that they all know Jesus is exalted because they had received the promised Holy Spirit.
 - Of these things we can be certain, says Peter, that Jesus is Lord (King, Sovereign, God) and Christ (Savior, Redeemer, Messiah)!

“6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. “

▪ **Jesus rebukes their revived error and trifle.**

- The disciples embraced the prevalent error that the Messiah would bring the nation-state of Israel back to the power and prosperity that she enjoyed under David and Solomon.
 - The Jewish leaders even convinced king Herod that the Messiah would be born ‘King of the Jews’ (Matt. 2:1-6).
 - The people, though denying Jesus’ true identity (John 6:66), wanted to forcibly make Jesus their King to throw off Roman rule (Jn 6:15).
 - The crowd mocked Jesus in His death by claiming that the ‘real’ king or Messiah of Israel would not be dying on a cross (Mark 15:32).
 - The disciples themselves expected to rule beside Jesus as He established an earthly kingdom (Matt. 20:20-21).
- The disciples realized this view was false when their King died.
 - The disciples said they had ‘hoped He would redeem Israel,’ but they did not think He had done so (Luke 24:21).
 - A centurion, some of his men, women who had followed Jesus ministry, and one man who is named as a distant disciple of Christ (that is he was not one of the 12) are the only ones mentioned as not having totally deserted Jesus at His death (Matt. 27:51-61).
- Here, the disciples’ false hopes are revived.
 - They have a new confidence in this erroneous view... Surely He will accomplish what we expected – for He is powerful even over death!
- Jesus does not address the accuracy of their question; He rebukes them for concerning themselves with something other than the main thing (v7).
 - One theologian says, “From these expectations of the apostles we may learn: (1) That there is nothing so difficult to be removed from the mind as prejudice in favor of erroneous opinions. (2) that such prejudice will survive the plainest proofs to the contrary. (3) that it will often manifest itself even after all proper means have been taken to subdue it. Erroneous opinions thus maintain a secret ascendancy in a man's mind, and are revived by the slightest circumstances, even long after it was supposed that they were overcome, and in the face of the plainest proofs of reason or of Scripture.¹

¹ See Barnes’ Notes on the Bible at this link: <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/1-6.htm>

“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.”

▪ **The Holy Spirit comes with purpose**

- The Holy Spirit empowers the proclamation of the Gospel and convicts sinners (1 Thess. 1:5).
- The Holy Spirit enables us to experience joy and peace, as we trust in God (Rom. 15:13).
- The Holy Spirit empowers sinners to receive and proclaim Jesus as their Lord (1 Cor. 12:3).
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to guard the truth of the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:14).
- The Holy Spirit brings dead hearts to life (Eph. 2:5) and makes sinners born again (Jn. 3:3) through the truth of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17).

▪ **The Holy Spirit gives purpose to Christians**

- Christians are to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18), newly created witnesses to the Gospel (2 Cor. 5:17), and bold heralds of the supremely good news of Christ’s redemption (Acts 1:8).

“9 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.”

▪ **Jesus ascended as the glorious King of kings and Lord of lords**

- We can know this because of the ‘cloud’ which encircled Him and removed Him from sight.
 - God beckoned Moses to enter the intimidating cloud of glory that engulfed the mountain on which God delivered His commands (Exodus 24:15-18).
 - When the Temple was consecrated and God’s covenant was remembered, the refulgent glory of God filled the Temple so that the priests could not stand it (1 Kings 8:10-11).
 - The overwhelmingly brilliant glory of God filled the temple in Isaiah’s day, and seraphim breakout in songs of holy praise (Isaiah 6:1-4).
 - When Jesus was transfigured in the presence of His disciples, it was a cloud of glory that blazed in their midst and brought terror to the sinners who saw it (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34).

- Many theologians believe that Daniel was given a view of the heavenly reception, which Jesus Christ enjoyed as He ascended.
 - Daniel 7:13-14 – “13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”
 - Recall that it was this very statement from the mouth of Jesus that so infuriated the Jewish leaders who wanted to kill Him (Matt. 26:64-65; Mark 14:62-63).

- **Thank God that Jesus is our Priestly King!**
 - Jesus is our ‘great priest’ who gives us confidence to enter the ‘holy places’ where God’s glory dwells (Hebrews 9:19-23).
 - Those who are in Christ Jesus do not approach a terrifying judge, but they may confidently and reverently draw near to the God of all creation because of the priestly, mediatorial work of Christ (Hebrews 12:18-24).
 - Jesus is our prayerful intercessor, and His petition is that which fastens our souls to the anchor of Christ (Romans 8:34-39).
 - Because of Jesus’ priestly work, including intercession, all that the Father has given Him shall be saved forever; those who have ‘been saved’ may rest in certainty that their salvation is secure (John 17:9-11).
 - Peter boldly claims full intention to remain steadfast in commitment to Christ (Matt. 26:33-35), but Jesus tells him where his true security is found – namely in the priestly ministry of Christ, for His effectual intercession is heard (Luke 22:31-34).

Takeaway:

Jesus is both Lord and Christ! He is the glorious King, and the effective High Priest for all those in Him.