

The Ascension

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 7th April 2013

Intro

- This morning we will look at Christ's ascension into Heaven. We will look at Christ's teaching to His disciples before his betrayal and crucifixion concerning why He was about to ascend into Heaven.
- We will at three reasons why Jesus ascended into Heaven.

Read John 13:31-14:18

Jesus ascended:

1. To reveal to us that he is God and Has all Authority-

- **14:1 'you believe in God believe also in Me'**
- Jesus was basically saying "You believe that I am the Messiah, but I want you to further change the way you think about Me. You're used to praying to God, now start to get used to praying to Me, because I am God, and the ascension will transform the way you think about Me". It's one thing to 'say' you came from Heaven, it's another thing to prove it by going back there visibly!
- Jesus left the glories of Heaven to come to earth, humbled Himself to death on the cross to save us and now God has exalted Him back to the highest place again (see Phil 2)- Jesus went from the highest to the lowest, back to the highest again. John 17:5 "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory I had with You before the world was" Jesus always was God, but chose not to exploit His God-attributes, instead living as a servant to God the Father whilst here on earth to model this to us and in order to save us. He was the true **Secret Millionaire**, God-in-disguise, but now through the ascension they would see Him return to His throne of glory. It was the true **Return of the King**.
- **Application-** Motivation to ask Jesus for great things in prayer- boldness to ask. We know what Jesus is like- we see His compassion for people, how when He was on earth He would go without food in order to minister healing to people- this is the person we are speaking to in prayer- Jesus who loves to heal. He's the One who is ruling the universe and we can approach Him with confidence.
- 'Don't let your heart be troubled'- this is a decision we have to make ourselves- to trust in Jesus rather than worry. The disciples must have been pretty worried at some of the things Jesus was telling them, but He had it all in-hand; He even knew about Peter betraying Him 3 times and cock crowing before it happened- what are you worried about in the future? Give it to Jesus- He understands our frailties, choose instead to trust Him.
- In many places the N.T says that Jesus is exalted now to the right hand of God. What does this mean? Comes from Psalm 110- 'sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a foot-stall for your feet'.
- 'Right hand' -Jesus is crowned co-regent. You Version commentary on the Bible:

Peter indicates that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God. He draws on Psalms 110. Thus, Jesus is now crowned as king on the throne of David and has authority, much like co-regents in the ancient world:

"In the ancient world, including Rome and ancient Israel, it was standard practice for a king to serve with his son as co-regents. That is, the king would crown his son while they both lived, so there'd be no transition after the older king's death and to train the younger king to rule. It was a means of preventing a palace coup (and removing the temptation for the son to kill the father to take the throne).

Thus, to sit at the king's right hand would be to serve as co-king, having such power and authority as the father

chose to delegate. That's the image. And therefore Peter interprets Psalm 110 to refer to the appointment of a co-regent in heaven — Jesus on the throne of David." (Jay Guin, <http://oneinjesus.info/2011/12/acts-222-37-the-prophets-speak-of-jesus/>)

- Right hand speaks of inheritance- the firstborn son would have the father's right hand placed on him to get the birthright inheritance- see Gen 48 where Jacob places his right hand on the head of Ephraim and left hand on Manasseh's head (Joseph's sons). Joseph tried to rearrange the hands as Manasseh was the firstborn, but Jacob insisted because he was following the Spirit's prompting and going against custom (the firstborn has 2 portions of dad's inheritance, every other son had one portion).
- Footstall- The boy-king Tutankhamun had a footstall found in his tomb on which was engraved his enemies. There are instances in Egypt of kings physically using captives as physical footstalls at the foot of their thrones (e.g. Amenhotep II 1448-1420 BC). Joshua encouraged the leaders of the army to put their feet on the necks of the conquered kings of the land.
- What we have literally in the O.T is fulfilled spiritually in the N.T. Jesus has ultimate authority over all demonic principalities and powers- they are under His feet, and subsequently under ours, like Joshua encouraged the men of Israel to see about their physical enemies. All may not presently call Jesus Lord, but one day all will- every knee will bow.
- Film-Jack the giant slayer- the crown when worn meant the giants (ogres) had to bow down to the wearer, even if they didn't want to they still did it.
- **Application-** Know the authority we yield- demons are under our feet- authority to tell demons to leave people, to tell sickness to go in the Name of Jesus. We must not be living in fear of the power of the enemy, living in bondage to superstition as many are in Wales- Jesus has authority over all, and we belong to Him. Because of the ascension and exaltation of Christ our King really is on Heaven's throne.

2. To prepare a place for us-

- **14:2 'I go to prepare a place for you'**
- Film-Jack the giant slayer- the beanstalk was massive and joined one kingdom to another- without it the one kingdom could not access the other.
- Jesus ascended to show us the reality of the kingdom of Heaven- Heaven is a real place and that He really is the door, the gateway, the stairway to heaven.
- If Jesus had risen but not ascended it would give us hope for our bodies, but not give us any hope for a wonderful new realm of paradise to live in, but praise God there is a realm which Jesus promised the man on the cross- paradise. I don't know what you think of when you hear the word 'paradise', but I'm thinking something good, even better than the Bounty advert could portray. 1Cor 2:9- eye has not seen nor ear heard nor mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.
- Urban Myth- World Magazine reported a surprise tidbit from history, to set the record straight: the first man in space was no atheist. According to an urban legend, Yuri Gagarin, who flew a Soviet rocket in 1961, said that he didn't "see any god up here" in space. The quote has provided fodder for preachers ever since on the senselessness of atheism. Alas, poor Yuri; it appears now that he was a believer and never said such a thing.

According to World, a professor at Russia's air force academy, Valentin Petrov, claims that Gagarin "was baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church and was a believer whose roots strongly influenced him." The source of the spurious story was apparently some kind of game. Other sources attribute the claim to Nikita Khrushchev (see SOS Globe and Free Republic, for example).

- Heaven is a real place, but where is it? Jesus went up, so did Elijah, but Jesus also appeared in locked rooms and various places in His resurrection body- it is probably best to conclude that Heaven is unseen, just as angels are normally unseen, but can become visible to us at times- like when Elisha prayed that his servant's (Gehazi's ?) eyes might see the angelic (2Kings 6:17). Perhaps Heaven could be described as another dimension- a 2D drawing could discuss forever about the possibility of a third dimension- if a 3D object, such as a cube, intersected a piece of paper from the 2D world it would produce a constantly changing shape as it passed through- the 2D world would have caught a glimpse of the 3D world. Well there is a

new dimension- it is the spiritual dimension and it is more real than the world we inhabit now (a bit like the Matrix!). At times people are blessed to get glimpses into it, but one day we will live in it.

- Experiences of Heaven- John's Book of Revelation, Paul's experiences, near-death experiences- Di Foxwell, Pat Makepeace.
- **Application-** Motivation for suffering we are going through, just as Christ was motivated through His suffering for the joy set before Him- Heb 12:12. There is joy in the exaltation of Christ which we will share in, just as all those blessed enough to have a ticket to the closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games experienced when they rejoiced with the winning champions- how wonderful Heaven will be.
- Moral application- living holy lives because we are about to step into Heaven. Not getting too embroiled in the things of this present world. Set mind on heavenly things not earthly-

Col 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

- Jesus goes to prepare a place for us- we have an advocate in Heaven- Jesus, He is our great High Priest- there is a man representing us in Heaven- He understands us and forever lives to make intercession for us.
- **Application-** Do you ever wonder if you are going to make it? If He loved us enough to die in our place, He most certainly won't forget us or disown us if we are willing to continue to trust Him and take Him at His word. He's constantly praying for us, He's the author of our faith, He's also the finisher, and he finishes what He starts. Remember, like school, it's home-time soon. We really are homeward bound as Simon and Garfunkel would say. The ascension is Jesus' sign to us that He's going to take us to Heaven and soon. Soon and very soon we are going to see the King. The angels said he will come back in the same way He went, the scriptures say we will meet Him in the air- the ascension is a sign to us that He means business.

3. To pass the baton onto us-

- **14:12 'he who believes in me the works I do he will do'**
- We are to continue the works of Jesus- the baton has been passed to us through Christ's ascension.
- Jesus came as our great Apostle Heb 3:1. He was sent of the Father for a mission, like Mission Impossible- 'Here is your mission should you choose to accept it'. An apostle is a messenger sent on someone else's behalf to represent them- it is an empowered servant authorised by and representing their master. Jesus came and did only what He saw the Father doing, saying only what the Father told Him to say. Jesus even did the miracles in His Father's name (by His Father's authority). The Father empowered Jesus with the Holy Spirit to complete this task- see especially after Jesus' baptism.
- Jesus' ascension is Him finishing the task- He sat down at the right hand of the Father-i.e. He finished the task the Father set Him to do. He did the apostolic work the Father gave Him to do and now He was Himself going to commission His Church to do the same- to SEND them. We are an apostolic people- sent into the world by Jesus to testify powerfully on His behalf, with His authority and also with His power, the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why the Holy Spirit is so linked with our mission- we like the word Comforter, but the word really is "counsellor", "helper", "encourager", "advocate"- it means one called to your side, like in court having someone to represent you. The Holy Spirit will help us to remember Jesus' teaching, know what to say and will also back up what we say by working in the individuals we speak to. As we do the work God promises to be with us by His Holy

Spirit- we are not abandoned but God promises to work through us.

- John 17:18- "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world", John 20:21-"Peace to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you". And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit"
- Jesus said the Holy Spirit would not be sent unless Jesus went to the Father (John 16:7). What did He mean by this? We know that the disciples received a foretaste of the Spirit from the resurrected Lord breathing on them, but something more amazing was coming- the gift of the Spirit for ALL believers, empowering ALL believers to carry on the work of Jesus- this was promised by God through Joel. It was the age of the Spirit- the Holy Spirit for all (believers) and it was basically Jesus passing on the baton, not to just one other person, but to the whole Church, every believer. That's why Luke opens Acts by saying in His gospel He covered all that Jesus began to do, the work continues even today through us.

Application

- Have you received the Holy Spirit? Are you living a life empowered by the Holy Spirit? Do you need to be refilled today?
- Have you truly received your calling to mission? Do you have Christ's heart for the lost? Ask Him to give it to you.
- Ephesians 4 says that the ascending Lord took captivity captive and gave gifts (of people) to His Church- various ministries. Basically Christ plundered those enslaved to Satan and empowered them to work for God instead. What things has Christ saved you from and what great works has He saved and empowered you to do in His service. Are you doing this with all your heart?
- In Philippians it says that Christ became obedient even unto death. This truly is remarkable service out of love. What areas of service are we currently involved in, and what is our attitude towards serving? God exalted Jesus to the highest place once Jesus had been willing to go to the lowest place to serve the Father and our need. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, He will exalt us too if we are willing to humble ourselves in service. In what areas do we struggle to humble ourselves and in what areas are we putting this into practise effectively?

Summary

Jesus ascended:

- To reveal to us His Authority as God
- To prepare a place for us
- To pass the baton onto us

Song

There's a pageant of triumph in glory