



THE ASCENSION OF JESUS AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR US

Grace Communion International

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ASCENSION SUNDAY

**SCRIPTURE
READING:**

**ACTS 1:1-11
(ESV)**

“1 ¶ IN THE FIRST BOOK, O THEOPHILUS, I HAVE DEALT WITH ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH, 2 UNTIL THE DAY WHEN HE WAS TAKEN UP, AFTER HE HAD GIVEN COMMANDS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE APOSTLES WHOM HE HAD CHOSEN. 3 TO THEM HE PRESENTED HIMSELF ALIVE AFTER HIS SUFFERING BY MANY PROOFS, APPEARING TO THEM DURING FORTY DAYS AND SPEAKING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

4 AND WHILE STAYING WITH THEM HE 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.” 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. 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.” 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.

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.”” (Ac 1:1-11 ESV)

**THESE ARE THE WORDS OF THE LIVING
GOD**

**Thank you God for including us in the
heavenlies in the God-Man Jesus!**

AMEN

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During today's sermon, we are going to look at a very important aspect of Jesus continuing ministry.

(Next slide: quote from **What We Believe** GCI – 2018)

WHAT WE BELIEVE – SECTION 11 – THE GOSPEL

- **11.1 WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?**
- **THE GOSPEL IS THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND SALVATION BY GOD’S GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IS TO PROCLAIM THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD’S PURPOSES THROUGH THE SENDING OF THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BREAK INTO OUR FALLEN WORLD, OVERTHROW ITS EVIL, AND TRANSFORM AND REDEEM ALL WHO WERE CAPTIVE TO SIN AND EVIL’S POWER AND ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES.**

11.2 WHAT ARE THE CENTRAL EVENTS OF THE GOSPEL?

- **THE CENTRAL EVENTS OF THE GOSPEL ARE ABOUT JESUS: HIS BIRTH, LIFE, MINISTRY, CRUCIFIXION, DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION. THROUGH THESE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS, GOD'S KINGDOM HAS BROKEN INTO OUR TIME AND SPACE TO BRING ABOUT OUR SALVATION. (1 COR. 15:1-4; ROMANS 5:15; JOHN 1:12; 1 JOHN 5:11-12)**

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During the sermon, we are going to look more specifically at Jesus' ascension to heaven which occurred 40 days after his resurrection from the dead.

All of Jesus' life and ministry on the earth is important. In Mark Jesus is very open about why he came to the earth. **"43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** (Mr 10:43–45 ESV).

In preaching to the Corinthians, Paul discussed what was of first importance in discussing or talking about the good news of the gospel. **"3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,"** (1 Co 15:3–4 ESV)

Again everything in Jesus' ministry is important. He came to the earth doing the will of God the Father. His single purpose in coming to the earth was to give life to dead human beings. The sting of death or the cause of death is sin.

Sin is the effort of man to live successfully apart from God. God is a just God. He could not let the consequences of sin unpunished. Being dead, he knew that man could not give himself life. God knew that the consequences of sin had to be paid for and only God could undo its terrible consequence.

As a result, Jesus who is of the same essence as God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the oneness of the being of God, accepted to take our place and die for all of us.

Sin is a very serious thing which goes against the purpose of God for man. Living apart from God, living in darkness, man has tried unsuccessfully to undo the effects of sin on his own. Living in darkness, man lost the knowledge of his purpose, of his destiny and of how he should live. Without God, man has no reference to go by. As the book of Judges says, **"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Jud 21:25 ESV).** Without God, man becomes the poor barometer of what is right and wrong.

Jesus, God in the flesh, lived for us, died for us and was resurrected for us.

Jesus who for a while was the hope of the Jewish people, who for a while was their hero and who for a while wanted to make King over them finally rejected him and handed him over to the Romans to be killed as a common criminal.

Being sinless, he took the fall for all of us. He took upon himself our utmost darkness and hopelessness which is death.

When he died on that cross, even the Roman soldiers who killed him had to admit that this man was different from all others.

At the death of Jesus, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the son of God!" (Matt. 27)

The Centurion and soldiers had witnessed many die by crucifixion. They had never seen something like the death of Jesus.

Jesus, the Son of man, went into the grave, went into the ground, in a burial cave, seemingly trapped by impenetrable rocks and he came out alive! He conquered death.

For 40 days, he appeared to many people. He spent time with his disciples teaching them about the kingdom of God. His work on earth as the God man in our flesh was finished. After 40 days, it was time to go to heaven and to send the promise counsellor, who is like him, the Holy Spirit.

He came from a place, from God's throne, a place man had never gone before except in vision — (examples—Ezekiel, Daniel, John). He went, as a man, the son of David, to a place where man had never gone before.

His mission, even after his ascension, continues. Presently, the Holy Spirit is on the earth doing a powerful work. One day, Jesus is going to return to the earth like a thief to restore the fullness of God's kingdom.

Among the many responsibilities Jesus has as the Creator and Sustainer of this whole universe, a role given to him by God the Father, what are some of his other responsibilities, we may ask.

Now I know, as a small congregation, many are going through difficult trials at this time. Life can be very rough at times. Death is not a friend. Because we are in the image of God, we form strong bonds with people we love. When those we love our whisk from us or threatened to be taken from us through various circumstances, we mourn, we feel sad.

At those times, we must remember what Jesus has done for us. We are not alone. We are to lift our heads and not only look at the physical circumstances but actually look beyond us to the ascended glorified Jesus!

He has promised, as we look to him, that the trials of this life are temporary and are nothing compared to the glory that awaits us in the resurrection.

- We hurt when we see people being flooded out of their homes.
- We hurt when we see women being abused in the sex trades.
- We hurt when we see human trafficking.
- We hurt when we see people addicted to drugs and alcohol.
- We hurt when we see breakdowns in marriages and families.
- We feel sad and hurt and concerned when we see people lose their jobs.
- We feel sad and hurt when we see young children in hospital suffering from horrible illnesses (example Asher, a 10-year-old boy, who suffers from Crohn's disease and is presently in acute pain).
- We feel sad and hurt when we see people around us who are depressed and anxious wondering what is the real purpose of this life.

- We feel sad, hurt and often powerless when we see homeless people.
- We feel so powerless when we see people killed by senseless wars such as what is happening in the Middle East, in Yemen, in the Republic of the Congo and in too many other places.
- We feel those same feelings when we see our Christian brothers and sisters being persecuted in places such as India, North Korea, Indonesia, China in so many other places.
- It breaks our hearts to see so many unborn children being aborted in our country and in other parts of the world.
- We feel sad and powerless when we hear about parents rejecting their children.
- We hurt when in our weaknesses and in our fallen human nature, we ourselves hurt others whom we love.
- We feel sad and hurt went, through our weaknesses, we fall into sin.
- And the list goes on, doesn't it.

Again, we do not have to be hopeless because we can rejoice in the hope of the fact that Jesus is alive and well and interceding for all of us. Although he has gone to a place where man has never gone before, at the right hand of the Father, he has not abandoned us nor forsaken us. In fact, he is ever present in our lives. The sins of the whole world have been forgiven when he died on the cross for all of us (2 Cor. 5). Evil does not have the last say. God does!

For us to have the privilege of being called children of God right now and to know it, we have the joy of knowing that he lives in us and we in him through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever situation we are in, we are never forsaken, we are never abandoned people. We know that even people who are in the grips of darkness and hostile to God, alienated from God in their own minds have also been forgiven of all their past, present and future sins even if they do not know it yet. We have hope for them because, like all of us, Jesus has died for us all even when we were all his enemies. This does not stop the love of Jesus Christ for them nor the love of God the Father nor the love of the Holy Spirit, the three persons in the one being of God.

The following slide shows the goodness, the effectiveness of Jesus' love for us as High Priest.

Levitical High Priest**Reference Hebrews****Jesus the High Priest**

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Many in numbers	7:23 – 24	One
Temporary	7:23 – 24	Permanent and eternal
Sinners who had to offer sacrifices for their "own sins"	7:26-27	Holy, innocent; offers sacrifice only for others
Had to sacrifice "daily"	7:27	Sacrificed "once for all"
Offer sacrificial animals	7:27; 9:11-14	"Offered up himself"
Enter the holy places through a man-made tent and by means of the blood of goats and calves	9:11-12	Entered the holy place of the presence of God and by means of his own blood
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There are many encouraging verses in the Bible, too many to enumerate. I find the following verses so encouraging.

“23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” (Heb 7:23-25 ESV)

Chapter 7 to Chapter 10 of Hebrews shows us the role of Jesus, as our perfect high priest. This is very reassuring because Jesus is so selfless and so loving that he is willing to give us and to share with us his righteousness and sanctification.

Because the sacrifice of Jesus was so perfect, he is making us holy through God the Holy Spirit. God the Father is transforming us in the perfect image of the humanity of His Son.

We have a High Priest who in his ascension is completely humble and continues to do the will of God the Father. In him there is no pride. In him there is no reluctance to continue giving of himself. We are always on his mind because he intercedes for us continually. He not only receives our prayers as God but prays continually. He has our utmost well-being in mind. He represents all of us. That is why we do not trust in our faith which is feeble but we trust in his faithfulness towards us.

That is why, in repentance, we have to look up to him, raise our thoughts and our eyes to him and with his help to put away our pride, thinking that we know best.

The book of Hebrews tells us that by his one single offering, he has perfected for all

time those who are being sanctified”. (Heb. 10:14). In other words, we trust in the invisible work of Jesus in our life, and the life of the church and the life of the world. Whatever he does has eternal value!

Right now Jesus is seated at the right hand of God’s majestic throne in heaven. One day, all the enemies of God will be made a footstool for his feet.

The fact that Jesus has ascended to heaven brings us great joy and is worth celebrating!

Let us praise him with hearts full of thanksgiving, adoration, awe and worship!