

~ACTS~

Lesson 3- The Ascension and Return of Jesus

As we journey through the book of Acts, the next set of verses we will be looking at is Acts 1:9-11 speaking of the ascension and the return of Jesus Christ. But before we dive into these three verses, I want to back up and start at the last chapter of Luke's gospel because he gives us a little more insight into this event. The end of Luke Volume 1 and the beginning of Luke Volume 2, the book of Acts, are very similar and if we meld these two together, we see a larger picture. Mark even adds a little nugget of Truth. So our text verse today is Acts 1:9-11, but we will read this compilation starting with Luke 24:44. Jesus is in Jerusalem speaking His final words to the Apostles before He leads them to Bethany to be taken up...

[Luke 24:44](#) Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." [Acts 1:8](#) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

[Luke 24:50](#) And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. [Acts 1:9](#) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. [Acts 1:10](#) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

[Luke 24:52](#) And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

Last week we discussed the happenings of Jesus in the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension, and we learned that He presented Himself alive by many infallible proofs and He spoke of things concerning the Kingdom. Now that Jesus has completed His redemptive work on the cross and that work being validated by His being risen from the dead, Jesus begins setting things in order for His Eternal Kingdom to come.

Remember the parable of the kingdom from last week in Luke 19, about the Nobleman who went into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom. And as the Nobleman was departing, He did two things: 1) He promised that He would return, and 2) He gave them minas, which was the means and the responsibility to do the King's business until he came back. That's what we are doing in this Church Age right now. The Nobleman is Jesus, we are His servants, the far country is Heaven, the minas are a type of His Word and His Spirit that He has given us, and we are instructed to do His Kingdom business until He returns. And of course, His Kingdom business is to proclaim His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. And when King Jesus returns, at the end of the Tribulation, He is going to set up the Millennial Kingdom and in this process of setting up His Kingdom, He is going to give His faithful servants authority to help rule and reign with Him in His Kingdom, and He is also going to evicts the bad citizens that hate Him that don't want Him to be King. And remember in Luke 19:27 how Jesus is going to do this? He says in Luke 19:27- "*But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.*" This is Righteous Judgment from the Word to all those who hate the King.

God has a very specific plan for His Kingdom and His plan includes us. He has designed the Church to play a major role in this plan, and it starts with our relationship with Him. He has invited us to be His children and to spend eternity with Him and those of us who have accepted His invitation, He has commissioned us to be fellow-workers with Him. This is the theme throughout the book of Acts, the continuation of Jesus' work of all that He began to do and to teach. And we do this by the power of the Holy Spirit who is bearing witness of the risen Christ. Look how Mark ends his gospel, [Mark 16:20](#).

That's a recap from last week and it also sets the stage for our discussion on the ascension. We see Jesus lead the disciples to the Mount of Olives in Bethany where He is taken back up to Heaven. Let's look at our text again...

Luke 24:50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

Acts 1:9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Luke 24:50 Ἐξήγαγε δὲ αὐτοὺς ἔξω ἕως εἰς Βηθανίαν· καὶ ἐπάρας τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς.

Acts 1:9 καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν, βλεπόντων αὐτῶν ἐπήρθη, καὶ νεφέλη ὑπέλαβεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.

Bethany had very special meaning to Jesus, and many times it was a place of refuge for Him because His friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived in Bethany. Many times, throughout His ministry Jesus would come to the Mount of Olives, into Gethsemane and this region of Bethany to pray and get away from the hustle of the city.

Bethany was across the Kidron Valley, and its city boundaries reached the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. The center of the town of Bethany is about 2 miles from Jerusalem. Luke tells us in Acts 1:12 that after the ascension, *"...they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey."* So this tells us that Jesus ascended somewhere in between the Mount of Olives and Bethany, but this ascension from Bethany wasn't the first time Jesus ascended to the Father during these 40 days. This just happens to be the final ascension, and it is the most dramatic because Jesus is making a point to show how He will return. But the first time He ascended to the Father after His resurrection was Sunday morning after He appeared to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb, **John 20:14-18**. How do we know Jesus actually ascended to the Father? Later on that night He told His disciples to handle Him saying, *"...Handle Me and see, for a Spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."* Luke 24:39. He wouldn't have told His disciples to handle Him if He hadn't already ascended to the Father.

What did Jesus do this first time He ascended to the Father on that Resurrection Sunday? Resurrection Sunday was also the Feast of Firstfruits. It was the day following the weekly Sabbath after Passover, **Leviticus 23:9-12**. This Feast was in remembrance of Israel's deliverance from slavery and their entrance into the Promise Land that the Lord had given them. The High Priest would wave a sheaf from the harvest as a firstfruit offering in faith that more harvest would come. And along with the sheaf offering, the High Priest would offer a Lamb without blemish. So, at the same time the High Priest is waving the firstfruits offering on earth, Jesus was in Heaven offering His blood in the Holy of Holies in Heaven to the Father as our High Priest, **Hebrews 9:11-15**. He did this so that we might receive the promise of the Eternal inheritance. The first fruit offering of more to come. Paul says Jesus is our firstfruits of more to come, **1 Cor 15:20-24**.

After Jesus offers His blood to the Father in Heaven, then He comes back to the earth that evening, and over the course of 40 days appears to those who love Him. And now at the end of the 40 days, He is making one final appearing before His final ascension. And He is going back to Heaven for two reasons: 1) to receive for Himself the Kingdom, and 2) receive the Promise of the Father.

1) He is going to a far country to receive His Kingdom. Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer and He, as our Kinsman Redeemer paid the price to redeem us with His blood. And also, as our Kinsman Redeemer, He has bought back the earth as well. The earth was originally given to Adam, but Adam gave it to Satan when He sinned. But now Jesus has authority of the earth again. And there is coming a Day when He will take back His possession. And that is in Revelation 5 when He receives the title deed to the earth from the Father, Luke 19:12; Rev 5.

And 2) He is going back to Heaven to receive the Promise of the Father so that the Holy Spirit can be poured out to us, **Acts 2:32-33, 38-39**. The Father does everything through Jesus. So Jesus receives the Holy Spirit from the Father, and then He through His High Priestly ministry pours out the Spirit to us who believe, **John 16:5-7, 12-13**.

So now, Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father and been given the Name that is above every Name, Phil 2:9-11; Eph 1:19-23. He is fully God and fully Man sitting in the Godhead as our High Priest, ever living to make intercession for us, administering the Holy Spirit to us, and mediating the New Covenant in His blood for us, **1 Tim 2:5-6, 3:16**; Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 10:12-13; 8:6; 12:1-2.

Acts 1:9 says, “**while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.**” This was a visible thing the disciples saw, but again it was only those who loved Him that got to experience this ascension. And notice the way He was taken up... by a cloud being under Him. Jesus isn’t ascending up in the sky so far that they can’t see Him anymore. No, He begins to be taken up and then a cloud receives Him and takes Him into another dimension to Heaven. This exact event was prophesied in the book of Daniel, **Daniel 7:13-14**. Jesus is going, in the clouds of Heaven, to receive His Kingdom.

Acts 1:10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

Acts 1:10 καὶ ὡς ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, πορευομένου αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο παρειστήκεισαν αὐτοῖς ἐν ἐσθήτι λευκῇ,

While Jesus is actively departing from their eyes into another dimension, and the disciples are gazing into Heaven, probably with shock and amazement, but probably sadness too. Immediately, while this is happening, two angels appear to them and Luke says they “stood alongside them,” paristemi, παρίστημι. Many people assume these are angels. And they very well could have been angels that appeared as men. That is a very common thing we see in the Bible. But I have another thought. Luke, being a very accurate historian, describes these beings specifically as “men,” andres, ἄνδρες, not angels, ἄγγελος. And Luke also uses this same description for the two angels in the empty tomb, but again, Luke doesn’t call them angels but says they are two men, δύο ἄνδρες, Luke 24:4. And also on the Mount of Transfiguration Luke mentions two men, ἄνδρες δύο, who were with Jesus and these were Moses and Elijah. Could these two men that Luke keeps describing be the same men, Moses and Elijah? Possibly...

Verse 11 tells us the comforting words of these men...

Acts 1:11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:11 οἱ καὶ εἶπον, Ἄνδρες Γαλιλαῖοι, τί ἐστήκατε ἐμβλέποντες εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν; οὗτος ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ὁ ἀναληφθεὶς ἀφ’ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, οὕτως ἐλεύσεται ὁν τρόπον ἐθεάσασθε αὐτὸν πορευόμενον εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν.

These are such comforting words. This same Jesus, 1 John 1:1- *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—*, our Savior. This same Jesus is coming back, and He is coming back in the same manner which you saw Him go. He went away in the clouds, and He is coming back in the clouds, **1 Thess 4:17**. This is the rapture, when He is catching us away unto Himself. Not the Second Coming in the Day of the Lord. Because in the Day of the Lord, at the end of the Tribulation we are riding behind Him coming from Heaven, Rev 19:14.

This has been his promise even before the cross, **John 14:1-3**. He is coming back to catch us away to be with Him forever, and He is only coming back for those who love Him, **John 14:15-18, 21**. And then Judas asks a good question in **John 14:22**, and Jesus responds in **verse 23**. We got a preview of this manifestation in these 40 days in between His resurrection and ascension. But you can tell from His response Jesus is thinking of more than just appearing after His Resurrection. That is just one aspect of this, and it is even more than Him dwelling in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, although that is another aspect of this promise. But ultimately, Jesus is assuring us that He will come back and appear to us in flesh and bone, and we will be with Him forever from that point on. Remember those beautiful words at the end of our Bible, Revelation 22:20- ... “*Surely I am coming quickly.*” Amen. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

This is our Blessed Hope. The hope of His return and Everlasting Life with Him.