

"Our Ascended King" (Acts 1:1-11)

Rev. Dr. Alfonso O. Espinosa

Introduction: The Ascension is an Essential Aspect of the Saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!

- A. We hear the word "Gospel" a lot, but what does it mean?: it is "good news" and is connected to the heralding or battle-cry announcement/proclamation that the victory is won. The Good News is that the war has been won; we are safe, we are victorious in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; through His victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil. We will not die, but live!**
- B. We typically connect the Lord's victory specifically to these CORE and FUNDAMENTAL Gospel/Good News aspects:**
 - 1. He took on human flesh (the Incarnation).**
 - 2. He lived and died for us (He fulfilled the Law of God for us while He lived and atoned for our sin on the cross while He died).**
 - 3. He rose from the grave (His glorious resurrection).**
- C. And these things must be proclaimed for someone to come to saving repentance: to be turned by the power of the Holy Spirit from sin to forgiveness; from death to life; from the road headed to hell, to the road headed to heaven; and to a life today that is with God instead of being against God.**
- D. HOWEVER, there is ONE MORE major part of this Gospel! It is the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- E. Consider how prominent this event is in Holy Scripture:**

Mark 16:19: "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God."

Luke 24:51: "While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven."

Note that Acts chapter 1, verse 2, verse 9, and verse 11 all refer to Jesus being "taken up" or "lifted up" in reference to His ascension.

1st Timothy 3:16: "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

Ephesians 4:10: *"He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things."*

F. The Ascension is part and parcel of the Gospel!

Part I: Why Is It So Important?

- A. It teaches us why Christ is at the CENTER of our faith.**
- B. Oftentimes, we go along with the mistaken idea that Jesus is gone now, and we imagine that it would have been much better if He had stayed with us in the same way in which He walked with His original disciples. Nothing could be more mistaken.**
- C. "If only I could see Jesus!" says the soul that despairs without the knowledge of the Gospel. We must know the significance of the His Ascension:**
 - 1. It confirms that Christ has all power and authority (Matt. 28)!**
 - 2. It proves that Christ is glorious (1st Tim. 3:16)!**
 - 3. It means that He has no limitations (Eph. 4:10); and that He fills the whole universe!**
 - 4. It means that He rules His Church, is the Head of the Church, the foundation of the Church, the power of the Church and the Life of the Church. This is why Acts is not really "the acts of the apostles," but the acts of Jesus Christ in and through the apostles! Christ is the source of all life and power. That is why He is proclaimed as the ONLY way to heaven (Acts 4:12) and why He is proclaimed as our very source of life (Acts 17:28).**

Part II: But Why Was He Slowly Taken Up?

- A. Many struggle with this. Does this mean His physical body is somewhere confined above? No!**
- B. This event demonstrated that our Lord was doing exactly what He needed to do for our sake. The first disciples saw the confirmation of Christ's prediction and promise (they saw with their own eyes His deliberate and slow ascent).**
- C. And it is recorded for us as well. We now understand that we are to expect Him to come back in the same way: we will see Him in His body, and we will see Him descend from heaven just as the first disciples saw Him ascend into heaven.**

- D. But this does not mean that Christ is limited by His physical body, because in accord with His true divinity He has absolutely no limitations. Then why ascend bodily? for the same reason that Christ conducted all of His other miracles in the body: so that His disciples would have confirmation of what was happening!
- E. If He had just suddenly disappeared – which He could have done without any problem whatsoever – the disciples would have been left in speculation and uncertainty.
- F. At the same time, just because Jesus served the limitations of our humanity by His physical ascension, does not mean that He is limited in a physical place!
- G. For example, Moses is in heaven right now, but he is yet to have a glorified body as Christ has now. For Moses that will come on the day of the resurrection, but for now – even while Moses may be seen in heaven as he was seen at the transfiguration of Christ – Moses is in heaven. Christ, however, is not in any way limited. As God, Christ who also has a physical body is everywhere present at the same time. How? Here's the simple answer: He is God!
- H. This is the difference in teaching our faith when it comes to Holy Communion. If you understand the ascension, then you understand why our confession is so biblical and so bold. Many others limit Christ's body and must therefore qualify what Holy Communion is. But if Christ is God – and He is – then why have trouble with the fact that Jesus can be in heaven, be in you, and – at the same time – come to you through His body and blood in Holy Communion? The Ascension gives us the assurance that bottom line Jesus Christ is not limited!

Part III: The Ascension is ALSO to Bless Us in Other Ways!

- A. The Ascension is connected to the gift of the Holy Spirit who testifies to Christ and who leads to Christ.
- B. That is, by the Holy Spirit, we receive constant testimony about Christ and are led to Christ, so that *we may remain in Christ!*
- C. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we continue to know Christ's life in and with us. This is why Christ attached the promise of the Holy Spirit to His Ascension:
 - 1. I am ascending in all power and glory!
 - 2. So it not too hard for me as God, to send the Holy Spirit to keep you in me and I in you!
- D. You see to have the Holy Spirit means that you have God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see John 14:15-23).
- E. But all of this is only true on account of the fact that Jesus Christ ascended with all glory, power, authority, and dominion!
- F. This means that Jesus reigns as King; and this means that you – who have the King of Kings in your hearts – share in His Kingdom!

1. It has made us a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6).
2. And our crowns are now awaiting us (2nd Timothy 4:8). A crown of righteousness for all that our Righteous King did *when He comes again in the same manner in which He ascended* – in the greatest love – will be given to you dear Christian!

Conclusion: The Ascension Means Our King Reigns!

- A. He reigns as our prophet! He gives us His Word!
- B. He reigns as our priest! He prays for you!
- C. He reigns as our king! He rules all things and holds you in the palm of His hand, and nothing can take you out of His hand!

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves you from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil is Jesus incarnate for you, Jesus lived for you, Jesus died for you, Jesus rose for you, and Jesus ascended for you! In Jesus' Name. Amen!