

Ascension Day

Did You Celebrate Ascension Day? It was on Thursday. It is one of our big four events we celebrate: (1) Incarnation, (2) Cross and Resurrection (3) Ascension, and (4) Pentecost. **The ascension of Jesus** is not a myth, or literary device, or some inner spiritual idea. Rather, it is an event of immense significance for the human race. Yet, even in Christian circles, we seem to talk so little of it, or so vaguely about it.

And yet: 'Through the ascension we discover that the incarnation continues, Jesus remains united to our human nature'—Gerrit Scott Dawson.

OUR SOCIETY CONTEXT—wherever Christ ascended is not taught

The big 4 once distinguished the forward-moving, ever-learning, telos-oriented western world, from the hopeless, mystical ideas of 'circularity' in the east.

The big 4 stands over and against,

1. the relentless, restless 'push, push, push' driven politics, which has captured the Marx/Mao Chinese Communist Party.
2. Many of our University lecturers—and their students—and our society, have embraced 'mere science', while abandoning the big 4 relational framework, so important for proper thought and action.
3. Without the ascension, you are left with cranky pessimism, a bleak outlook, and no reality. The ascension is about reality, and genuine glory.

OUR HOPEFULNESS—wherever Christ is taught

Baxter Kruger says: "I knew as a child that something...Vast, Deep, Ancient and Beautiful was running through all of life. He says, we are part of a dance. An invisible river of glory is running through our lives. Christ is the Key. Joy is in knowing the Father, Son and Spirit"

Luke says that the Risen Jesus led the disciples as far out as Bethany, 'and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven' (Luke 24:50-51).

Writing to Theophilus, in his second volume about Jesus, he also says this took place on 'the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away' (Acts 1:12).

This historian, Luke likes to give us real details, including details about the ascension:

1. Geographical details: this was at **Bethany** and **Mount Olivet**, near Jerusalem.
2. Of Jesus identity, '**they worshiped him**' (Luke 24:52). This is God, the Son.
3. Of their emotions, they 'returned to Jerusalem with **great joy**' (Luke 24:52).
4. Of those present, Luke lists 11 **disciples** (Acts 1:13), 'together with **certain women**, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as **his brothers**' (Acts 1:14).
5. Of the **next period** of their lives, and of the next period of Jesus' life, we hear:
⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when **the Holy Spirit has come upon you**; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the **ends of the earth.**" (Acts 1:6-8)

6. Of Jesus departure details, think of '**glory**' **cloud** not a cumulus type cloud.
⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and **a cloud** took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." ¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet...(Acts 1:9-12).

This is to re-seat us too, in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6), with Christ, in Christ Jesus.

It is '**All About Glory**'. (*David Kowalick – the title of his book*)

7. Of the time-frame we learn that it was **40 days** following Easter Sunday: 'After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by *many convincing proofs*, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God' (Acts 1:3).

THE ASCENSION HAS TO DO WITH:

- Geography
- History
- People in history—and their witness to seeing all this—their real names mentioned
- Human emotions—joy
- Worship—of the incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended God—who reveals himself
- Theology
- Prophecy – of the near event of Pentecost (Acts 2)
- Time-frames (the kingdom of God, as the priority)
- The unseen dimension, (including heaven angelic creatures, [*demonic*] also unseen)
- Human tasks, work to do, and,
- A mandate for travelling to 'the ends of the earth', with global news bulletins for all

— These are all things that matter. Christ has to do with every aspect of life.

What matters most of all is that this *passively* crucified Jesus is truly both '**LORD**', and '**Messiah-King**' (Acts 2:36). This means that Jesus—as a man—is our saving God, and Reigns now. It is gospel-telling time. And so we do.

It is to our advantage (John 16:8) that Jesus is Reigning, by his Spirit. He is, together with the Father, by means of the Advocate—the Holy Spirit—*convincing* the world of the truth of sin, righteousness and judgment. Life within—not out of—God's good plan matters. Forever. He is calling us to proclaim it, and the world to **believe it, repent and respond** in the way we all do life. He is 'filling all things with fullness' (Ephesians) of meaning, and significance. Our faith response is, through 'the faith, and faithfulness of Christ' (Gal. 2:20).

This week: we gave thanks to God for *Ravi Zacharias*, recently gone home to the Lord. Ravi was good at philosophy, and theology, and especially loved to graciously share the logic of the gospel, (as a Christian apologist, and evangelist) with large groups of university students. But *he knew*, that it was the ascended Lord Jesus, by his Spirit, that does the *convincing*!

May the Ascended Lord continue (or begin) to work his ministry to the nations of the world, through your life, to his glory!

Prayer: '*Thank you, Oh our Father, for giving us your Son, and leaving Your spirit 'til your work on earth is done*'.

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