

## **You Are Called: Jesus: The Ascension**

**Acts 1:1-11**

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**February 11, 2018**

### **Introduction**

Calling has to do with understanding both our identity and our assignment. In the dominant culture around us, we are taught to search for our identity through our assignment. But the Bible says that God wants us to know who we were made to be first; and it is on this foundation that we fulfill our assignments.

Luke, the writer of the books of Luke and Acts, was a trained physician. Like many of us, who wrestle with the tension between faith and reason, Luke was trained in the natural and yet still captivated by Jesus' connections and abilities beyond the natural. His account meticulously testifies that our faith is surely grounded in history and evidence. We start our *You are Called* series by looking at the ascension of Jesus to heaven. We discover today how the ascension is the detonator -- the explosive game-changer -- of our walk as Christ followers.

#### **Scripture: Acts 1:1-11 (ESV)**

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." <sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." <sup>9</sup> And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, <sup>11</sup> and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

## Who is Jesus?

In Acts 1:2-3 we read, *“He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs.”* Luke explicitly validates that Jesus really was dead and then really was alive with his disciples, exactly as He said He would be. Why? Because the resurrection is absolutely central and foundational to following Jesus. Without it, the counter-cultural kingdom paradigm in which Jesus walked would be incredibly difficult to wrap our heads around. The message of the gospel is not that Jesus came to make bad lives good, but to make dead people alive! With an identity in a Kingdom that is beyond this dimension, we can freely walk in the understanding that there is more to this life than what we can see. Jesus demonstrated that this world has no authority over us by taking authority over the things that human being accept as inevitable. If Jesus has authority over even death, then every one of his promises can be trusted! Our pain in this world is real and deep. With Jesus, we can enter into a space where by faith we can allow the Spirit to open our eyes to a greater hope than the things of this world can offer. Jesus is the Risen Savior!

### **Question#1**

*Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 together. In your own words, why is the resurrection of Jesus critical and central to our faith?*

### **Going Deeper**

*Fighting from Victory means Believing that our problems may be a present temporary reality, but God’s promise are our future eternal reality! Read Romans 8:18, and encourage one another in the hope of Jesus that is greater than any specific, seemingly-insurmountable circumstances you may currently be facing.*

## What Comes Next?

In Acts 1:6-8, Jesus’ followers ask him an interesting question, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” For hundreds of years, the Jewish people had waited for a messiah who would restore their earthly kingdom. The disciples had formed a vision of what they thought and expected God to be about, and couldn’t see how their earthly goal could be accomplished without Jesus coming with great force. Instead, Jesus responds with a new model for ministry that reaches far beyond the Temple in Jerusalem to establish the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His followers. Unlike us, God is not local and limited in his perspective. He is global and powerful to accomplish extraordinary acts through ordinary people filled with the Holy Spirit. Until we surrender our vision of the future to the work of the Holy Spirit, our faith will be too small at best, and godless at worst. We all have our own visions of how we would like or expect things to go. But what we are supposed to do next may not be what we thought.

**Question#2**

*Where are you demanding that God work in a certain way, when He may have an entirely different plan to accomplish His mission?*

**Going Deeper**

*God has the power to give us strength to break through the barriers to His kingdom being manifest on the earth. Are you limiting your sense of calling because you lack certain credentials?*

## What Should I do?

In Acts 1:9-11 when Jesus had ascended to heaven, the disciples stood there in that place until they were told to move. There is a difference between hearing and responding -- between knowing and living. We can't stay camped out at the last place where we saw God, afraid to walk into something new. We risk missing out on where He is working now! Only God can put us in a place of expecting a promise from Him in peace and joy while walking in obedience and hope in the waiting. This is the life of faith He invites us to. We don't have to have it all figured out, but we can do the next right thing and learn to walk by the Spirit, rejoicing as we go (Luke 24:50-53).

**Closing Discussion**

*When we live from victory in Jesus, not for victory, we are free to surrender our will to God, and make space for the Holy Spirit to move. God does not call those who are already able, but He enables those who respond to His call. It is obedience that enables us to everything God has called us to. Prayerfully consider, discuss, and ask for the Lord to search your heart on the following questions:*

*If you are comfortable in your Christianity, are stuck looking at where he was? How can you take the next faithful step toward where He is?*

*What is the one thing you are holding back from Jesus? Choose to pray for His will to be done and surrender your own will so the Spirit of God can show up!*