



**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
ASCENSION,
ACTS 1:1-11**

The Importance Of The Ascension

- Have you ever heard or saw something you knew was probably important but had no idea why
 - Maybe it is a new sound from your car
 - **Genesis 2:15-16 NIV**, 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”
 - Adam had no experience with dying so he probably had no idea how bad it was
 - “Dying you will die”

The Importance Of The Ascension

- Adam had no experience with dying so he probably had no idea how bad it was
- Here you have the command of God for Adam and Eve's blessing - but
 - **Genesis 3:6 NIV**, "the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom"
 - "How bad can it be with all of these benefits?"
 - They knew God's command was important but did not adequately understand why

The Importance Of The Ascension

- We do this same thing with God's commands in Scripture today
 - We understand they are important, or God would not have commanded it
 - We even know it would be best for us
 - But we underestimate their importance and what comes along with with rebelling against them
- I think we also underestimate the importance the Ascension of Jesus and what God is showing us today through it

Scripture

- **Acts 1:1-11 NIV**, In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Scripture

- **Acts 1:1-11 NIV** 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”
 - 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.
 - 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The Importance Of The Ascension

- Today we understand the importance of the crucifixion and the resurrection from a Gentile perspective
- We also hear it from a Jewish perspective in our Scriptures today
 - The question from the disciples in **Vs. 6**, Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”
 - Seems like a logical question doesn't it
 - They had no idea what Jesus was about to do nor why

The Importance Of The Ascension

- Today we understand the importance of the crucifixion and the resurrection
 - Questions would have come to their minds like
 - Why did Jesus have to go?
 - Why not just usher in the fullness of the kingdom then and there, and start wrapping the whole thing up?
 - Wouldn't it be a great asset to our labors in spreading the Gospel Message and our understanding Scripture to have Jesus still around?
 - Wouldn't it answer the skeptic's darkest doubts about the gospel narrative

The Importance Of The Ascension

- But to the religious Jew, stopping at the resurrection would have seemed incomplete
 - The Ascension is more than Jesus rising up in the clouds
 - It is the triumphal act that crowns both the royal and priestly ministries of the Messiah
 - ❖ Demonstrating King David's heir ascending to the throne to reign over God's Kingdom
 - ❖ And the great High Priest ascending to take His royal position as holy intercessor standing between a Holy God and His sinful people

The Ascension is the triumphal coronation of the messianic king

- **Daniel 7:13-14 NIV**, 13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.
- In this vision, the Son of Man, surrounded with clouds, approaches the throne of the Ancient of Days
 - He is given the dominion of an everlasting kingdom
 - Notice that the prophecy does not show the Messiah’s rule beginning with an earthly reign, but quite specifically with a heavenly one

The Ascension is the triumphal coronation of the messianic king

- Jesus has done what good kings in the ancient world were expected to do: he has saved his people from their enemies then return home triumphantly
 - Jesus has defeated the powers of sin, Satan, and death, and now he makes his ascent to the throne prepared for Him
 - If Jesus had remained on earth and tried to claim his kingship, then he could not have been the Messiah—for the true Son of Man had been prophesied as ascending into the presence of God, there to be given his reign
 - Having accomplished these kingly acts, Jesus approaches the Ancient of Days and is crowned with splendor and honor

The Ascension is the triumphal coronation of the messianic king

- And although we still await his return, along with the fullness of his reign, that reign has already begun
 - Now that he is on the throne, seated at the right hand of the Father, the signs expected of the messianic age are being fulfilled before our eyes
 - The Spirit has been poured out
 - ❖ **Joel 2:28 NIV**, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.”
 - And the nations have begun to turn their hearts to the worship of Israel’s God

The Ascension marks the Father's acceptance of Jesus' atonement

- Biblical atonement - To suffer the penalty for sins, thereby removing the effects of sin from the repentant sinner and allowing him or her to be reconciled to God
 - To restore what was lost in the garden
- Early Christians considered Jesus' death on the cross to be a sacrifice of atonement, an act whereby our sins are fully and finally forgiven
 - **Romans 3:25 NIV**, God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

The Ascension marks the Father's acceptance of Jesus' atonement

- How would God demonstrate to His people what will happen when the Messiah makes atonement for their sins?
 - Day of Atonement Ritual
 - Biblical Ritual – Visual representation of a spiritual truth
 - With the purpose of teaching
 - And keeping it fresh in our minds
 - Before Jesus' atonement it pointed to what the Messiah would do
 - Today it points us to what the Messiah has completed
 - Today we have two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The Ascension marks the Father's acceptance of Jesus' atonement

- On the Jewish Day of Atonement there were two things needed:
 - A sacrifice to be slain in place of the person offering it and the nation
 - And a high priest to bear the sacrificial blood into the presence of God for review and acceptance
- The sacrifice for the people's sin would be killed on the great altar outside the temple doors, outside of the Holy of Holies, outside of heaven
 - Their question, "Has it been accepted?"
 - The second part of this ritual reveals the answer
 - To Jewish ears, the claim that atonement stopped at the Crucifixion would have sounded like saying that the sacrifice had been slain on the altar and left there – the atonement not completed, approved

The Ascension marks the Father's acceptance of Jesus' atonement

- The high priest would then take the blood of the innocent sacrifice and ascend the steps of the temple—to enter into the sanctuary of the Lord surrounded by billowing clouds of incense (*Lev. 16:11–13*)
 - The high priest would step up into that cloud, vanishing from the sight those watching, and then proceed into the Holy of Holies
 - There, in the presence of the mercy seat of God, the high priest would present the blood of the sacrifice, completing the ritual of atonement and interceding for the people
 - Then he would emerge, coming back down through the cloud of incense in the same way the crowds had seen him leave, bearing the assurance of forgiveness and blessing back to the people of God

The Ascension marks the Father's acceptance of Jesus'

- God's revelation here is that the Ascension was the next necessary step in the ritual after the Cross
 - This does not imply any insufficiency in what Jesus did in his saving work on the Cross
 - Only that this completed sacrifice was always intended to be followed by another step in the process, which was bearing his sacrifice into the true Holy of Holies
 - **John 20:17 NIV**, Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

The Ascension marks the Father's acceptance of Jesus' atonement

- Special mention is made of the cloud into which Jesus vanishes (*Acts 1:9*), which echoes both Daniel's prophecy of the Son of Man and the visual imagery in the Day of Atonement
- If Jesus was the Great High Priest presenting a sacrifice in the heavenly tabernacle, he would have to ascend to perform that very function

The Importance Of The Ascension

- The Day of Atonement ritual wasn't a matter of just going up into the temple and God's presence, but also coming back again
 - The High Priest would ascend the steps into the Holy of Holies
 - Perform his acts of intercession
 - Then He would descend the steps after blessing the people
 - **John 14:1-3 NIV**, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going."

The Importance Of The Ascension

- The present age of Jesus' absence, then, is the period of his active priestly service, as he continues to intercede for us in the presence of God the Father
 - **Ezekiel 22:30-31 NIV**, 30 "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. 31 So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord."
 - Likewise, the promised second coming of Jesus is not some future event that stands on its own, but the long-awaited completion of everything he has already been doing, just as was foreshadowed in the ancient priestly practice

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- **Hebrews 9:24-28 NIV**, 24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

The Importance Of The Ascension

- For Jesus to be the true messianic king he must ascend to return and claim his throne as stated in Scripture
 - For Jesus to be the Great High Priest he must complete what the Day of Atonement prophesized by bearing his sacrifice into God's presence
- The Ascension is no mere footnote to the gospel story, and neither is His return
 - It is nothing less than the climax of the Messiah's passion—and the setup for the finale of his great story of redemption



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