

**A Declaration of Those Things Which Are  
Most Surely Believed Among Us**  
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke  
Chapter 24- **Luke 24:50-53**  
355- The Importance of the Ascension of Jesus

---

July 9, 2017

**Luke 24:50-53**

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

**51 While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.**

**52 And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy,**

**53 and were continually in the temple praising God.**

To the Glory of God

Now today's sermon is my final effort at exposition in our "journey through Luke". We began this "journey" on Sunday, October 19, 2008, and we have traveled far over the last nine years and ten months, and we have seen much. And I pray that your vision of Jesus has been expanded through my feeble effort at going through every single verse over these 24 Chapters. I pray that after *visiting* and *re-visiting* this wonderful Book, 355 different Sundays, you can see Jesus better and more clearly than before, that your reverential respect and admiration and awe of the Christ has risen, and that those three qualities have served to develop a real and deep and rich and profound love for this blessed Savior, to the end that your obedience to the God/Man is based on your delight in Him, that, more than ever before, you truly are finding the highest degree of personal joy in being fully submitted to Jesus.

Now we began our journey nearly ten years ago by looking closely at this medical professional named Luke, this Gentile physician and

close companion of the Apostle Paul who was an historian, theologian, and pastor. And we saw that Dr. Luke *initially* wrote this magnificent Gospel Record and the diary of the first thirty-years of the Church, that we now call “**The Acts of the Apostles**”, to a Roman dignitary named “Theophilus”. And he began his Gospel record in **Luke 1:1-4** by telling him and us why he was doing this:

- 1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,**
- 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,**
- 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;**
- 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.**

... and then he repeated his purpose in **The Acts 1:1-2**:

- 1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,**
- 2 until the day when He was taken up *to heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.**

Now all during this “journey” we have met the many people and events that Luke compiled, many times by personally interviewing the people, that when you put all them together brings the reader to only one honest conclusion:

A Man named Jesus from Nazareth was, in fact, God Almighty in human flesh.

And, as you carefully read the details of Luke’s Record, you cannot help but come away with certain amazing Realities about this Jesus:

- ✓ He was prophesied about repeatedly in the Old Testament
- ✓ He was announced by an angel
- ✓ He was virgin born
- ✓ He was beloved by God
- ✓ He was perfectly sinless in thought, word, and deed

- ✓ He had complete Authority over the physical world
- ✓ He had complete Authority over the spiritual world
- ✓ He forgave sin
- ✓ He was the Author of the Ten Commandments
- ✓ He spoke Divine Truth with Authority
- ✓ He was the "one and only" of the Father
- ✓ He was of the "same substance" with the Father
- ✓ He was in perfect submission to the Will and Word of God
- ✓ He was perfectly obedient to the Will and Word of God
- ✓ He was perfectly led by God the Holy Spirit
- ✓ He categorically denounced the religion of the religious leaders of His day
- ✓ He was arrested by the Romans on trumped up charges by the Jews
- ✓ He was in complete control during His arrest, trial, and murder
- ✓ He was beaten unmercifully
- ✓ He was killed by Crucifixion
- ✓ While on the Cross, God took all of the sins of all of God's elect and put them on Jesus
- ✓ The full fury of the Wrath of God against those sins was poured out on Him
- ✓ He literally and physically died
- ✓ He delivered all of those in "Abraham's Bosom" to the "Bosom of the Father"
- ✓ He literally, physically and bodily rose from the dead three days later in the very same Body in which He died
- ✓ He instituted the New Covenant- bringing an end to the First
- ✓ He appeared and disappeared repeatedly over the next 40 days

... and now Dr. Luke tells us in these final four verses that Brother Andy just read to you that Jesus *literally, physically, and bodily* went up into heaven in full view of over 500 witnesses. Luke was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to tell Theophilus, and us, that Jesus **"lifted up His Hands and blessed them"**, and then **"While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven."** And, of course, this is what is now known as **"The Ascension"**.

Now *part* of the reason I am preaching about the Ascension this morning is because it is the next Passage in our journey through Luke.

And almost ten years ago, I promised you that I would look at and analyze and investigate and exegete and preach through every single verse of all twenty-four chapters of this Story of Salvation. And the Ascension is the final section of Luke's Gospel.

But *part* of the reason that I am preaching about the Ascension this morning is to hopefully illustrate to all of you, and to this Church, and to myself, three aspects of the Ascension of Jesus Christ:

1. That it is true, it really happened.
2. That it is one of the most overlooked and neglected Truths in the entire Bible.
3. That we would repent of that neglect and change.

My prayer is that, beginning this morning, that as a Church body, we would *recognize* the Ascension and *celebrate* it and *talk about* it and *think about* it and *pray about* it and *meditate* on it as being *just as* important and *just as* vital to the Glory of God, to the fulfillment of Scripture, and to our own Salvation as the Incarnation and the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus.

And let me illustrate what I am talking about. There is probably nobody in this Sanctuary this morning that doesn't know that December 25 is the day that we take every single year to remember and to celebrate the greatest miracle that God ever carried out, the moment when God Almighty *inserted* Himself into His Own Creation and actually became a *part* of that Creation by taking on human flesh and becoming Man.

The "Incarnation" is of such great importance to us because it was the moment when God chose to magnify the Glory of His Grace by forgiving and making righteous unworthy sinners by what He alone did for them. And this single Event has had such a powerful effect on Humanity that even our own pagan Government, that for the most part operates solely on humanistic principles rather than biblical principles, has created a Federal Holiday to celebrate it. So, the reason you get off work at Christmas time is *not* because it is a remembrance of the "Winter Solstice", but because we take that day to remember that Jesus was born.

Now I have no idea when Jesus was actually born, and nobody else does either. All I know is that He *was* born. And so, we join in

with others to take December 25 to *remember* and to *celebrate* and to *worship* God for becoming Man.

Likewise, many of you will know that this past April 16 was the day in 2017 that we took to celebrate the literal, physical, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And unlike the celebration of the Incarnation, the remembering and celebration of Jesus' Resurrection falls on a different day every year. And there is a lot that we could say that, but suffice it to say that the Christian Church changed the day of assembly from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day to commemorate the Resurrection every single week.

And, in addition to celebrating the Resurrection every Lord's Day, we take one day each year to especially center our minds and hearts on the fact that Jesus did not only die, but that also He rose from the dead three days later. And on that day, we are *not* remembering the Spring Equinox, and we are *not* remembering rabbits, who for some reason can somehow lay eggs. We are remembering and we are celebrating that three days after He died, Jesus literally and physically and bodily rose from the dead.

Yet I doubt that anyone here today knows that Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> of this year was the day that we *should* have been remembering and celebrating the Ascension of Jesus. I am certain that while many of us met one another with greetings like "*Merry Christmas*" and "*Happy Easter*" or "*Happy Resurrection Sunday*", we probably didn't say "*Happy Ascension Day*", or referenced it at all.

Now look, I'm not advocating that we begin another tradition. I'm simply saying that most of us would not even know that the Christian Church has historically taken the 40<sup>th</sup> day after Resurrection Sunday to celebrate and to remember and discuss the Ascension, at least in *some* way. And so, there was at least *some* regular mention of the Ascension for most of the life of the Church, that is until recently. And my question is, "*Why?*"

What happened that the Ascension has become so *de-emphasized* or outright forgotten by the people of the modern Church? And is that a good thing? And, if not, then shouldn't we fix that? Why do we concentrate on the Life, Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus, and then skip right over to the Second Coming, and just *bypass* the Ascension and all that Jesus is doing for us right now, as though it doesn't matter or has no bearing on either God's Glory or our own Salvation? I am

humiliated to tell you that until I began to prepare for this very sermon, the Ascension of Jesus was something that I didn't pay a lot of attention to either.

So, let me try to put this another way. The fact that the literal and bodily Ascension of Jesus into heaven is not discussed much anymore among believers is *not* because we are *more* spiritual or *more* biblical than those who came before us. The fact that the Ascension is usually bypassed or neglected by many in the modern Church is *not* because we love Jesus or because we are seeking to honor Him or because we are too busy winning souls or because we are trying to maintain the "once for all handed down to the saints" Faith. And I don't believe that in order for us to correctly emphasize the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus and His Second Coming, that we have to neglect the Ascension.

No, the Ascension is passed over way too much because of a gross lack of teaching and instruction about how this amazing Event not only honors God, but fits in with our own Salvation. The physical and bodily rising of Jesus into Heaven is mostly ignored today because we are *less* biblical, *less* spiritual, and *less* in tune with the things that matter the most to God.

We neglect the Ascension because we have grown far too comfortable with the issues and topics that other people have determined are more important and crucial rather than what God has said. And I pray that after this morning, we, the leadership and congregation of the Covenant of Peace Church, will repent of this grave error, and that we will begin to understand and then rejoice over and then remember and celebrate the great significance of the Ascension of Jesus Christ, both to God Himself and to us.

Now let me begin by saying that the physical Ascension of Jesus into Heaven is entirely biblical. It is what the Bible declares to be true. It is a biblical Truth, and therefore, it is part and parcel to the Apostle's Doctrine that we say we believe and teach. So, the Ascension is *not* a "peripheral" or "secondary" issue. It isn't "window dressing" or "fluff" or something that believers can either "take" or "leave". The Ascension is also not something that *some* believers hold dear, while others, who are equally saved, choose not to.

No, the Ascension is part of the Essential Truth of Scripture. So,

Jesus, not only, was born of a virgin; Jesus, not only, lived a sinless life; Jesus, not only, was God Almighty in human flesh; Jesus, not only, performed astounding miracles to verify His full Divinity; Jesus, not only, spoke perfect Truth; Jesus, not only, was arrested, beaten and tried; Jesus, not only, was killed by Crucifixion; Jesus, not only, received all of the sins of all of God's elect by imputation while on the Cross; Jesus, not only, satisfied the righteous Justice of God in absorbing all of God's Wrath against those sins; Jesus, not only, physically and literally died; Jesus, not only, literally and physically and bodily rose from the dead on the third day in the same Body in which He died; Jesus, not only, spent 40 days with the Apostles after His Resurrection; But Jesus also literally and physically rose up into Heaven in the Ascension where He is now seated at the "Right Hand" of God the Father where He is very busy continually making intercession for us, and He is there "expecting" until all His enemies are made to be His footstool, and then this same Jesus will physically and literally return to this earth to present to Himself the Church in all her glory!

And that means that Jesus didn't ascend into Heaven, "metaphorically" or "figuratively" or "spiritually" or "esoterically" or "mystically". No, the Bible is crystal clear about this: Jesus' Ascension was *literal*. It was *physical* and it was *bodily*. Jesus really and truly rose up into Heaven in His resurrected Body, which was the very *same* Body in which He died. And that means that those who teach that Jesus' Ascension was *figurative* or *spiritual* or *mystical* or *symbolic* are wrong and they are guilty of denying a prime Biblical Truth.

And so, as the "heirs of the Reformation", as those who make up the real and invisible Church of the living God, and as those who have been wondrously saved by Grace alone and through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone, we then have the duty and the responsibility and the joy to read and study and understand and celebrate and teach and remember the Ascension of Jesus.

Now let me begin by saying that it is Dr. Luke, the medical professional turned theologian and historian, that wrote the most about the Ascension. The Gospel Records of the Apostles Levi and John don't speak of it at all in connection to Jesus' Resurrection. And all that John Mark wrote is this:

### **Mark 16:19**

**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.**

Now the glaring omission of the Ascension by two of the four Gospel writers is curious because it was *not* because they didn't believe in it, because they did. Leaving out any reference of the Ascension by Levi and John was also not because the Apostles were supposedly divided about whether the Ascension had occurred, as some false teachers have suggested.

The Apostle Paul taught *extensively* about the literal Ascension and its connection to our own Salvation. For example, in **Romans 8:33-34**, he said:

**33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;  
34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.**

.. and in **Ephesians 1:18-23**

**18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,**

**19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might**

**20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,**

**21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**

**22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,**

**23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

### **Colossians 3:1**

**Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.**



### **1 Timothy 3:16**

**By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.**

... and the Apostle Peter taught the Ascension when he said this in **1 Peter 3:21-22**

**21** Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

**22** who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

And then Jesus Himself taught about the Ascension, and actually used the word three different times as recorded by the Apostle John. The first time was with Nicodemus in **John 3:13**:

### **John 3:13**

**No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.**

... and again in some of the deepest and most profound Teaching that Jesus ever conducted in **John 6:60-65**:

**60** Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

**61** But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "**Does this cause you to stumble?**

**62** "*What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?*

**63** "**It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.**

**64** "**But there are some of you who do not believe.**" For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

**65** And He was saying, "**For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.**"

... and finally with Mary Magdalene in the Garden immediately after His Resurrection in **John 20:11-18**:

**11** But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

**12** and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

**13** And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

**14** When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus.

**15** Jesus said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?**" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

**16** Jesus said to her, "**Mary!**" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

**17** Jesus said to her, "**Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'**"

**18** Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and *that* He had said these things to her.

But perhaps the most detailed account of the Ascension is found in **The Book of the Acts of the Apostles**, please go there with me and read **The Acts 1:1-11**:

**1** The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,

**2** until the day when He was taken up *to heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

**3** To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of* forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

**4** Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "**Which,**" *He said,* "**you heard of from Me;**

**5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."**

**6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"**

**7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;**

**8 but you will 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."**

**9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.**

**10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.**

**11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This 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."**

Now, from this Account we know several things:

- ✓ Jesus appeared and taught the Apostles "thing concerning the Kingdom of God" for forty-days *after* His Resurrection (verse 3).
- ✓ At this time, they were still confused about what Jesus meant (verse 6).
- ✓ Jesus promised them supernatural Power when the Holy Spirit came upon them after His Ascension (verse 8).
- ✓ This Power would enable them to be witnesses of Jesus to the world (verse 8).
- ✓ Jesus literally, physically, and bodily rose up into Heaven (verse 9).
- ✓ Jesus was lifted "up"; they saw Him go "up" into the sky; they were "gazing intently into the sky"; the two men (angels) asked them why they were looking "up"; Jesus went up into heaven and will come back from heaven (verses 9-11).

Now this last issue is important to know because it refutes the false teaching of the 12 million Mormons who say that Jesus walked

into a cloud and came over here to North America. The Bible says Jesus ascended "up" into Heaven.

So, the Ascension is tied up in what has historically been called "The Glorification of Jesus" or "The Exaltation of Jesus". The Ascension is really the *culmination* or the "high point" of Jesus' earthly Ministry over a period of about 33-1/2 years. And from that moment until He literally and physically returns to this earth, Jesus is in His Heavenly Ministry, at the Right hand of the Majesty on High, *assuring* that all who have *truly been saved* will *stay saved* until they either die or He comes back.

So, Jesus is very busy, right now, *interceding* to God the Father on our behalf, so that *none* that God chose to be saved from before the foundation of the world, and *none* that Jesus died to save, and *none* that God the Holy Spirit has drawn to Jesus and empowered to obey will be lost.

Now, we are those who believe in the concept of "Sola Scriptura", which is Latin term developed back in the fires of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation that means: "*By the Scriptures alone*". This concept says that the Christian Church is only authorized to believe and teach the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone. Therefore, all "Church Doctrine", all "Godly Reproof", all "Scriptural Correction", and all "Instruction in Righteousness" (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**) must come solely from a thorough and correct exegesis of the inspired Words of the sacred text, alone. And as you know, the issue of "Sola Scriptura" was the "Formal Cause" of the Protestant Reformation.

So, as the modern version of those who began the "protest" against unbiblical beliefs and man-made teaching, we categorically reject the idea of "papal infallibility" or "pastoral infallibility" or the infallibility of *any* human being, no matter what position or office or role in the Church he may hold. We also reject the infallibility of any utterance (whether supposedly from the Holy Spirit or not) or any statement or teaching or book or song or writing from any person outside of the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. So, in a nutshell, we ascribe to the Fact that the only place on earth where anyone may find inerrant and infallible and inspired Divine and Absolute Truth is in the pages of the Bible.

And that means that while Church Confessions and Creeds and Catechisms and Church history and rulings by Church Councils and other writings by Church leaders throughout history may be

*informative and instructive and useful* in our ongoing Sanctification, they are *not*, in any way, "inspired". These documents are nowhere near being "inerrant" or "infallible", and therefore, they make up a distant "second" in order of importance, and always, and in all cases, take a "back seat" to the Scriptures.

Now, having said that, it is useful to know that from the earliest days of Christianity the Doctrine of the Ascension has been taught and believed by the Church. So, for example, one of the earliest Creeds, the Apostle's Creed says this, in part:

[And I believe] ... in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord:  
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary:  
Suffered under Pontius Pilate;  
was crucified, dead and buried:  
He descended into hell:  
The third day he rose again from the dead:  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:

Likewise, the Nicene Creed (as updated by the Council of Constantinople in AD381) says:

[And I believe] ... in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only-begotten Son of God,  
begotten of the Father before all worlds;  
God of God, Light of Light,  
very God of very God;  
begotten, not made,  
being of one substance with the Father,  
by whom all things were made.  
Who, for us men for our Salvation,  
came down from Heaven,  
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,  
and was made Man;  
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;  
He suffered and was buried;  
and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;

and ascended into Heaven,  
and sits on the Right Hand of the Father;  
and He shall come again, with Glory,  
to judge the quick and the dead;  
whose Kingdom shall have no end.

Now notice that in all of the verses and in both Creeds, the Ascension is always linked to what Jesus is doing now in heaven, at what the writer of **Hebrews** called "The Right Hand of the Majesty on High" (**Hebrews 1:3**). Now where did that phrase come from? Jesus used it repeatedly. In **Matthew 22:44** and **26:64**, in **Mark 12:26** and **14:62**, and again in **Luke 20:42**, and **22:69** Jesus is quoting from **Psalm 110:1**, and He is likening the fulfillment of that Old Testament prophecy to Himself. So, what does **Psalm 110:1** say? Well, that prophecy came from the pen of King David as he was moved along by God the Holy Spirit 1,000 years before Jesus was born to say:

**The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."**

Now, the phrase "Right Hand" is not speaking of God's *physical* or literal "Hand" because God is "immaterial", He is Spirit and does not have a physical body. So, this phrase has to do with a "place of pre-eminence", a "place of honor", and a "place of great prestige, power, and authority". Now, it was this same David who also wrote **Psalm 16**. And in verses 8-11 David wrote:

**8 I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

**9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely.**

**10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

**11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

... and it is **Psalm 16:8-11** that the Apostle Peter was quoting in his first sermon on the balcony of the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost. And

as Peter stood to speak that day, God the Holy Spirit moved upon him to give him the ability to correctly interpret what **Psalm 16** meant (even though for 1,000 years no Jewish theologian was able to do this) when he said this in **The Acts 2:23-33**:

**23** *this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

**24** *"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.*

**25** *"For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.*

**26** *'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE;*

**27** *BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.*

**28** *'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.'*

**29** *"Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.*

**30** *"And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,*

**31** *he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.*

**32** *"This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.*

**33** *"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.*

Now it is a bit more difficult for those of us who live in America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to piece all this together. But, the phrase "Right Hand" meant a lot to the Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century who were schooled in the Order of the First or the Old Covenant that was administered by the Levitical priests. So, to understand all of this, we need to turn to the **Epistle to the Hebrews** and read from Chapter 1:

## Hebrews 1:1-4

**1** God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

**2** in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

**3** And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

**4** having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Now here is a crucial observation in the way that the writer of Hebrews originally wrote this verse: it is one clause with one subject and one main verb. Everything else serves to shed light on that one main assertion. The subject is "**He**" (or "who" in the original), that is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The one main verb is "**sat down.**" So, the one main clause of the verse is:

**"He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."**

.. and everything else in the verse serves that assertion and sheds light on that. So, the way we need to hear this is:

- ✓ "He . . . being the radiance of God's Glory . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
- ✓ "He . . . being the exact representation of God's Nature . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
- ✓ "He . . . upholding all things by the Word of His Power . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
- ✓ "He . . . having made purification of sins... sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

So, what the writer wants us to see is what makes it *fitting*, what makes it *proper*, what makes it *correct* for Jesus Christ to "sit down at the right hand of God's Majesty", especially since no Levitical priest could ever sit down. And he mentions four things:



1. He is the radiance of God's glory, so he sat down at God's right hand.
2. He is the exact representation of God's Nature, so He sat down at God's right hand.
3. He upholds all things by the Word of His Power, so He sat down at God's right hand.
4. He made purification of sins (all by Himself), so He sat down at God's right hand.

Let's look at these connections. And as we do, ask God to illumine your mind and heart to see the true Greatness and Glory of Jesus Christ.

### **1. The Purification of Sins**

First, consider the connection between the Work of Christ in making purification of sins and His "sitting down" at the right hand of God. We can see the connection made explicit for us in **Hebrews 10:12-14**:

**12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,**

**13 waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.**

**14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.**

Now what is plain from these verses is that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God to honor Him for the total completeness of His sin-bearing Work on the Cross. He "sat down at the right hand" waiting until all his enemies are subdued, *for* by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Now, the word "**for**" in verse 14 means that Jesus sits in this "place of honor, authority and power" *because* His Offering (on the Cross) accomplished *exactly* what God wanted it to.

And that means that if a wicked rebel will put his trust and hope in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as his Savior and Lord, Jesus will be united to you in a "saving relationship", and you will be given His Spirit Who will then begin a lifelong work of "sanctifying" you or making you holy. In other words, it is the Life, Death, and Resurrection that

initially brings forgiveness and Righteousness to the sinner, and it is His *on-going* Work in heaven at the Right hand of God (brought about by His Ascension) that keeps you saved by continually bringing your mind and heart and life more and more into conformity to Jesus Christ. That's what **Hebrews 10:14** means when it says, "those who are being sanctified." Those are the ones who are banking all their hope on Jesus and are being changed from one degree of Glory to the next into His Image by His Spirit (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

So, what did the "Self-offering of Christ" accomplish for them?

**... by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified**

So, in dying for us, Jesus covered our sin so completely that it can be said that we are perfected before God. That is, "in Christ" we are forgiven for all our sins, and, to use Paul's language, "acquitted and reckoned to be righteous". And not just for a while, but "for all time." This is why Christ Ascended into Heaven and was exalted to the honored place at the right hand of God. His sin-bearing Work was perfect. The Resurrection and Exaltation and Coronation of Jesus at God's right hand is a declaration and celebration of His perfect Work of sin-bearing.

So, all our worship of the risen Christ is a reflection of the total sufficiency of the Death of Christ to cover and cleanse and remove all the sins of everyone who trusts Him and enters the road to life called Sanctification. Now when it says:

**When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

... it means that the "sitting down" in this Place of "preeminence" and "honor" and "authority" and "power" was a Divine Declaration of how perfect Jesus' Work really was. So, Jesus was *fitted* for this Place of "honor" by the *fullness* and *perfection* of His sin-bearing Work for us.

And I pray that you will embrace this precious biblical reasoning. This is meant to make you strong and unshakable against the terrible temptations to doubt that your sins can be forgiven. The Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ to the Right Hand of God is meant to make you confident in the hour of trial and in the hour of death that the

purification of your sins is "sure" and "real" and "sufficient" to give you an entrance to Heaven. So, don't take lightly this biblical reasoning: Christ Ascended and reigns today in Heaven *because* He made purification of sins, once for all.

## 2. Preservation of All Things

There is another great Work that Jesus does to fit Him for this exalted place at God's right hand. **Hebrews 1:3** says:

**"He upholds all things by the word of his power." Literally: "He, . . . upholding all things by the word of his power . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."**

Now, why is this included here? Why mention that the whole universe hangs on the Word of Christ for its moment-by-moment existence? Because it would be a great mistake to think that we depend on Christ only for our *purification* and *not* also for our very *existence*. You see, there are actually two things that might keep you from entering Heaven and enjoying the Glory of God and all His Works:

1. If your sins were not forgiven.
2. If you ceased to exist and all the Works of God ceased to exist.

So, if you are to have a happy future in God's Presence, two great Works are needed:

1. There must be a Work of purification of sins.
2. There must be a Work of preserving your existence.

Now even though this may sound weird, it's very important that we hear it. Because the only reason it sounds strange is that most of us have absorbed a worldview that treats material existence and human existence as the foundational reality in the universe. What we can see and touch and smell, is what is real, and *that* is the measure of what else is real.

But the writer of **Hebrews** calls that whole approach into question. He says that the foundational Reality in the universe is *not* us and it is *not* material things that you can see and touch. This man was moved

on by God the Holy Spirit to tell us that the foundational Reality in the universe is Christ and His Word. So, that which we think is so real, is, in fact, very fragile and on the brink of extinction. It hangs by a slender thread. One Word from Christ and it goes out of existence, or one Word *unspoken* by Christ and we go out of existence.

So, the challenge before us this morning from this writer is tremendous: will we just sing along with the modern song of "human self-sufficiency"? Or will we listen to the Word of God and learn that Christ upholds all things by the Word of His Power?

If we will learn from Scripture how to see ultimate Reality, we will see that we need Christ not only to make purification for our sins, but also to preserve our souls and our bodies. And that means that Jesus is *doubly* worthy of our dependence and trust and love and worship.

When we see Him sitting at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, it is not only to honor the Work of His Purification in *saving* us, but also to honor the Word of His Power in *preserving* us. We not only owe our Purification to Jesus, we owe our entire being to Him!

### 3. Who He Is

There is one last reason **Hebrews 1:3** gives for Christ's sitting down at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, two more phrases in the verse to look at:

**"He [Christ] is the radiance of His [God's] Glory and the exact representation of His Nature."**

... or, as we saw from the original words:

**"He, being the radiance of God's Glory and the exact representation of His Nature . . . sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."**

The difference between this qualification for sitting at God's Right Hand and the other two is that those described what Jesus *did*, while this describes who He *is*. What He *does* is "**uphold all things by the Word of His Power,**" and "**make purification of sins**" by the Worth of His Blood. But Who *is* He? That's my last question this morning. Who died for sins? Who rose from the dead? Who ascended into heaven? Who

upholds the universe by the Word of His Power? Who ascended into Heaven? Who is sitting at the Right Hand of God?

Jesus, the very **“Radiance of God's Glory”** and the **“exact representation of His Nature.”** What does this mean? It's important that we take these two phrases together, because they control each other and keep us on track.

When it says that Christ is “the exact representation of God's Own Personal Nature”, we are to realize that for us to see Jesus Christ is for us to see God. Jesus said, **“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father” (John 14:9)**. And **Colossians 1:15** says, **“He is the image of the invisible God.”** So, to see what God is like, you behold Jesus Christ.

But that could be taken in an entirely wrong way. Suppose you take it to mean that Christ represents God the way a photograph or a painting represents a person, or the way an authorized letter represents the king, or the way a wax impression represents a golden ring. That would be totally wrong. And the other phrase here is meant to protect us from that misunderstanding. So, Jesus is the **“exact representation of God's nature”** *not* in the way a painting represents a person, but in the way “radiance represents glory”. Verse 3 says he is **“the radiance of God's glory.”** In other words, Jesus is God.

So, Jesus relates to God the way radiance relates to glory, or the way the rays of sunlight relate to the sun. Now keep in mind that any analogy between God and natural things is imperfect and will distort if you press it. Nevertheless, consider for example:

- ✓ There is no time that the sun exists without the beams of radiance. They cannot be separated.
- ✓ The radiance is co-eternal with the glory.
- ✓ Therefore, Christ is co-eternal with God the Father.

... so, in this case, the radiance *is* the glory radiating out. It is not different from the glory. Christ is God standing forth as *separate* but *not different* from the Father.

Thus, the Radiance is “eternally begotten”, as it were, by the glory, not created by it or made. So, if you put a solar-activated calculator in the sunlight, numbers appear on the face of the calculator. But the numbers are “created” they are “made” by the sun, but they are *not* what the sun *is*. But the rays of the sun that shine forth are a true

*extension of the sun itself.* So, Jesus is “eternally begotten” of the Father, but He was not “made” or “created”.

We see the sun by means of seeing the rays of the sun. So, we “see” God the Father by “seeing” Jesus in His ascended Glory. The rays of the sun arrive here about eight minutes after they leave the sun, and the round ball of fire that we see in the sky is the image, the exact representation, of the sun, *not* because it is a painting of the sun, but because it *is* the sun itself streaming forth in its blinding, brilliant radiance.

So, I close this morning and end this amazing journey through the Gospel of Luke by commending this great Person, Jesus Christ, to you, that you might trust in Him and love Him and worship Him. Jesus is alive today and He is sitting at the Right Hand of God with all Power and Authority, and will one day come back in great Glory. And Jesus has that exalted place because He *is* Himself God the Son, and because He upholds you and me by the Word of His Power, and because He made a perfect purification of sins.

And this is why these men, who were chosen by God to go into all the world, representing the Man, Who lived and died and rose again, could do what Luke said in the last verse of the last Chapter:

**they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.**

May we emulate them in our day, and may the Name of Christ be forever praised. Amen. Let’s pray.

© 2008-2017 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.