

Ascended Hope

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[0 : 00] Let's pray before we go into the Word of God this morning. Father, we come to you this morning because there is no other place to find rest.

! To find rest and hope and strength and encouragement and encouragement and instruction apart from you and your word.

We have nothing. Apart from you. So Lord, you have exalted and magnified your word according to your name.

So as your word is preached this morning, may your name and your nature and your character be exalted as well. May it work in your people to build up your church as you have promised and guaranteed.

Because it is your promises that we rest upon in this weary life. So we come to you, Lord, this morning as your people.

[1 : 06] To be made more like you. We ask in your son's holy and precious name. Amen. Amen. Well, this past Thursday marked a theological event that I'm not sure crossed your mind.

Maybe you didn't think about it much. You probably did not celebrate it as we celebrate other wonderful times in Christianity like Christmas or Easter.

You probably didn't have a marvelous feast. You probably didn't bring your family over together and give gifts to one another. Father, I can assure you I'm as guilty as all of you might be.

But it is so incredibly significant that I pray maybe after today, it might be a little bit more of a grounding reality that maybe next year we do.

We think about it. We have the church over to think and grow and learn and celebrate all that Christ has done in the hope that we have in the gospel.

[2 : 19] So I invite you to turn to Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1 verses 9 through 11. Where after 40 days, Jesus Christ ascended to heaven.

I know that in the Old Testament, there are various feasts and celebrations. And in the New Covenant, we have some of our own.

Maybe the Ascension and next Sunday like Pentecost, maybe within our Christian lives, we can celebrate just as much as we do the incarnation, Christ coming to earth.

And what that means for our hope of salvation. And of course, Easter and the Passover and what that means for our salvation. Let me read verses 9 through 11.

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

[3 : 36] They also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking in 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.

The book of Acts in general is foundational in the story of redemption. Acts offers clarity about where the world is headed.

It affirms the purpose about the mission of the church. It breeds motivation for us to get to work. It produces praise for the work of God in his church.

And it gives discernment about the work that God gives us to do in the church as we go out into the world. And it generates courage to press on in faith.

In everything Christ is doing on this earth for his gospel. The church is world changing.

[4 : 37] A world changing institution. It is a history making institution. It is divine institution. That is guaranteed success. God's plan of salvation and redemption sets the course for all of human history.

It is not governments. It is not a world leader. It is God instituting his church in the world to go to the nations to proclaim the gospel of the gloriously resurrected Christ.

And when that work is accomplished, he's coming home and will be praised for all of eternity. So what is Luke doing in the book of Luke and Acts?

He's showing that reality from the first Adam to the second Adam. He's connecting all of Revelation history with all of human history. You don't have to have PhDs in all of different disciplines of academics.

You just have to be humble and read your Bible and trust God to know where the world is going. Why God is doing what he is doing.

[5 : 47] Luke is revealing this reality in the church through the book of Acts where it is the continued ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth. The church is God's instrument to be used and to extend the call of salvation to the ends of the earth.

And the church is going to have guaranteed success as an instrument. I know sometimes it doesn't feel like guaranteed success. When someone doesn't maybe come to faith that you've been giving them and preaching to them for days, months, maybe even years or decades.

Or the struggles that happen in churches sometimes, division that happens, disagreements with believers. But Christ is building his church.

How can we have that kind of confident assurance, steadfast hope, and persevering trust that all that work is being done currently and will be done to the end?

The ascension. The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's maybe not an area that receives as much airtime as other notable theological events like the incarnation or like the cross work.

[7 : 07] Or maybe even the resurrection. And we understand why that's the case. But the more that we study this, maybe it can elevate in our own hearts something that we can love all the more.

That brings honor and glory and praise to Christ. Because God created humanity with the ability to think logically and create opportunities.

To organize material, mobilize resources, and produce outcomes. I know you go to your job and you want to produce an outcome. You want it to be guaranteed.

You want that success. But if we are honest with ourselves sometimes, more often like to admit we connect our efforts and what we do to the success of the Great Commission.

Earthly results. Success of our own desires being fulfilled. It becomes the watermark for whether God is at work or whether the church is being successful. It's always prudent to review ministry and to think about what are we doing and how are we being faithful.

[8 : 14] But when you think about an endeavor, think about a missionary endeavor. Something like Jim Elliott and his band of missionary brothers going to the Ecuadorian jungle in the 1950s.

They attempt to make contact with the Wadani Oaka tribe. Jim and four other missionaries were speared to death the moment they made contact with them.

They were going and sacrificially giving themselves to a tribe that have never heard the gospel. They could barely communicate linguistically with them.

And they were slain. They were killed. They were murdered. They were martyred for their faith. That doesn't sound like a great outcome in the moment, does it? Was Christ not at work anymore?

Was the gospel defeated? Was Christ dethroned? No. Jim's wife Elizabeth and a team went back to the same ones who killed their husbands.

[9 : 31] And Christ's salvation spread through that tribe. The ascension helps us to have heaven's perspective.

Heaven's assessment. Despite all that we can see and all that we can evaluate. These verses bring out very rich theological points about Christ and the significance of his work on the earth.

This transition from his earthly work to his heavenly work. This confirmation of his deity. The reality of his personal shepherding and intercession.

The prophecy about his second coming. All within these little two, three, four verses here. God the Father is bringing his son back home to intimate fellowship and a relationship that was there since all of eternity.

Now, after the work has been done, Christ has been humble, obedient. And he's back to receive the glory that is rightfully his with his Father.

[10 : 41] Jesus' earthly work is accomplished. He's transitioned to this heavenly work. And he's assuring his disciples. By extension, assuring us and the church the success of the mission of the

church.

Our outline this morning is going to be two ascension truths assuring Christ's ministry in the church. Our first ascension truth this morning is going to be heaven's accepted offering in verse 9.

Then heaven's anticipated return in verses 10 through 11 and a little bit of 12. First ascension truth is heaven's accepted offering, verse 9.

And they, after he had said these things, he was lifted up. While they're looking on, a cloud received him out of their sight. So the disciples, they just had their 40-day intensive about the kingdom of God.

They've just received their instruction, their mission purpose and direction. They know where they're going to receive their power from. And then it is time for him to go back to his Father.

[11:57] He repeatedly mentioned this in the Gospels to his disciples. I'm going to be killed. I'm going to raise up. I'm going to go back to see my Father. And it begins from heaven.

Look down at the text. After he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on. A cloud received him.

He was lifted up. You can see that even in verse 11. Jesus, who has been taken up from you. This is a heavenly action.

The action is happening to Christ. I know that we say, and it's not a wrong or bad thing, that Jesus ascended to heaven. Because it's true. But notice what is happening. It is heaven descending down onto earth and taking up and receiving Jesus back into glory.

Jesus has finished his work of redemption. The perfect fulfilling of the law. The perfect sacrificial lamb. He is like a whole burnt offering in that Old Testament where the priest had to take all of it.

[13:10] Nothing was left. He was perfectly pleasing to his Father. And he's being received as a full and perfectly accepted sacrifice into heaven.

When you think of the humility of Jesus Christ, we focus on that first coming and a large part of it. We don't often enough think about what the loss was for heaven and his Father. The personal, intimate nearness of the Trinity.

And Jesus goes down onto the earth. Who he created. Subjected himself to the rebellion of his own creation. Received the torture and the punishment for our sin.

We know to a little bit, a limited degree of what separation from loved ones feels like. But we'll never know it to this degree.

[14:16] Think about what was happening. What was being experienced now. Because he returns. His glorious and eternal resurrected body taken up from earth.

He experienced the grief and the pain and the sting of death. But he's conquered it. And now he's being received up to sit at the right hand of his Father.

He prayed about this. In John 17. Give me the glory that I had from you from the beginning. The Father and the Son reunited together.

And then preparing for the launch of the Son's Bride, the church. The spiritual body of Christ going to the ends of the earth. A heavenly host welcoming where only a Savior of the world could sit.

And do only what the Savior of the world could do until his return. We kind of need to stop and ponder now. From all that has taken place, even in this one little verse.

[15:28] Connected that all that Christ has done. What does this mean? You have absolute security and certainty of your salvation.

Because Christ was accepted as this perfect offering. An unblemished lamb taking the full weight of the forgiveness of your sin on his shoulders.

And he conquered sin and death by raising from the grave. And now he's been accepted from heaven. Every sin has been forgiven. The richness of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

The guarantee of transformed glory to all of his children who believe. We have no need to doubt. No need to fear.

What Christ has done and what heaven has accepted for all of eternity. If his father has accepted him. The father will accept you.

[16:33] His child. Who is made in his son's image and conforming to his son's image. We can praise God that it is not due to our efforts.

And that you can have absolute and utter security of all salvation that he promises. Isn't that what we sung? Your precious promises from your word in this weary life.

It's not to say you won't be weary. It's not to say you won't struggle. It's not to say you won't go through trials. But this is an absolute secure reality. Because of heaven's accepted offering. But this wasn't the end of Jesus' ministry. It's just a new phase of it. He promised that he would be with them to the end in Matthew 28. He promised that he would bring the Holy Spirit. He said that he would go to his father. Multiple texts. From Old Testament to New Testament. [17:50] Reminds us. Tells us. Guarantees us. That he's sitting at the right hand of his father. Which speaks to his royal kingship. And his faithful priesthood.

That he rules. And he intercedes. For you. For his church. You can go to the Old Testament in Psalm 110.

You can go to the New Testament. And Paul's epistles. Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians. The writer of Hebrews that we just read. That's the assurance.

That we have. Of what Christ is doing right now. Until he returns. We'll be here in a couple months. But just turn to Romans chapter 8 anyways.

Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8. Start at verse 31.

[19:01] What shall we say to these things? If God is for us. Who is against us? He who did not spare his own son.

But delivered him over for us all. How will he not also with him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies.

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.

That's the absolute security of salvation. He intercedes. He appeals. He petitions. He brings requests.

He urgently asks his father of the things that we are doing that would bring him glory. Don't turn there. Don't turn there. But Hebrews chapter 7 verse 25 says, On behalf of those he is saving to those who draw near to God through Christ.

[20:09] Intercession is essentially the understanding that we have access to God. And he works on our behalf to accomplish his purposes. So he is sitting down having royal access to the throne room of heaven.

Sitting beside his father where he sovereignly leads as the head of the church. He knows whom he is saving. He knows churches he's going to be planted. He knows tribes that are going to go seen by missionaries in the middle of nowhere.

He knows the work that needs to be done here. He knows that leaders need to be raised up. He knows that they have to be sent out. He knew that BK would be preaching this morning in Indonesia. He knew it all.

And he sovereignly led that to happen in his church. He intercedes for his children, his church, his mission.

The general at mission control watching over all of the battlefield. He sits beside his father at his right hand. As you are praying. As you are ministering.

[21:12] You want to see someone to Christ. See someone come to Christ. And you are praying. God is interceding. He's being interceded by through Christ. You're praying for the mission of SBC to go forward.

To grow in unity. You're praying for the mission of church all over the world. He's interceding on all of that. There's an appeal for all of his church.

In faithful worship. Sacrificial love. Bold proclamation. Living in good deeds. Humble faith. Holy living. The transformation of souls. Gathering together in fellowship.

All of these things. Everything we are striving to do as a church. Church. He is making intercession for us. But he's not some like stoic deity.

He's not some like Greek God. That is distant. And we don't ever get access to him. He's a high priest.

[22:18] Who understands our weakness. He knows our frailty. He's already been burdened by our struggles. He's an intimate shepherd.

Who has personally walked through every single temptation that you have ever faced and will ever face. He was rejected.

Betrayed. Mocked. As he was proclaiming truth. As he was pouring out his life and himself for you.

So you are not going to experience anything. That he hasn't walked through. Or you don't need intercession for. That he hasn't already endured to the end.

Family member. Whether in your home or church family member. A neighbor. Counseling.

[23 : 21] Discipleship. The ascension. Gives you the hope. Because he was an accepted offering. Granting the security of salvation. And his personal. Overseeing of the work. And this transition from the earthly ministry to the heavenly ministry.

Gives us ministry assurance. And as if we needed more assurance than that. There's a cloud. A cloud. You're thinking of course.

Maybe he needed to. Because he's going up into the sky. It kind of makes meteorological sense. You know planes and helicopters. Hot air balloons. Those things weren't really invented yet. So that was the next best thing.

I can assure you beloved. It is so much more than that. A cloud. Theologically speaking. Brings significance. To so many theological realities.

[24 : 22] Squamish is a pretty cloudy place. We get that. A lot of the times. But I hope that this gives you a little bit more appreciation. For those clouds you see.

Almost on a daily basis. A couple of questions for you. In Genesis chapter 9. Where did God set his bow? In a cloud. Exodus 13.

How did the Lord go before Israel? Pillar of fire and a pillar of? Cloud. Exodus 19. How did the Lord appear to Israel on Mount Sinai?

A thick cloud. Exodus 40. How did God appear when his glory filled the tabernacle? A cloud. Leviticus 16.

How did God, how did Yahweh appear over the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant? A cloud. A cloud. What do clouds represent in the scriptures?

[25 : 22] At least in the Old Testament. At this point. It's the redemptive presence of God. The presence of the glory of God. When he is doing something to show his redemptive power.

This is amazing. And wouldn't you know it? It happened in the Old Testament. It's happening in the New Testament as well. A cloud covered the mountain during Jesus' transfiguration.

And with the voice of the Father's affirmation of the Son. Jesus prophesies about his second coming. When he will what? Come in the clouds with power and great glory.

This is a moment that is guaranteeing the deity of Jesus Christ. While he is being accepted as the sacrificial lamb raised in glory.

Shouldn't surprise us. God continues to do his work. Continue to show us all that is happening within this text.

[26 : 31] Go back to Acts chapter 1. Got so excited about that. Forgot to move back. What also is happening here is the transition in ministry.

One thing that we have talked about before is if God does something once. Does he normally do it again as a pattern to kind of help us understand what he is doing? Has he done this before? Has he brought someone up and then given somebody a separate or unique power. For their ministry? Of course he has.

You have Moses to Joshua. Don't turn there. Let's just listen. Deuteronomy 34.9. Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom. Because Moses had laid his hands on him.

And the sons of Israel listened to him. And did as the Lord had commanded Moses. Moses dies. Joshua is now filled with the spirit of wisdom to continue on the ministry.

[27 : 36] 2 Kings 2. Elijah to Elisha. Elisha receives a double portion of the spirit of Elijah after he's taken up in a whirlwind and continues on with his ministry.

Jesus is taken up. And now the church is going to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to continue the work of Christ. So Jesus' exaltation brings that transition from the authority of Christ on the earth to authority of Christ in heaven.

And brings and allows that authority in the church to do the work of the Great Commission to all of the nations. Because he was lifted up.

Because a cloud received him out of their sight. We have an accepted offering. A savior securing salvation. Hope.

A faithful priest to intercede. A watchful shepherd to guide. An authoritative king to protect. And a righteous judge to oversee all the earth. Beloved, we do not have to cower in fear.

[28 : 45] We are being empowered by his spirit. Jesus had to ascend so the spirit could come down. So the church could go forth as a witness to the ends of the earth.

That's why this ascension truth assures Christ's ministry. Not only because he was heaven's accepted offering. But secondly here, he was heaven's anticipated return.

Look at verse 10. And they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going. Behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

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 the same way as you have watched him go into heaven. Christ is coming back. Christ is coming back. With the same assurance of our salvation and his intimate intercession as a faithful high priest.

[29 : 49] He's coming back. The church's ministry on the earth is going to end at some point. We will be with God.

The ascension and the return are these world changing realities where the church in the middle has got a specific work to do that we can have hope in, assurance in.

But we are anticipating that return. What drives this thought?

It is Jesus saying, the gospel is going to go to the ends of the earth and then that's the end. That's it. Once that has been accomplished, which we don't know the date, we don't know the time, we don't know the country it's going to be in, we don't know the tribe, we don't know the language group, we don't know any of those things.

But Jesus said to the disciples, when the gospel goes and reaches the end of the earth, I'm coming back. So go. This is your work to accomplish.

[31 : 02] The disciples had this in mind. They were thinking towards that end. The early church, unfortunately, were kind of led astray in this. They thought that Christ had already come back.

That's what the book of... Let's bow right now and let's pray. Father, we come to you knowing the very truths that we have been preaching, Lord, that you know.

You can intercede right now. You know Mark's body. You know the struggle. You know what's happening, Father, but we do not. Help us to serve well.

Help him to get the help that he needs in this very moment, Lord. Father, please, we ask that your great grace and your mercy right now, would you offer the help that is needed?

We petition, we call out, we cry to you in this moment, Lord. Father, would you help Mark here in the name of Christ? We need your help, Lord.

[32 : 25] All right. We have got an ambulance on the way and we have many qualified professionals to help him. So let's just, again, go to the Lord. Let's pray.

Let's trust him with Mark's body right now. Heavenly Father, we come to you knowing that you have created Mark perfectly in your image.

There's purpose. And you are overseeing every moment. So, Father, would you care for Mark?

Would you give him the comfort physically? Would you help his body to recover? Father, would you allow the help that he's receiving to be discerning and wise so that he can feel much better?

Lord, we ask that the ambulance would get here quickly. He gets the help that he needs. Father, you have purpose in this and you are good in this.

[33 : 41] Help us as a church to bear this burden well with Mark and Mel. Help us to be faithful stewards of their souls and Mark's body here as we can provide help and encouragement.

Help us to be the body of Christ to them in this moment and then moving forward, Lord. So we thank you and we praise you.

In this moment, Lord, as we await for your will to be done, we can trust you in this. We ask in your son's holy and glorious name.

Amen. All right. They're taken care of in there. We can continue on in a moment and when we get updates, we will let you know.

I'm glad to hear a little bit of laughter back there as well. Mel's laugh can certainly fill up a room. It's sweet to hear. All right.

[34 : 44] Let's head back into Acts here. Let's just read again verse 10. As they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

They also said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking in the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come just in the same way as you watched him go into heaven.

We didn't think that we would need these truths this immediate in the service. But the Lord knew. But it's the same mentality and the same thought process.

If you were giving somebody the gospel, we would need it as quickly as what we needed to pray there. Ministry in the church, we would need to pray and need to be a part of one another's lives as quickly as we needed to be a part of Mark's there.

That's what the ascension does. That's what the guarantee of heaven gives to us. They gazed intently into the sky.

[36 : 02] Of course they were. What else would they be doing? What an incredible sight this would be. Beyond imagination. Beyond comprehension.

But what about these two men? Why does the scriptures continually put a couple of people in every single one of these redemptive scenarios?

Because the Old Testament teaches us what? Where two or three witnesses gather together, right? And so you have all of the disciples.

You have two men in white clothing standing looking beside them. And remember, there was two men around the tomb in the resurrection.

So there was lots happening here. There was witnesses. There was proof.

[37 : 06] Tales couldn't be told. Myths couldn't be launched. The same way. That God has guaranteed with witnesses in everything that he has done, he does it here as well.

He says, you go be my witnesses now. You have two men in white clothing. Two witnesses. And now before I return it, as prophesied in verse 11, it's going to be a guarantee that you are going to be my witnesses all over the earth.

If you look at verse 12 for a moment, this is an amazing truth as well. Because they say that he is going to be my witness. Verse 12. Verse 12.

Verse 12. Then they return to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

Zechariah 14. Zechariah 14 prophesies that Jesus is going to come back on the mount of Olives. So this is again a reality from Old Testament to New Testament.

[38 : 26] Jesus returning where his exact feet are going to touch when he comes back on the earth. Do not be deceived, beloved, if Jesus is just coming back spiritually.

He's just coming back cognitively. It's not just a Christ consciousness that comes back. It is not just a spiritual reality.

It will be a physical return of his body and his feet are going to be firmly planted at Mount Olivet. You go be witnesses.

I'm going to return in the timing that my father and I, we have set. All of this is affirming the ministry of Christ on the earth and the encouragement needed for the disciples as we now see the significance of Christ's work.

Christ is overseeing our witnessing. Christ is overseeing our witnessing. He's shepherding us in our ministry life. He's interceding in all of it. So what did the disciples do?

[39 : 46] Look at verse 14. With one mind, they're continually devoting themselves to prayer along with the women and Mary and the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.

So they just prayed. They did the very thing immediately that Christ would do for them, intercede. First thing that's happening in the church is a prayer meeting.

Because Christ is now on the throne listening to them, hearing them and pleading these prayers to his father. They were obedient. They were obedient.

They went back to Jerusalem. They united in one purpose. And they prayed because that's all they could do in that moment. This is the absolute assurance of Christ's ministry because of the ascension.

They have their Savior. They have their king. They have their priest. They have their shepherd watching over them as we do in this very moment overseeing all of our work in ministry.

[40 : 57] And that should give us that motivation, that courage to press on in faith. Let's pray. Father, you knew from eternity every single moment that would take place here.

None of this is beyond you. None of this surprised you. Father, it is a joy to kind of just hear Mark be able to speak.

And it seems like he's doing better. So we praise you for that immediate relief that you've given to him. Father, we pray that there would just be more care, more encouragement.

Pray that he'd fully recover. And help us again as a church do the very thing that the early church did. They were devoted in one mind and in unity to each other and to the life of prayer in the church. Help us to take these amazing truths in the ascension, Lord. Let us think about it, ponder it often. In the same way that we think about other glorious works of Christ.

[42 : 06] Lord, we thank you and we praise you for all that you are currently doing in this moment, in the life of this church and in this body.

May we be faithful as you are faithful to us in your son's precious name. Amen. Let's stand together as we continue to exalt Christ this morning.

Amen. Amen. Amen.