

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***

*107 East Austin*

*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*

*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

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**Introduction To Ascension & Session Of Christ - Part 2**

We're gearing up for the Origin of the Church and the set up for that is the Ascension of the King. The Ascension is His movement from earth to heaven. And since the Church has a heavenly origin the King has to ascend to heaven before the Church can begin. But to understand why the King is ascending from earth to heaven we have to understand what happened in the Gospels between the King and the nation Israel. The bottom line is He came to His own and His own received Him not. That's a major theme of the Gospels. To see this turn to Matt 3. We're going somewhat backwards here. But we're going back so we can go forward. If we go back we see the Lord Jesus Christ, early in His career, offering Himself to Israel as their King and if Israel would receive Him as their King then their Kingdom would come.

However, what happened? His own didn't receive Him as their King. As a consequence the Kingdom did not come. Here's where things really begin to break into Reformed vs Dispensational camps. Here's where Reformed people get very uncomfortable with me talking this way. They get uncomfortable because in their thinking Christ came to die, period. That was His whole mission, to come and make atonement. With that we don't quarrel. He did come to do that. What we're saying, however, is that it wasn't a straight line to the cross. He arrived at the cross as a result of the negative side of a choice made by the nation Israel. He came to His own and His own received Him not. That's what resulted in the cross. That's the historical means by which God brought about the cross and the atonement.

For some strange reason this comes across as an odd idea, but if you think of history, you think of the fact that you can start out with the Creation, God offered a sinless environment to man, did He not? What did man do with it? He trashed it. So we have the Fall. Had man not trashed the environment

and had he not rebelled, would Christ have had to have died? So you see that the crucifixion works out of the negative side of a genuine human choice in Eden. Then you can go on down to the Flood. For 120 years Noah is building this ark and preaching judgment/salvation. Suppose when Noah preached everybody believed. Would the ark then have become necessary? Why judge if everyone believes and is saved? So the Flood again is the result of the negative side of a genuine human choice. The point I'm showing you is that in every one of these historical events there's a pattern of God bringing about things in His plan by means of a negative side of a choice. That's what you want to see. So when you see the cross in the Gospels come about by the negative side of Israel's choice it isn't new. This is a repeat of the same sort of thing God had done throughout history. God presents a positive option, you can have your Kingdom Israel, if you'll receive your King, they reject Him, the Kingdom doesn't come, and this ushers in the next step in the plan. It's not a plan B, this isn't God rushing to salvage something, this was the plan from all eternity God. God set up aspects of His plan to be accomplished by means of the negative side of genuine human choices. So let's watch how it works out in the Gospels.

Matt 3:2, here comes the prophet, the king-maker, and in Matt 3:2 look what he says, what's the message? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ because He's going to atone for your sins. It's true that John the Baptist knew that the Messiah would suffer, he knew that out of the OT. And there was an inkling that somehow the Messiah would die, that's true. But that's not the message. The message is an offer of the kingdom to the nation Israel. He says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," - it doesn't say it's here, it says it's at hand; it means it's at the door, so to speak, it's at the threshold of the doorway. Why should the nation repent? What does it mean to repent? It means to change your whole way of thinking. What was Israel's way of thinking? We can do this. We can work up enough righteousness to please God, so it was a culture that was dominated by a bunch of religious works. It's the old balance system, that God's going to judge, we know He's going to judge, but He has scales and if our good works outweigh our bad works, the scale tips in our direction, then He's got to forgive us and bless us. That's works, that's a system of works. The problem is, the scales never tip our way, and furthermore, this represents an arbitrary forgiveness; if God is holy how does He get rid of the bad? There's got to be a righteous Person to provide blood atonement.

John the Baptist knew all that and yet he preached this message to the house of Israel, to change their thinking, challenging them on the basis of Scripture to consider the kind of righteousness necessary to enter the Kingdom. Notice that he doesn't, in verse 2, define what this Kingdom is, and that's critical to understand about the NT. The NT never stops to define the Kingdom, which means one thing. It means they already knew what the Kingdom was. Where did they find out what the Kingdom was? From the OT. And what was the Kingdom in the OT? It started with the people asking for a king. Go back in your framework. After the Judges period the people had had it. It was chaos. They asked for a king like all the other nations. And God was hesitant to give them a king. Why? Because He didn't want them to be like all the other nations. So He said I'll give you a king but I choose the king, I put limits on this office of king. Saul was king, He cratered, it rises with David and then Solomon and then the whole thing cratered. Remember those steps in history, the rise and reign of King David, the Golden Era of Solomon, then the Kingdom was Divided, the Kingdoms went into Decline and what happened in 722 and 586BC? Exile. Why did this happen? Because the nation rejected God. The kings were corrupt, the people were corrupt, it was a mess.

And notice in the progress here, as early as King David and increasingly as the kingdom goes into decline there arises a vision among the prophets of an ideal King. The vision was a development out of the thoughts of David himself. David himself knew he was a sinner. David sinned grossly enough to be fully aware that he was not, even though he was anointed, little "a," the ideal king. We're going to see a Psalm, it's very important, and then we'll see two more Psalms, and these Psalms all originate with David, way back just before the golden era of Solomon. David foresaw this whole time of discipline and he looked beyond the discipline to an ideal king and blessing. Did he think Solomon was going to be the ideal king? No. Did he think that Solomon's son would be any better than him, Rehoboam, grandson? No. Well then who was this mysterious King, greater than David? We know it's going to be the Messiah.

And that's the vision of men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah. What was their message? Their message was just like John the Baptist's message. Repent. We've got a serious problem with all these kings and all their people. There's no one righteous, no not one. So in that situation how can the kingdom ever

come about? After they go into Exile they have no King, no Kingdom, how can they get it back? Do more good works? Build up self-righteousness? Impress God with all your little goodies? That's the environment in which this verse in Matt 3:2 comes. And it's a message of repent, have a change of mind about righteousness. And it's addressed to the whole nation because remember where he is ministering. It says in verse 1 he's ministering "in the wilderness of Judea." If you have a Bible map you see the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea and the Jordan River. There's a mountain range due to geophysical events related to the aftermath of the Flood so the mountain range runs basically north and south, and so the high ground is over to the west, the low ground is the valley where the Jordan River runs. So Jerusalem is the high ground. That's why it always says they went up to Jerusalem. No matter what direction you're traveling to get to Jerusalem you have to go up, up in elevation. John is down near the Jordan River, he's preaching there, it's very dry, it's a desert wilderness. So even though it's the wilderness, people would come out to the wilderness, especially to hear this guy.

"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," he says. Verse 3, "For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying," when did Isaiah write? He wrote back during the decline of the kingdom. What was Isaiah prophesying about? He talked about a perfectly righteous King that would come, he talked about His Kingdom, he talked about a restored nature in the kingdom, he talked about a totally restored universe with a new Jerusalem and an everlasting temple. So when you see the quote in verse 3, that tells you that John the Baptist is communicating what any Jew of his day should have understood from Isaiah. They should have understood all that.

So it wasn't necessary for Jesus and John to go into great detail to define the Kingdom. Everybody knew what the Kingdom was. So that's what is meant here. "Repent, for *that* kingdom is at hand," the last hour of Gentile domination is here and the Kingdom of Israel is about to be restored, it's at hand, if you'll repent Israel. That's John's message, He's preparing the way for the King and His Kingdom. Verse 4, "Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey," he was a weird guy, and his personality resembled Elijah a lot. The prophets were weird, I don't know why so many people want to be prophets, all of them were strange guys. Did weird stuff, look at the fashion statement this guy is making. Look at his diet. Probably some people went

out just to see a weird guy. Verse 5, “Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan,” see they were all coming out from this area, they probably had a traffic jam down the road just to go hear this guy. And it was a constant flow of people because the Greek in verse 5 is a picture of these people coming and going, this wasn’t a Saturday night revival meeting or something, this went on for an extended period of time. Verse 6, “And they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.” So he’s out in the wilderness and over near the Jordan River. Verse 7, “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism.” Now this guy really learned how to preach, not from one of the modern seminaries that teach you to do everything gently, shake hands, smile at everybody, pat everybody on the head, this is the way you get more people to come to your church. Verse 7 shows you he didn’t care who came to church, the issue was are you going to repent or not and if you’re not I don’t want to see your face, period. “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of snakes, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’” Why do you suppose he used the phrase “wrath to come” right up next to the Kingdom? What wrath is it that’s coming? It’s the wrath of the Lamb, the day of the Lord and it occurs right up next to His coming in His Kingdom. And what I want you to see is that at this point the First and Second Coming of the King are tied together, inseparably mixed at this point. We’re Monday morning quarterbacking; we know now there are two. Yeah, after the game you know that. But these people were in the game and the First and Second Comings of Christ were mixed together in their minds. You couldn’t have the Kingdom without the wrath of the day of the Lord, could you? What would clear the way so that this righteous Kingdom would be possible? It goes back to that graph about good and evil have to be separated. All that had to come before the Kingdom. So they associated wrath with the establishment of the coming Kingdom.

In verse 7 he gets really hot, when he sees these people he knows are not believers, they’re just going through a lot of religious motion and gimmicks and he says I’m not interested in you people, get out of here. Right here, what happens to the ministry, right from the start of the gospel? If this guy is the king-making prophet who ordains the Messiah, he’s already offended the power structure. So right from the start of the gospels you have a collision of God’s spokesman over against the incumbent leadership of the time.

Verse 8 goes on and he says “Therefore, bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” You say you have believed, then demonstrate it, verse 9, “and don’t suppose you can say to yourselves, we have Abraham for our father; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.” That’s a little prophetic because God has raised up children of Abraham, spiritually, in the Church Age. We don’t have Jewish genes, but through Christ we have become children of Abraham.

In verse 10 notice the judgment theme. People always think of the Kingdom of God as some gooey little positive... and it is, it’s wonderful, it’s world peace come, but look at the context. Imagine yourself going out there with a box lunch and a thermos, walking down this road to get out there to hear this guy; he’s kind of eccentric to start with, and then you hear this stuff. But as a good Jew you know what he’s talking about, you know that he’s talking about the last moment of history, and he says “the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. 11As for me, I baptize you in water for repentance; but He who is coming after me,” there’s the prophet and the subsequent King that the prophet-king makes, “is mightier than I, and I am not even fit to remove His sandals; He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Verse 12, “And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and he will thoroughly clean His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” The baptism of fire is the Second Coming of Christ and the destruction of evil. So you have this coalescence of the First and Second Coming, it is clear that He’s talking about judgment here and he’s basically telling them get ready because it’s coming, it’s right here at the door, it’s near.

Turn to Matt 4:17, notice what Jesus does. What is His first message? We’ve seen John, now we see Jesus. “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Again, the prophet and the King make the same message, these two men have the same gospel, the same message, to the same people over the same issue, “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This is a message that the end is here. If you’ll repent Israel you’re kingdom will come. Is this a genuine offer? Could God have brought in the Kingdom right here with Jesus Christ? Yes, but it didn’t work out that way.

Matt 10, later on in Jesus' ministry, now he's starting to pick up heavy resistance here. This is the time He sent out His disciples and they would confirm that the nation will reject Christ because remember, when the guys come home from the mission and Jesus brings up, in chapter 12 the blasphemy, whosoever shall sin against me is fine but don't you lie against the Holy Spirit because that's the unpardonable sin. That all came about at this point in His ministry. So we're halfway through Jesus' ministry here and He's commissioning the disciples, and he says in verse 5, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, do not enter any city of the Samaritans." Is this the same message as Matt 28? What does He tell the disciples in Matt 28? "Go into all the world." Has something changed? You bet, and that's what we're dealing with. This is a different gospel at this point. At the end of the Gospels when it's all said and done and Christ's finished work is there and He's risen from the dead, now all of a sudden the rules change; now we're going to do something different. What is going on in Matt 28 is not what's going on in Matt 10. Here he says I don't want you to go to the nations, I don't want you to go to Gentiles, but rather, verse 6, I want you to concentrate your ministry on the house of Israel. "but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This is a Jewish issue.

Think a minute, why is it a Jewish issue whether history ends or not at this point? It still is, by the way. Do you know what is impeding the end of history from coming? What did He say on Palm Sunday as He rode through Jerusalem and the people rejected Him? He says you will not see me until you say again, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt 23:39). So until Israel welcomes the Messiah, He will not return. In this case, in Matt 10 He's sending them out, there's a Jewish issue here. Israel is a key of history, Israel is the priestly nation of God and when it's not functioning right the whole world doesn't function right. That's why in Romans what does Paul say? If the casting aside of Israel be salvation, in other words, if Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ brought salvation to the Gentiles then what do you suppose is going to happen when Israel gets it together and receives Him? Then you're going to see blessing unheard of and that's the millennial kingdom.

But here in Matt 10:7, "And as you go, preach, saying," what are they saying? Again what's the message? It was the message of John, it was the message of

Jesus, and it's the message of His disciples. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Is this the gospel we know? This is a gospel that was projected during the time of Jesus' ministry to the house of Israel exclusively, a special gospel, a special announcement that the kingdom was right at their door. Go ahead, He said, <sup>8</sup>"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give." Why accompany the message with these miracles? Because they're signs that the kingdom is near. Always you have signs, miracles and wonders associated with the kingdom. He goes on and He threatens them if they reject, in verse 15, He says, "Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city," the city that rejects this message and this gospel. It's an ominous thing here. See the fierceness of this gospel message in Jesus' time.

Go to Matt 11:14, here's a strange thing; with your other hand turn to Matt 17:11. Here is one of the dilemmas of the gospel. In Matt 11:14 notice what it says, this is where John was in prison and he was kind of doubting things and Jesus said, Matt 11:11, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist," and then in verse 14 He says, "And if you care to accept *it*," the *it* being italicized, you have to supply the object of the verb, and what is it? It's the gospel of the kingdom, the message to "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," if you will accept this gospel, then John is Elijah and the prophecy has been fulfilled in John the Baptist. So there's a kinship between the spirit of Elijah and the spirit of John the Baptist. John the Baptist, in other words, is looked upon as a contingent Elijah. This is heavy stuff, this is not easy to understand what's going on here, but he's saying that if you accept John's gospel and the kingdom comes, then John is the fulfillment of what OT prophecy? That Elijah would come and then there'd be the Kingdom. So if the Kingdom is going to come in Jesus' day, you've got to have Elijah there. Well, who's the Elijah? He says if you accept John's message, John is Elijah. But if you don't, he's not.

Now in Matt 17:10, "And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'" <sup>11</sup>"And He answered and said, 'Elijah is coming and will restore all things,' <sup>12</sup>but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." The idea is



He's saying that Elijah is coming but he's already come. That's what I'm talking about, that's what I mean when I say the Gospels are hard, it's this contingency. God sends John and offers the Kingdom, John could have been Elijah if they received it, but the nation rejected it, John is not Elijah, Elijah is coming. So we have this negative volition toward the Lord Jesus Christ that sets up the cross.

That leads, one and two, the First and Second Coming, after Christ has died and rose, now look what happens. Now we've got the First and Second Coming split apart so we can see they're two different comings. But in splitting them apart, now we've got an age in between; we have a parenthetical age that is caused by Israel's rejection. Because the King came to His own and His own received Him not, the Kingdom is postponed, from a human perspective; it's still going to come but it won't come until Israel receives Him. Now we are introduced to this mystery age, the church and that's the dilemma that we're studying. Now that the King has been rejected He's going to depart and His departure is the first event we're studying in this parenthetical age. We call it the ascension of Jesus Christ.

And in the Gospel of John, John being the latest Gospel written, John is reflective, John is thinking back to what the Lord said and John says that Jesus hinted at this mysterious parenthetical age. So let's go back and look at some of what John remembered Jesus saying. Turn to John 6:62. John, of all the four Gospels, is looking at the whole thing after the fact, after the Church has begun and He's deep inside it. In John 6:61, "But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble?'<sup>62</sup>What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" Now can you imagine that statement? Let's read that slowly. What is implied in that statement? "What then would you do if you saw the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" Where was He before? In heaven. So what does this show you about Jesus? Clearly it shows you His preexistence. Jesus didn't start existing at the incarnation. Jesus preexisted the incarnation. So clearly this is showing His deity, this is a claim to deity. He was forever with the Father, He was incarnated and now He is going to ascend back to where He was before.

John 16:28, this is in the upper room when He's discussing in the last hours of His ministry, and John remembers now, as he recalls through the work of

the Holy Spirit on his mind, that Jesus said these things. So he says in verse 28, "I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father." Quite clearly Jesus is indicating in advance of the event that He's going to ascend into heaven. Remember our subject is the ascension. The ascension and session of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this same chapter of John, go back to verse 7. Now He's telling His disciples that He's going to go away but then He says, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper" or the Comforter "shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." What's this getting at? Who sends the Holy Spirit? "I send" the Spirit. I want to pause here, I want to give you a little point of church history that came out of this clause, "I will send Him to you." Do you realize that the eastern and western halves of Christianity split over this? The Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church divided, due to a lot of other reasons, but one of the divisions that remains to this day is the so-called *Filioque* clause, and that's a Latin term meaning "and the Son," and it's that section in the creeds that reads "and I believe in the Holy Spirit who was sent from the Father and the Son," etc... It puts the Son in with the Father as sending the Spirit. If you go into the eastern half of Christendom, the Greek Orthodox, that's not true, they don't believe that Jesus sent the Spirit, the Spirit was sent by the Father alone. This sounds like a little theologian detail. It isn't. Historically this has had devastating effects. Historically what happened is that wherever the *Filioque* clause was not actively pursued the full deity and authority of the risen Lord Jesus Christ was denied. That is why the eastern half of Christendom, to this day, is dominated by a mentality of totalitarianism.

This is why you could have forecast the collapse of the Soviet Union without looking at the newspaper. The Russian Orthodox Church is in the same group as the Greek Orthodox Church and you could have laid your last dollar on the fact that these people are going to have an awful time and probably will never make it to a participatory government because for centuries upon centuries upon centuries the old Russian families, from grandfather all the way back to great-grandfather and great-great grandfather, to great-great-great grandfather have said the Czar is necessary. There has to be a strong authority on earth to keep the peace and hold everything together. But why do they need a strong Caesar? That's what a Czar is; it's the word for Caesar. Why do they have such a strong idea of Caesar? Because they've got a weak

idea of Christ and if Christ decreases, Caesar increases; that's the equation. In the West you had a strong Christ, and you had Caesars, but the Caesars of the Roman Empire collapsed. Who dominated Europe in place of the Roman Empire? The Catholic Church. It was a little different but the point remains. Where you have a weak Christ you have a strong Caesar. So it does matter that the Son sent the Holy Spirit.

Verse 7, when the Lord Jesus Christ ascends to heaven, "I will send Him to you." The 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity sends the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person of the Trinity. If that's true then the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person must be a pretty big boy, and that's the whole point. If Jesus sends the Spirit then Jesus has absolute total divine authority right where He is, right now, at the Father's right hand as God-man. It is the full authority of Jesus Christ behind these verses. That's why this ascension is so, so important.

Notice in verse 8, "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me." He says when the Holy Spirit comes He's going to convict the world of three things. And this shows you what a good gospel presentation is, and what a good gospel presentation isn't. The first thing that the Holy Spirit is going to convince people of is that they do not believe in Jesus Christ. Notice it doesn't say all the little sins, moral sins, it's true those are sins, we're not making light of that but you can sit there and make those an issue and never get to the person and work of Christ. So the issue central to the Holy Spirit's ministry is unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ. A gospel presentation that is thorough, loyal and accurate to the Scripture will emphasize the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Verse 10, "and concerning righteousness," the righteousness is not man's righteousness, it's the righteousness of Jesus Christ, "because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me." How could Jesus Christ in His humanity go to the Father? Because He was perfect righteousness. So the second point of a good gospel presentation, it emphasizes that the righteous key that unlocks the door to the presence of God doesn't come from our hearts, it comes from Jesus Christ. The righteousness that saves you is located at the Father's right hand. The Protestant gospel, justification by faith, faith is credited as righteousness sitting at the right hand of the Father; the Catholic gospel is that faith and the work of the Holy Spirit in my

heart infuses righteousness in my heart which pleases the Father. It can't be both, either the Catholics are right or the Protestants are right. Either righteousness is infused into my heart by the work of the Holy Spirit or it is imputed to my account in heaven at the right hand of the Father. This gospel says that it's the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that's the locus of the righteousness, not the human heart.

The third thing, which is interesting, is that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of "judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged." Notice past tense, Satan has had it. When Jesus Christ ascended and sat at the Father's right hand, Jesus Christ now outranks Satan on the hierarchy of rank and command structure. The kingdoms of this world have been given to Jesus Christ. Who had them during the temptations of Jesus? Who offered to give the kingdoms to Him? Satan. What did Jesus say? Oh, you don't really have them to give. No, He did not, because Satan did have them. Where did he get them? From Adam, Adam originally was a dominion king but he failed to have dominion so he gave the kingdom over to Satan who became the god of this world. What is Jesus Christ doing now that He's victorious? He's taking them back. He's the great dominion King and He's taking back this world and this introduces the whole idea of why the Church is not Israel.

The Church is doing something Israel never did, couldn't do and will not do. Israel is God's earthly people with an earthly purpose and the Church is God's heavenly people with a heavenly purpose in the unseen realm of the angels. There's a spiritual war going on and the Church is in the middle of it, and it's there by divine design. The Church is doing something in this parenthetical time to prepare for that Kingdom that's going to come. It starts with the ascension and session of Christ for when Christ walked into the Father's presence and sat down at the Father's right hand, the Scriptures tell us what happened. Jesus Christ came to the Father and the Father said You are now eligible to sit at My right hand, in your humanity, "Sit." So Jesus Christ now reigns far above all principalities and powers, therefore of all creatures He has first rank. He has more stars on His shoulder than any angelic being. This is extremely important because the Church is in union with the resurrected ascended Jesus Christ.

So we come to the ascension itself, and we're going to start looking at the locus of this because I want you to see that this is a physical event that

happened outside the city of Jerusalem, just as physically real as the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is an amazing event. In the city of Jerusalem, the temple mount is on Mt Moriah, it's high ground, just below to the east you have the Kidron Valley, and you have another high ground with olive groves on it called the Mt of Olives. That's where the Garden of Gethsemane is and there are still ancient olive trees growing there, some about 1,000 years old. If you walk from Mt Moriah down across the Kidron Valley and around the Mt of Olives; just on the other side you get to Bethany. Now you can understand why he spent nights at the house there in Bethany, because if He was ministering in Jerusalem it was just a short walk around the Mt of Olives and it was kind of nice because it kept you out of the city, nice quiet area, gardens, separated you from all the hoopla of the city.

Where do you suppose Jesus rose into heaven from? Where was His ascension? The Mt of Olives, so it's right by Jerusalem, it's right between Jerusalem and Bethany, and it's only a few thousand feet from the temple. If you go there some time what blows you away is you read about all these Biblical events and you think why is it so small. It's interesting, it just strikes you, you expect this majestic thing and it's just a dinky little area. Those of you interested in going, we took a group from here in 2008 and we might go again some time. Ask those people what it was like. The place is small. You can stand on the Temple Mount and see the Mt of Olives in clear view; it's just right there. And if you go take a look it makes the Bible come alive. Here's where Jesus Christ lifted off, it was the last place His feet touched planet earth. It's really amazing when you think of it.

Here's where Mark 16:19 picks it up, the Lord Jesus, on that hill, just east of the walls, "So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. <sup>20</sup>And they went out and preached everywhere..." very abbreviated in the Gospel of Mark. Turn to Luke 24:50 and see what Luke adds to that scene. By adding I do not mean he made it up, I mean that he included more details in his writings. We're not looking at the NT as a result of some church "spin doctors." I just want to introduce when this ascension occurred and what they saw. Here's eyewitness. "And He led them out as far as Bethany," what did I say about Bethany, what was around the other side of the Mt? Bethany. So He must have walked over to Bethany and then gone up the side of the Mt. And then it says, "...and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup>And it

came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them.” It just leaves you, like what, did He just disappear? Where did He go? Something profound happened there. All those resurrection appearances ceased after the ascension of Christ, He never appears again like He did before. He appears in visions but He doesn’t appear like those resurrection scenes. One last text, Acts 1:8, Luke again, now you get even more information. We’ll start with verse 8 because that’s what you’re most familiar with. “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Then in verse 9, “And after He said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on,” so He didn’t disappear on the hill, these guys are looking at Him, they’re both standing on the hill and it’s like He’s going up in an elevator. There’s no visible elevator but His body is going up like He’s in an elevator, that’s the picture we’re getting from this; really, really weird, “He lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” So He disappears into a cloud and He’s gone. Of course, the cloud isn’t your normal cloud because the cloud in the OT is the Shechinah Glory, a manifestation of the Lord.

But the interesting fact is that Luke, in this passage, says something else happened. While these guys were looking up, and in verse 10, their jaws are probably dropped. I mean, have you ever seen somebody go up like that, they’d never seen this before, they’re sitting there with their mouths open and they’re gazing up because it tells you that if they’re gazing up, He’s got some altitude. “And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, and they also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This is Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’” I want to conclude with that last statement. He’s going to come again like He went. Did He go physically? Yes. Does this mean He’s going to come again physically. Yes. Did he go up? Yes. Does this mean He’s going to come down? Yes. Is He going to come to planet earth? Yes, not Mars or Venus, Earth. Where do you suppose on earth He’s going to come? To Palestine, to Israel. So the angelic confirmation is that just as Jesus Christ lifted off He’s going to return this way, and why people who read this text come up with the goofy idea, oh Jesus has already come, that was in AD70. Or Jesus has already come, that was the Pentecost, when the

Holy Spirit came. Nonsense! Jesus Christ hasn't come again this way.  
Where's the video. He never came like this.

This whole depiction here is a physical event, as physically real as the cross was, and yet rarely do we ever think about this in our own spiritual life. We get spooky and talk about the coming of the Holy Spirit. We mustn't just think of the coming of the Spirit as some spiritual goo, there's a physical thing here, there's Jesus Christ ascending in His physical body and sitting down at the right hand of the Father on a physical throne. Did you ever think that the physical body of Jesus Christ is located at a specific place? And it's from that specific place that the Spirit was sent. Don't get overly gooey when you think about the coming of the Spirit. There's a very physical thing happening here just like there was a very physical thing happening at the resurrection. And we'll be pushing these truths in the coming weeks as we get into this Church thing.

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