

Received Up Into Heaven

Mark brings his gospel, by the will of the Holy Spirit, to a speedy conclusion. In a few words he covers the ascension of the Lord Jesus, His reception into heaven and His session at the right hand of God. He also confirms the coming of the Holy Spirit in power and testifies to the obedience of the disciples in preaching and carrying the gospel into all the world, their ministry being confirmed with powerful signs as the Lord had promised.

Success, victory and glory

Mark's emphasis is upon success, victory and glory. The Lord Jesus had been successful in His redemptive work, purchasing with His blood all the elect committed into His care. He was victorious over His enemies. David and Paul tell us our Saviour in His ascension 'led captivity captive'. Our Saviour then entered into His glory, being seated as a man in heaven in the place of prominence at the right hand of God.

Received up into heaven

There is surely something remarkable in the phrase 'he was received up into heaven'. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not merely go back into heaven but was 'received up into heaven'. There was a reception for Him! With great joy, gladness and celebration the Saviour entered into His glory, surely as much if not more amongst the angelic hosts as at His incarnation. Christ's reception speaks of praise, welcome, honour and the triumph of a returning king lauded for victories won and spoils recovered.

Seated in heaven

It is notable, too, that the Lord Jesus is seated in heaven. There in His human body sits the Lord our God. It is a revelation almost too wonderful to contemplate that having received all power in heaven and earth the Saviour now sits in strength and authority as might a court in session, doing all His will; managing, delegating and disposing of all things in line with His own sovereign purpose. And while the Lord Jesus is physically seated in heaven He is still our mystical Head, and we His mystical body upon earth, being protected, preserved and provided for in every tiny detail.

Christ gave gifts unto men

David in Psalm 68 tells us when the Saviour ascended into heaven He 'received gifts for men'. In Ephesians Paul tells us the Saviour in ascending 'gave gifts unto men'. David looked forward to see what mercies yet lay in store for the people of God when their King should be honoured and received into glory. Paul looked back, surveyed the work of the Apostles and the spread of the gospel and realised those gifts were now amongst men in the form of God the Holy Spirit, God's manifest love, mercy and grace to all believers, and the gifts of the Spirit, variously to the Apostles and the church.

Confirming the gospel

We should not pass over Mark's confirmation that while our King is seated at the Father's right hand the Friend of sinners actively exercises His power in heaven and earth in working with and for His people 'and confirming the word with signs following'. Certainly this means helping the Apostles with whom the Lord worked in the person of the Holy Spirit; convicting, converting and gathering in the elect in all the earth. But we may properly conclude the Saviour is working still and exercising His power for your good and mine.

Signs following

The 'signs following' bore witness to the Apostolic authority delegated by the Saviour. They continue in the spiritual gifts and blessings experienced by the Lord's people throughout the ages of the church. We are saved to experience the life of Christ, we are endowed with the faith of Christ, we are partakers of the righteousness of Christ and heirs of the glory of Christ. We are blessed to have heard the gospel and blessed to believe the word preached to us. We are comforted with hope in the gospel for every needed grace and every promised glory. We are blessed indeed.

Jesus Christ our great Amen

In our service tomorrow we shall consider first, the Lord received up into heaven, second, the Lord sitting down at the right hand of God, third, the Lord confirming His word and fourth, the Lord working out His good purpose of peace and

truth in the lives of His people. We shall draw comfort from our Saviour's success, victory and glory, and strength from His power working in us. We shall mark Mark's final Amen, noting it to be a name of Jesus, 'the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God'.

Amen

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