

Jesus Christ - His Ascension and Heavenly Reign

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[0 : 00] Amen. So before we say, let me just say a brief on this working yet,!

And this answers the question, or these are the questions that we're going to look at. Where is Jesus now, and what is he doing? So that's the questions we're going to look at today. Where is Jesus now, and what is he doing? So there are two points, and I realise looking through my notes, the first point is called A, and the second point is called 2. So that's my fault. So can you, is it readable at the back? Yeah. So we're going to look at just a few texts that describe where Jesus is now, and what he's doing for us.

Let's look first of all at Acts chapter 1, verses 1 to 11. So if anybody needs a page number, it is.

[1 : 46] Somebody sing it out. Or say it. 1, 0, 9, 2. 1, 0, 9, 2. So this is Acts chapter 1.

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven. After giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave this command. Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. So when they met together, they asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?

[3 : 01] He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority, 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.

After this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. As they were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

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.

So here is the text. After he had said this, verses 9 and 10, he was taken up as they looked, and a cloud took him away from their eyes.

And then we presume these two men dressed in white are in fact angels. And they say, Look, men of Galilee, this Jesus, the one received, why are you looking up into heaven?

[4 : 25] The same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven or received from you into heaven will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven. So a number of repetitions there.

Repetitions of looked. He was taken up as they looked, from their eyes, and you saw him go into heaven, and you will, in the same way, he will come back.

So where is Jesus now? There was a certain time when he went from earth to heaven. It was marked by angels.

A cloud received him. And the angels said, No use looking up to heaven. You've got to get on with something else. But one day, Jesus will return in the same way that he went.

And hopefully, I've got a little picture of that text. So it gives us this idea of two realms, heaven and earth.

[5 : 39] Please don't think that this boundary is something that you can cross using a spaceship. It's not that sort of boundary. They're two different worlds. The world, which to us is this world, which we're calling earth.

And heaven, the place where God is. You can't get there in a spaceship. So please understand that. But it's presented to us in this visual way of ascending, going up from earth to heaven. But it's not a geographical movement. It's really a theological movement. And here is the place where these people are up, looking, pointing. Jesus has gone, as the red arrow shows, from the place of sin and suffering to the place where God's throne is, a place of God's holiness and the place of power.

Because we would tend to think that earth is the real place and heaven is the sort of airy-fairy, namby-pamby place.

But in the Bible, it's the other way around. Heaven is the real solid place of power and decisions and action. And earth is a rather dubious, rebellious, confused place.

[6 : 59] This is where the action is, but this is where we are. So we could answer from that text the question, why don't we see Jesus now? And the answer is, he is in the place of power.

He is with his Father in heaven. We will see him again when he returns. But if you are saying, well, I won't believe in him until I see him again, then you will be too late.

Because we have seen him on earth. He has left testimony about the gospel. He died for our sins. That was done in public. And he calls on people to turn to him in faith now.

Because when he comes next time, it will be too late. Everything will be fixed. So now is the time to be believing. It will be too late to change your mind if you haven't already met Jesus by faith.

And for the believer, as I think it says in John Benton's hymn, when he comes, our wildest dreams will be excelled. Everything will be put right.

[8 : 19] All wrongs will be righted. Everything will be made new. We cannot imagine how wonderful it will be when he returns.

So a brief answer to that question, where is he? He's gone to heaven. Let's answer it. This is point two.

What is Jesus doing now? What is Jesus doing now? Well, I've got some answers to this necessarily brief. He is ruling the world.

He is ruling the world for the progress of his kingdom and the well-being of his people. Let's look at the text from which all this comes. It's Psalm 110.

Please see if you can find Psalm 110. Or if you're going to get really confused, don't bother because it's going to be up on the screen. But if you can find places in the Bible, it's worth seeing it in front of you.

[9 : 24] This is a Psalm of David. It goes way back in the history. And the Psalm sets a new program for what God will be doing.

It's a bit mysterious. It mentions later on a priest, a particular unusual priest with an unusual way of being a priest.

His name is a funny name too, Melchizedek. It actually means king of righteousness. But the bit that I'm thinking of is just the first few words where it says, the Lord says to my Lord, the Lord, that's the Lord God, it's David speaking, says to David's Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

So notice what is said there. The Lord, the Lord God is saying to David's Lord, in other words, David's successor, and indeed, David's superior.

The Lord says, come and sit at my right hand. Come and sit at the place next to me, the place of power. And do so, not forever, but until.

[10 : 51] Sit here until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. And that's the text that keeps on being referred to as something that is fulfilled in Jesus.

So let's make a little picture of that. Here's earth, the place where there is conflict and where there are enemies of the kingdom.

Here's that blue dividing line. Jesus has crossed that going from earth to heaven and it's been fulfilled. He sits at the right hand of the father.

He sits next to the father. So they should be like share power. It's a kingly idea, so I put a crown there. And from heaven there is a rule and a working of power.

I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Well, I haven't tried to draw a footstool for your feet, but here are the enemies and they are subdued.

[12 : 02] They put their spears and swords down and there is a rule from heaven which subdues the enemies of Jesus Christ. And I suspect we can understand that to happen in two ways.

One is when the enemies voluntarily become friends and the enemies which was you and me say, I was wrong.

I was wrong to oppose you. I was wrong to be against you. I was wrong to reject you. And I come and bow willingly before your throne. And that I would say is an exercise of the power that from the right hand of God and enemies are made into friends.

And I think there's another way in which this is fulfilled where one day enemies will be forced to bow and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And there will be a lot of people for whom that is an unpleasant experience because all their lives they had rejected God and when they are proved wrong they won't be at all pleased by it.

[13:20] They will still resent it but nevertheless the enemies of Jesus will be brought to bow at his feet.

So what is Jesus doing now? He is ruling the world as it says in Psalm 110. And let's see another text which speaks about the same thing.

In Ephesians 1.22 let's move to Ephesians so we're coming to the New Testament into not the place so much of prediction but the place of fulfillment.

And in Ephesians 1.22 a page number would help.

1173 1173 So in Ephesians 1.22 it's the end of a prayer where it says that Christ Ephesians 1.20 says about God the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority power and dominion and every title that can be given not only in the present age but also in the one to come and God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

[15:09] Look at that text same idea of feet and power placement from earth to heaven does it say right hand? It does indeed in verse 20.

The bit that I wanted to point out here was just right at the end why is he ruling? What is his policy statement?

What guides his rule? And the answer is God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

That's an amazing statement isn't it? He presides and rules over how much? What does it say?

All things everything. He presides and rules over everything. So here's a little list I made. He presides and rules over history.

[16:11] He presides and rules over the wars that China had over centuries.

Presides over the French Revolution. Presides over the American wars of independence. Presides over the reunification of Germany.

Presides over the rise of Islam and presumably one day it's fall. God is the God of history. He rules over everything.

Jesus Christ is placed there to rule over everything. He rules over politics. He rules over Ed Miliband forgetting a paragraph of his speech. He rules over Napoleon.

He rules over Attila the Hun rules over all the different political military movements. They've all come by permission from the power of the throne.

[17:14] He rules over disease. He is the Lord who is sovereign over the black death and the plague. He is sovereign over Ebola. He's sovereign over whether you've got a cold or whether you've got flu or whether you don't feel too good or whether you've pulled a muscle.

All these things, none of them is outside his control. He rules over disaster, earthquakes, the missing plane, climate change, all these things, not saying that he approves of them all, but they all come under his permission and under his hand.

He rules over health, he rules over government, he rules over good and he rules over evil. There's nothing that happens apart from his presiding rule and he does it for the church.

He does it for the church and I'm not claiming to understand how it all works out. Maybe one day we will but he tells us that he is ruling all these things for the good of his church for the benefit of his people for the extending of his kingdom that he will bring from even the worst evil something good for his church!

plans and thoughts for your good you might not like them at the time but they are entirely for your benefit is that true of you do you have the confidence to say this God is for me if God is for me who

can be against me it's God who justifies who is it that condemns can you say that or would you actually have to say well he rules over me but I've got no assurance that he's planning for my good time to get that right now is the time to get that right now is the time to say to God I'm not prepared to not know whether your will is this way or that way for me I want to be in your kingdom I want to be under your care I want my hand to be in your hand

[20 : 16] I want to be with you whatever it takes Lord let me be in that position that's the sort of prayer you need to be praying let's move on so he is in this place of power ruling and he is interceding in heaven at the father's throne I'll explain that word in a moment Romans 8 verse 34 is a snippet of a verse from a longer section it's here where it says if God is for us who can be against us Romans 8 34 sorry page number please 1134 thank you it's quite a long section

I'm just picking out this bit from around verse 34 it's God who justifies it's God who says they're they're okay who is it that condemns it's Christ Jesus who died more than that who was raised to life is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of Christ and he says I'm convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord but I wanted to focus on this thought what is Jesus doing now he is well he is at the right hand of God and it says he is interceding for us and here's my explanation of that thought we think of the father in heaven who is always holy and always active and let's think of us here on earth below the blue line us in our confusion and weakness and our sin and one can imagine it being put to the father what a miserable lot they are so ungrateful so fickle look at them again sinning again sinning and again sinning look at them you should cast them off you shouldn't listen to them anymore that's once too often that they've sinned get rid of them reject them and that's a powerful argument because we do sin we continue to sin

Martin Luther was aware of that wasn't he when according to the story that Satan had a long list of all his sins and showed them to him to make him feel awful but Martin Luther's reply was Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins all those sins are cancelled by his blood and the text here says it isn't just Martin Luther who presents that counter argument but Jesus himself so he interrupts that line which would lead to us being condemned he gets in the way and he says it is Jesus Christ who died those sins are paid for already and who was raised to life and who is at the right hand of the father in the exact place where this argument counts and when the argument comes get rid of them don't bother answering their prayers treat them the way their sins deserve and in the middle of that argument comes

Jesus Christ saying no I died for those people they're my people I paid for their sins father in heaven don't condemn them bless them don't reject them love them don't disown their prayers answer their prayers and we have Jesus Christ in heaven interceding for us and I want to say that the place where Jesus Christ is is the place where he deserves to be is it not he deserves to be exalted to the highest place he deserves to be given the name that is above every name he deserves to have all honour and praise and power which is what he does and it's wonderful about him and isn't it also wonderful for us that we have a saviour in that place interceding for us so let's move on to a third thought here which is sort of saying the same thing in another way but it is said in another way that he is the high priest so we're not this time thinking of him being the king like David but of being a priest if you remember like

Melchizedek both of those things let's look at Hebrews 4 14 to 16 Hebrews 4 14 to 16 do we have a page sorry is that again 120 120 page 120 again it's breaking in the middle of a section but he says Hebrews 4 14 therefore since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens Jesus the son of God let us hold firmly to the faith we profess for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are yet was without sin let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need

[27 : 24] I remember hearing Dick Lucas talk about the time of need and he said in his own Dick Lucas way what's the time of need every day isn't it every day I think that's right so the text says we have a high priest who's gone through the heavens and he sympathizes and because of that let us approach the throne I don't think God has different thrones I think this is the throne it's just described as a throne not of judgment but of grace his gracious throne as we're to understand it and receive mercy and to help us in our time of need so I'll try to put that into a picture so Jesus has

gone from earth to heaven he's seated so I've drawn a chair there he's seated and here are we in our need tearing our hair out at our wits end or whatever we might be and he says well don't don't don't don't just tear your hair out and be at your wits end he says let's do something else let's approach the throne we have a great high priest who understands what it's like who understands what you're going through in a way that nobody else on earth might do at all but he jolly well does he jolly well does he sympathizes with our weaknesses he knows all of that and we can approach him in his place of power in his compassion and I put a p there which I did do in orange but my printer is black and white so it's pointless doing it in orange so there's a p there and there's an h there and the p is an arrow going from people to the throne p for what does it say prayer an h for what comes down from the throne to us comes down help that's what comes down it's a wonderful text isn't it what is

Jesus doing in heaven for us he's waiting for us to pray and as we pray he sends help have you ever found that to be true see everybody's head nods everybody's found that to be true you don't have to be an expert prayer you really just say like Peter did help Lord and help comes so to round up round off to finish here's the question where is he what is he doing and the answer is he's in heaven and there is this period of time where he sits at the father's right hand until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet you might object to it you might say it's a bit of a letdown for Jesus after all we can't see him can we could be doing anything and I say it's not a letdown for Jesus you could say it's an obstacle to faith because I'd believe in him if I could see him and I'm going to say no now is the time for you to have faith and you might say well it's a bit of a disappointment to the believer and I'm going to say no this is a key part of how to live the Christian life now those are the objections and I'm not going to agree with a single one of them and I'm going to say a letdown for Jesus no it's the highest promotion it's where he's always deserved to be he never deserved to be on that cross he wasn't in his element when he was walking by the sea in Galilee he came from his element to be there for some kind purpose he belonged on the throne and now that's where he is the hymn says the highest place that heaven affords is his by sovereign right the king of kings and lords of lords can't remember the next bit he reigns in sovereign might or something like that but I the first bit the highest place that heaven can give is where he belongs and that's where he is now and we rejoice in that don't we don't we say amen that's exactly what he deserves and an obstacle to faith is this does this mean well now is not the time to be believing now is the time to be believing he's done his work here on earth he died for our sins he rose from the dead and it says he left many convincing proofs now is the day today is the day to believe now is the time don't wait till he comes back that's too late now is the time of salvation now is the opportunity you don't need to postpone that a single minute you could be sitting there where you're sitting now and saying Lord this is exactly what I want it's exactly what I need I need what you did on the cross I need that I should bow before you and I know even though I can't make myself do it you have the power from heaven to put me in the place that I ought to be will you please do it because that's what I most want in all of life you know like Katia said you know being a communist doesn't give you purpose and meaning we're built for more than that and you're saying Lord I want the more than that and I want it now please and is it a disappointment to the believer absolutely not this is the key to the life of the believer this is the source of daily divine strength for the believer put together those words about king and priest omnipotent compassion omnipotent compassion power that can do anything coupled with concern for people like you and me a heartfelt concern that's what we live by isn't it as Christians his omnipotent compassion we were built for daily contact with the divine and people try and get it somehow or another perhaps they look in their horoscope every day or they throw salt over their shoulder or I don't know what they might do but this is what we should be doing every day coming to the high priest who's been tempted as we are let us then approach the throne with confidence to find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need which is every day yeah and is it let me add one more thing to it the session in heaven is temporary Jesus is not going to be doing this same thing forever unchanged it is until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet do you remember how we began he went from earth to heaven and the angel says don't bother just standing there looking up you've got stuff to get on with doing but remember as you do all the stuff you need to be doing one day he will come back from heaven to earth to take you to be with him forever Jesus said I've gone to prepare a place for you and one day I will come and bring you back and we will be together forever you will be in my presence and I want you to see my glory we have a hope one day he will return a