

# Jesus - Our Risen Saviour

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn for a little again to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, chapter 24, and looking again at verse 50, Luke 24 and at verse 50.

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

As we know, partings are never really easy in life, whether we're parting one from another just for a short time, or whether it is the most severe parting where death comes in and changes relationships, changes life forever.

Partings are never easy. But here we have a parting, and in a sense it's quite strange, because we find that the reaction of those who have been parted from Jesus is actually one of great joy.

And if you were to say to the disciples that when Jesus finally parts from you in this world, that your reaction would be one of great joy, they would say that's not possible.

[ 1 : 26 ] No way. But of course, that is how it actually is. And of course, we will see why that is the case. Now, Jesus' departure from this world, in many ways, couldn't have been more different to his arrival into the world, although in some respects there's a similarity in that it was very private.

Although it was a public spectacle at one level, here on the Mount of Olives, I don't believe it was a public spectacle.

We'll come to that in a moment. I believe that nobody saw the risen Jesus apart from his followers. The resurrected Jesus apart from his followers.

And that although the disciples were there on the mountain and were witness to it, that nobody else actually saw what took place there.

So, of course, we know that when Jesus came into this world, it was very symbolic in many ways that there was no room for him. You remember how they had come up to Bethlehem?

[ 2 : 43 ] And of course, by the time they got there, Bethlehem was full and it was really just in an outhouse. And that's where Jesus was born. And it's very, in many ways, a fitting picture of how it was for him.

That there was no room in the inn and there's still no room, by and large, for Jesus. Although there's many people who do love Jesus. Many people who really respect his teaching.

But by and large, in the world, there are so many people who just don't want Jesus at all. And so this idea that there was no room for Jesus being born into this world is still, I think, very, very true.

Now, the ascension of Jesus was a remarkable event. And the disciples had seen many, many remarkable events when they followed Jesus.

These were the men who had seen Jesus walk on the water. They had seen him open the eyes of the blind. They had seen him open the ears of the deaf, of releasing the tongue of the mute, of healing the paralyzed.

[ 3 : 53 ] They had seen him heal the lepers. They had even seen him raised from the dead. Three of them had been on the Mount of Transfiguration with him. And they had seen the glory of God appearing there in a wonderful way.

So they had seen many, many wonderful things in their time with Jesus over the three years. But I would imagine if you had said to the disciples afterwards, What was the greatest thing that you ever saw in your time with Jesus?

What really is what lingers in your thinking, in your mind? I'm quite sure that they would say what happened there on the Mount of Olives, where Jesus was lifted up, where he parted from us.

I think that would probably be the lingering image that would be in their mind. Again, when we say something like that, we're only speculating.

It doesn't tell us. But I would just, if you put yourself into the picture and you begin to think, If I was there, what would be of all these particular different experiences and images that are in my mind of what Jesus did, I'm sure this would have to appear as probably the greatest.

[ 5 : 09 ] So, as we say, it was a very fitting departure for an extraordinary life that was lived in this world. And, as we know, there was a 40-day period between, you know, those 40 days from the resurrection to his final ascension.

And in that period, Jesus kept reappearing to his people. It wasn't just to the immediate 11 disciples, but also we know he appeared to Mary Magdalene, he appeared to other of the women, he appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus, he appeared, Paul tells us, to 500 of his followers. And, of course, he appeared to the Apostle Paul when he was Saul of Tarsus as the risen Savior. So, in that period of 40 days, Jesus was, we believe, going back and forward between heaven and earth.

But he was not being seen. And in that period, he was instructing and teaching the church. He was dealing with the future of the kingdom.

And it tells us that, if we turn to Acts chapter 1, he presented himself often to them after his suffering by many proofs appearing to them during 40 days, speaking to them about the kingdom.

[ 6 : 36 ] So, the early church had to be witnesses of the risen Christ because it was going to be their job. They were going to have to go out into the world and make known that Jesus Christ, who was put onto the cross and died, has risen from the dead.

And they were witnesses of that. And that was part of the mark of an apostle. An apostle was somebody who was, as it were, commissioned by Jesus, sent out by Jesus, but also had to be an actual eyewitness of the risen Savior.

So, these men there, these immediate disciples, they were witnesses of Jesus, and they were also being taught by Jesus, because this was going to be, more or less from now on, it was going to be a global expanse of the gospel.

Of course, it would take time. And what we said earlier, that nobody, we don't believe anybody, saw the risen Savior apart from those who were followers, those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, to a certain extent, there's something of that, even as it is in the normal, natural way. Because it tells us in Isaiah, that they saw no beauty in him, that they should desire him.

[ 8 : 08 ] And that is still true, because there are so many people, they see nothing about Jesus. They don't see any beauty in him, they don't see anything attractive in him, they don't look at a Christian life as saying, well, that's what I want to adhere to, that's what I want.

They don't see Jesus. And as we know, it is only the Holy Spirit that can open our eyes to see the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is where we come into the whole realm of faith.

And particularly in the age that we're living in, which is such a secular age, where people can be quite dismissive, a lot of people can be quite dismissive of faith as such.

It is only by faith. And I think we've always got to realize that. I mean, the Bible tells us that it's by faith that we believe that the worlds were created. So, faith is coming into exercise all the time.

And without faith, it is impossible to please God. Faith is at the very center of everything. And this is where we have to ask that the Holy Spirit will open our minds and our hearts.

[ 9 : 16 ] Because if we've never seen Jesus by faith, if we've never come to see him as a Savior who is there, to lay hold upon the knowledge that is revealed to us in the Word of God, then we have to ask the Holy Spirit to open our heart and our minds in order to see.

And that's part of, we're told in the Bible, it's the Holy Spirit, that's his great work, is revealing to us the things of Christ. It was Christ's great work to reveal the things of the Father.

That's what Jesus is saying. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. So there's this wonderful union and linkage between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But it was Jesus' great work is revealing the things of the Father.

And it's the Holy Spirit's great work to reveal to us the things of Christ. And that's why we have to go and say, Lord, open my eyes, open my understanding.

And if we're really serious, the Lord will do that for us. So, that's like where the apostle would say, I know in whom I have believed.

[ 10 : 30 ] But, Jesus, as we said, he spoke to them about the kingdom. And this was, in a sense, like their private teaching. This was their finishing school.

Now, when Jesus is going to use anybody, he very often takes them apart for a wee while. He did that with Moses. He did it with the apostle Paul. And here he is with the disciples.

This is, as it were, the finishing school where there's this very personal, very private instruction. instruction. So, they were receiving this instruction from Jesus.

It tells us that in verses 44 and 45. Then he spoke to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, Thus it is written, and so on. And it's amazing how often, as we've said it often enough, but as we go along, and the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, the teaching from the Bible, it sometimes, it doesn't make sense to us.

[ 11 : 45 ] Sometimes it does. But then, it's later on, it's like our minds have opened a wee bit more and we say, Ah, I get it. I get it now.

I couldn't see that before, but now I understand. And that's what Jesus is doing just now because he said to them, For three years I was telling you all this. Because you've got to remember, Jesus was talking to them and teaching them throughout that three-year period.

And he says, I spoke to you from the law. I spoke to you from the prophets. I spoke to you from the Psalms. And everything that I've said, now, this is how it is.

And of course, as we say, their understanding is then being opened so that they're able to lay hold upon what he's saying. And then they come to the great moment, of course, of the ascension.

And so, Jesus leads them out as far as Bethany. And as we know, it's often suggested that Jesus took them there. That's what a lot of people suggest, that they were taken to Bethany.

[ 12 : 48 ] Jesus took them to Bethany as a kind of a mark, a testimony to that home in Bethany that was very special to Jesus, the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

And we would say in particular to Mary, who we believe from the Scripture was the most spiritually-minded follower that Jesus had, that Mary understood things that even John wasn't understanding or Peter or James.

she understood about his death and his burial. She understood these things even when the others couldn't.

Because remember in the anointing, when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus just prior to his crucifixion, Jesus said to those who were there, against, this is for the day of my burial that she's done this.

Remember how the women went, they wanted to go and anoint Jesus. Well, Mary's faith was such that she did it before he died. She recognized, she understood his teaching because Mary, we're told, was always found like at the feet of Jesus, which is often a picture of where we're maybe learning from.

[ 14 : 02 ] So, that's why we say that the Bible would indicate that she was the most spiritually-minded follower Jesus had. And then we see there, lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

Here are the hands that fed the multitude. These are the hands that were laid on the sick and brought healing. The hands that were touched, even the lepers that nobody else would touch.

These were the hands, as we say, that distributed like from the five loaves and two fish. These are the hands that were, that for three years public ministry did nothing but good in this world.

And so, these also are the hands that were nailed to the cross. And the final act of his hands in this world is that of bringing blessing to his people, to the church.

because the final thing that he does in their presence is that he lifted up his hands. That's what it tells us. And lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

[ 15 : 09 ] And that is a, it's a wonderful thing to think that the final thing that Jesus has done as he rose up into heaven was to bring his benediction blessing upon his people.

And it's a picture that we still have of the risen saviour as the one who is bringing his benediction blessing down upon his people. But there's also a very interesting picture given to us if we went to the book of the Leviticus because we find that when Aaron had been made high priest, he was the first of all the, in the run of priests.

Aaron was Moses' brother. He was the first high priest. And we read how when he was set aside for the priesthood that the first great offering where there was a sin offering and a burnt offering and a peace offering was made.

That after that was done, Aaron lifted up his hand, lifted up his hands and as he did so over the people that the glory of the Lord appeared. And it seemed to be a special moment where God is giving an authoritative blessing through Aaron on to his people.

[16:30] And of course Aaron was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. So if we see this and transfer that picture, then we have this idea that as the burnt offering and the peace offering and the sin offering, all these offerings have been made to God by Jesus Christ his Son.

Because that's of course what he had come to do. He was and is the great sin offering bringing peace to us because of that reconciliation between Father and Son.

That just as Aaron did over the people when that was concluded, so in a sense here is Jesus where he has concluded his work and he is giving this sense of it is all finished.

I have done everything that the Father asked me to do. And he is conveying blessing onto the church at this particular moment. And we believe that that blessing continues right on to right this very moment.

And so we know that as Jesus tells us that he led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands he blessed them.

[17:49] And it tells us that while he blessed them he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. Now in Acts chapter 1 it tells us and as they were looking on he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.

So it appeared that here it has this idea of him being carried up. In Acts it tells that he was lifted up which would indicate that this was an act of the father lifting the son up.

Jesus of course had been lifted up in another way before. Remember how it says if I be lifted up I will draw all men to me. Well but here is Jesus he is being lifted up into heaven.

And we're told that as this happened that they worshipped him. And again as we've said there are many wonderful scenes that we could go through in the life of Jesus.

But I think it's beautiful when you think that Jesus' last act in this world for his people is one of blessing. And that his people their last act before Jesus goes from them or as he goes from them is one of worshipping.

[19:11] Where there's just this beautiful coming together in this way. And Jesus then was carried up into heaven. And Acts tells us that a cloud took him out of their sight.

Now as we say why was there this public ascension before all the disciples? Well we believe very simply that as Jesus was appearing and reappearing over this period of 40 days the church had to realise that now he was going finally back to heaven.

That was it. And they wouldn't see him as it were in the flesh they wouldn't see him anymore in this world. And so that's why this was given and shown.

But then it tells us how he was lifted up and like clouds came round and received him. And again that's very symbolic of the presence and the glory of God.

And many of the great places in the Bible like for instance when Israel were journeying through the wilderness. They were led by a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night.

[20:27] And when the clouds stopped they would stop. And this cloud was always symbolising the presence of God. It was the same when the temple was dedicated and Solomon had finished and they had the great offering and then there was a great prayer.

And when he had finished that it tells us that a cloud filled the temple. And this of course was the coming of the presence of the Lord. Again you find it on the Mount of Transfiguration as Jesus was transfigured that this cloud descended.

And so this is a picture of the glory of God. In fact it tells us when Jesus returns again it's very interesting that as he went up as he departed this world that he went up into a cloud.

The clouds received him. But it also tells us that when he returns for the second coming that he will come it tells us in the book of Revelation he will come with clouds.

He will come with the clouds of heaven. So there's always this picture of the clouds. And it's an amazing thought because again if we go to Acts this is what it tells us.

[21:45] This Jesus this is what the angels remember two angels appeared. This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven.

that's a prophetic word that is given to us from God's word. So one day Jesus is going to return. But it will be different.

The big difference between his ascension and his return is that at the ascension as we said we believe it was just his immediate disciples who were there looking on this. When Jesus returns everybody will see him. That's what we're told again in the Bible. every eye will see him. Now again that goes beyond our understanding because you say to yourself how will every eye in every part of the world be able to see the return of Jesus. Because we sometimes you know this is where we say that I find hard to I believe it but I find hard to understand. But when his return is going to be there will be cataclysmic events taking place and this whole world we're told there's things going to be happening.

[ 23 : 03 ] So we do believe that the return of Jesus will be in such a way that every eye will see him. And that speaks to us very very much of where we are today within our own heart.

Because the return of Jesus will mean different things for different people. The return of Jesus for the church is this. It tells us in the book of Revelation that as Jesus says I'm returning soon that the church respond and say even so come Lord Jesus. In other words there's an anticipation in the heart of the church and looking forward to the return of Jesus into this world. But again if people who don't want Jesus then their attitude is obviously going to be very different.

But our God will surely come. Now again the ascension of Jesus and with this we close. The ascension of Jesus means various things. His ascension for instance means there's proof that everything that he was given by the Father to do he has done. His ascension means that Jesus has won victory over death.

[ 24 : 26 ] That's a wonderful thought. Jesus has won victory over death. And however demeaning and however awful death is it's not the end.

Jesus' ascension also shows us that Jesus has won victory over the grave. Because the grave couldn't hold him. Death excuse me death couldn't hold him. That's one of the most awful things about death is that someone that you have loved that their life has gone. But to see somebody who had died returning to life is quite an extraordinary thing. But that's what Jesus did. And Jesus is showing that he through that ascension he's saying I have won victory over death. I have won victory over the grave. The grave which appears so final. It's like the final thing where you cover over and enclosed within that tomb and that's it.

[ 25 : 33 ] But the grave Jesus shows that the grave couldn't hold him. And Jesus tells us the Bible tells us that the graves will open. There's going to come a day at the return of Jesus when the graves will open.

And the graves will give up their dead. And the sea will give up their dead. And again as we're saying as we say so often these things are mysteries to us. But the shorter catechism puts it that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory and their bodies being still united to Christ to rest in the grave to the resurrection. And people will say well how on earth can you have a body that is disintegrated into dust and how can that body rise again? I can't tell you. But my argument is always this if the God at the very beginning took the dust to the ground and made man and woman man, how is it going to be at all difficult to do exactly the same again with the dust of our own bodies?

[ 26 : 46 ] I know that we cannot understand it because it goes beyond our understanding but it's what we believe, it's what the Bible tells us and that's why faith is so important because it brings another dimension to life, it brings a scope to life that this world in and of itself can't bring, it's where there's this development of our mind to understand these things and again his ascension showed that he had won victory over sin because that was why he came, he was a great sin bearer, that's why he died to wash away our sins, he won victory over hell, he won victory over these forces, these enemies that are so horrendous and so he has, by his rising again he has proved that he has won victory and he has gone into heaven with benediction over the church and he has gone into heaven we're told again to intercede for us, that's what he's doing, interceding when you're interceding you are praying on behalf of somebody else you are doing for them, you're pleading for them and that's what

Jesus, we're told, makes continual intercession by presenting what he has done, by presenting his own blood before the father and so there is this continued acceptance place for us and so he has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us and since he has gone to heaven he is also preparing us for the place that he has prepared for us of course when Jesus says I go to prepare a place for you that involved his death in fact when Jesus is coming into this world was part of the preparing a place for us he had to come into the world in order to prepare a place for us and so when he said to the disciples just on the eve of his death I'm going to prepare a place for you the last thing as they looked on his body on the cross they would say what did you mean when you said you were going to prepare a place for us because at that particular moment at least it looked least likely but that was all part of what he was doing where he was offering himself as a sacrifice for our sin and of course he has subsequently gone to heaven and in the meantime he is preparing us this is what goes on this constant this work of sanctification and he says

I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you to myself and it tells us then in verse 52 and they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and then it says they were continually in the temple blessing God it's very interesting that Luke opens in the temple and closes in the temple Luke the gospel of Luke begins with remember how Zachariah John the Baptist's father was offering incense in the temple and then of how you know the angel had told about the birth of John and then of how Zacharias was filled with the spirit and he began to prophesy and he went on to talk about and he said blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people and now it closes with now the redemption of his people this is where it begins in the temple with the prophecy of Zacharias and it ends in the temple with Jesus' disciples making their way back with great joy because that redemption is now accomplished John Murray has had well known book redemption accomplished and applied well the redemption has been accomplished the great question is has it been applied to you because that's what it's all about and if not ask the Lord today please Lord apply the work of Jesus into my heart and into my life let us pray Lord our God we again give you thanks for your word which brings to us things that we couldn't understand of ourselves we give thanks for this revelation the natural world gives us a sense of who you are but this is the special revelation that we have in your word and we pray Lord that you will open our minds and open our understanding and that you will enrich us and bless us with every kingdom blessing

Lord take each one of us back home safe and sound and that you will be with us and all whom we love and take away from us our every sin in Jesus name Amen Hy