

Intro: The ending of our time through Luke. Jesus hasn't returned, yet. Luke has revealed to us the glorious authority of Jesus, the divine King who humiliated Himself to become one of us and, even more humiliating, to be executed as a criminal, and even more humiliating, to bear the wrath of His eternally loving Father as the very sin which sought to overthrow Him from His own throne. This reign of Jesus is unlike any other reign the world has ever seen, nor ever will, for He has authority over nature as its Creator, over sin as its triumphant victor, and over our salvation as the uniquely competent and qualified priest and lamb to bridge the infinite chasm between sinful humanity and the holy God. And thus He has done.

Luke ends his gospel with Jesus departing from the disciples by ascending into the heavens. Why? Surely, it seems like it would have served the cause of Christ better to remain and rule from Jerusalem, so that we could go see Him now, 2,000 year-old King. Surely people would believe in Him, then, right? We don't understand very well why the ascension is necessary, let alone good enough for the disciples to rejoice when he leaves when just a few weeks before they were grieving when he said that he was going away. What changed? They now understood the glory and the significance of His going back to His Father. You see, the ascension is gloriously good, nay, better than anything else. For, in like manner to our political representatives, our 'man in Washington', so to speak, we now have a 'man in heaven' to represent us, plead His merits for our cause, rule and reign from His Father's throne, and to pour out the greatest blessing of His own Holy Spirit to empower us to run our race and to see the glorious triumph of Jesus throughout all the earth. The ascension of Jesus is necessary for our good and His glory.

## 1. Divine Authority: The Ascended Jesus is the Son of God

- a. was brought up (passive) *into the heavens*
- b. "brought up" has a double meaning
  - i. also means "offer" and is used overwhelmingly in the LXX to refer to sacrifices being lifted up in offering to the Lord (Jg 13:19; 1 Sam 6:14; Ps 66:15; Heb 9:28)
  - ii. It is only used in the gospels here and to refer to the transfiguration, where Jesus "brought up" Peter, James, and John to see His glory on the mountain (Mt 17:1; Mk 9:2)
    1. This is why Luke mentions in his second volume, the book of Acts, that Jesus was taken up from their sight by a cloud
      - a. This is the cloud that was on the mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:34-35), which reveals the hidden presence of God and from which God spoke, "This is my beloved son, my chosen one. Listen to him!"
        - i. Hidden because of mankind's finiteness and mankind's sin - shielding the burning holiness of God's glory from the sin and finitude of Man's profanity
      2. Jesus tells the disciples on the Mountain of Transfiguration not to tell anyone "until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Matt 17:9)
        - a. This shows us that Jesus is connecting His glory to His resurrection and ascension
        - b. "God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory" (1 Pet 1:21)
        - c. His ascension to the Father, through the heavens/clouds, is His glory
          - i. It is what he requested of the Father in John 17:5
          - ii. It is the same glory that he wants us to participate in because of His work and standing before the Father (!!!) in the same prayer (John 17:24)
    - iii. Thus, the ascension has to do with His Sonship – He is returning *to the Father* from whom He came (Luke 22:69)

1. It's not that Jesus left them that made the disciples rejoice (that should have made them gloomy, but they are not), but rather that He arrived at the Father's side!
2. So, the ascension is not merely a leaving, but an arrival
  - a. This arrival is the eternal and abiding work of the Son, not merely a servant
    - i. Heb 3:5-6
  - b. This arrival is the glorious news that brings us great joy: We have a 'man in Heaven' who represents us for our good and glory, Jesus Christ the Son of God

## 2. Triumphant Authority: The Ascended Jesus is the Reigning King

- a. The words of the Father on the Mountain of Transfiguration are contextually linked to the David kingship
  - i. They are words acclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, the final King who receives the eternal kingdom
    1. Hebrews 12:2 – “endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”
    2. Rev 3:21 – “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, *as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*”
  - ii. Jesus *triumphed* over His enemies by conquering sin and death
    1. 2 Cor 2:14
    2. Col 2:15
- b. The fact that Luke mentions Jesus being taken up “into the heavens” in Luke 24 and “through the clouds” in Acts 1 is the same language of Kingship from Daniel 7
  - i. Daniel 7:13-14
    1. Jesus quotes this passage during His trial before the Jewish leadership,
    2. The context of Daniel is a vision of 4 kings who all are made subject to “one like the Son of man, coming on the clouds of heaven”
  - ii. This is the ascension of Jesus – Luke showing it from under the clouds and Daniel seeing it from above in a vision
- c. The ascension of Jesus is His true “Triumphal Entry”, as Peter alludes to in Acts 2:34-36
  - i. David was not the true king, for “he did not ascend into the heavens”, but Jesus is and His sitting at the right hand of the Father was His coronation
  - ii. He didn't merely ascend the throne of Jerusalem, but of the heavens, over the entire world
    1. Luke has spent an entire gospel showing that Jesus has authority over all things and is thus King of all peoples, and even over all creation both spiritual and physical
    2. He has the power over sickness, the sea, demons, and authority to forgive sins, etc.
- d. Thus, Jesus ascends to reign from the throne of God because He has authority over all
  - i. So He tells His disciples in preparation for His ascension (Matt 28) that “all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.”
  - ii. He is the triumphant King over all things created (Eph 1:21; Phil 2:9-11)
  - iii. As such, God has transferred us into His Kingdom as citizens, no longer enemies (Col 1:13-14)

## 3. Mediating Authority – The Ascended Jesus is Our High Priest *to mediate between God and Man.*

- a. He is the Son of God: fully God (Col 2:8-9) and fully Human, and as such is the perfect mediator between God and Man (1 Tim 2:5-6)
- b. Jesus entered into the cloud, behind the veil, within the glory...for us (Heb 4:14; 6:19-20)
  - i. He went “behind the inner curtain” as our High Priest, having passed “through the heavens” into the “presence of God” having been made “a priest in the order of Melchizedek”
- c. Thus, He is our priest, who now stands before God with not mere sacrifice of animals, but with His own blood as the means of our acceptance, His own life as the means of our life
- d. The ascension is important for this reason: We have an Advocate in Heaven
  - i. Our High Priest, this mediator, ascended into heaven, the very throne room of God, in order to intercede for us
  - ii. Hebrews 8:1-2; 9:12, 24
- e. The family, the priesthood, the monarchy, are “pre-enactments” of the Real Mediation in the heavens, where Jesus is
  - i. Adam ‘became alive’ in the garden, but Jesus became a ‘life-giver’ (1 Cor 15:45)
  - ii. Adam was a ‘son of God’ in the garden, but Jesus is the eternal Son of God in the heavens (1 Cor 15:47)
  - iii. Moses was a mediator between God and His people; Jesus is the True Mediator between God and His people (Heb 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5).
  - iv. Moses ascended a mountain to meet with God in the clouds; Jesus ascends through the cloud into heaven itself and the glory of God which Moses was not allowed to see (Ex 34)
  - v. Moses is shown a copy of the heavenly tabernacle and told to replicate it on earth; Jesus ascends to enter the Real Tabernacle, the heavenly one (Heb 8)
  - vi. The priest stands between God and Man with the blood of an animal; Jesus ascends to stand between God and Man with His own final blood (Heb 9:12)
  - vii. The priest comes to God with jewels that symbolize God’s people; Jesus ascends to give us each a stone with our own names on it as beloved of God. (Ex 28:9-10; Rev 2:17)
  - viii. David was ‘man after God’s own heart’; Jesus is the very expression of the heart of God, the exact representation of His very nature (1 Sam 13:14; Heb 1:1-3)
  - ix. David was given temporary authority over Israel and died, Jesus is given eternal authority over all creation and lives (Dan 7:27; Isa 9:7; 2 Pet 1:11; Rev 11:15)
- f. Jesus ascends to be the Real Priest, the Real Mediator, and the Real King of which all other Priests, Mediators, and Kings prefigured.
  - i. It’s a little like an architectural model and the real building
  - ii. Moses built a model to instruct on how the building would look and work, but Jesus is the heavenly full-scale grandeur by which we fully see and understand the depravity of sin, the holiness of God, and the mediation by His blood.

#### 4. Generous Authority: The Ascended Jesus Blesses Us With His Holy Spirit

- a. This may be an allusion to Jesus as our High Priest
  - i. See Hebrews 7, Jesus is our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek
  - ii. He blessed Abraham, for He is greater than Abraham
- b. His blessing is that He is our representative with the Father and He will pour out from such a position His very Holy Spirit that we might be on mission to great effectiveness throughout the entire earth
  - i. Acts 1-2
  - ii. Jesus told the disciples that “it is for your benefit that I go away...for I will send the Helper to you” (John 16:7)

- iii. The gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers our witness and reveals the glories and excellences of Christ to our souls, was contingent upon the return of Jesus to the side of the Father to mediate for us
  - 1. Eph 4:8, ascending, he gave gifts to men, leading captive a host of captives
- c. The way that the King exercises His power and authority is by giving His Spirit to His people, His Church, in order to carry out His mission
  - i. We ought think of ourselves like the days of King Richard and Prince John, when the King was King but had gone to defeat the last of His enemies
    - 1. We live in a time when we have heard the message that the King has won victory, but He is still returning to the city
    - 2. Will we believe that He has won and live in the light of His kingship and authority?
    - 3. Or, will we not believe that He has won and live as if a pseudo-king (Prince John) has authority?
  - ii. We are a people of witness, proclaiming that Jesus is the King and He will be the King
    - 1. The earliest encapsulation of the Christian testimony was “Jesus is Lord” in a time and place where it was said that “Caesar is Lord”
    - 2. The gospel message is first and foremost not a message of forgiveness or justification or restoration (which it surely and necessarily is these things), but is of the authority of Jesus over all things: sin, Satan, sickness, salvation, etc.
    - 3. In fact, this is the most offensive aspect of the gospel to our world and it is the heart of the gospel
  - iii. We have been given His Spirit to testify of this truth and to empower us to proclaim His authority over all things
    - 1. In our submission to Him, we proclaim the supremacy of His authority
    - 2. In our praise of Him, we proclaim the goodness His authority
    - 3. In our love of Him, we proclaim the sweetness of His authority
    - 4. He is the King, and He is the King who made Himself poor for His people, so poor as to humble himself to our death
    - 5. Now He reigns in glory and honor and power and might and dominion, and He is returning
  - iv. The Spirit shows us Jesus’s beauty and power, convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (authoritative categories)

## 5. The Response to the Ascension of Our Mediating King: Joyful Praise

- a. They were worshipping (*proskuneo*) and praising (*eulogia*) God
  - i. Praise is the testimony of God’s goodness in the authority of the ascended Son/King/Priest Jesus
    - 1. through *every* thing
    - 2. gathered together in the Temple
  - ii. “I will praise Him in the congregation!”
- b. Luke’s gospel ends where it begins: in the Temple with praise for God because of the arrival of the saving King
  - i. Only now there is a greater understanding of just what this means, and it is far more glorious than previously thought
- c. This reactions shows us that it is the victorious reign of King Jesus, the one who gave Himself up as an atoning sacrifice and was raised from the dead in power, that gave the disciples joy and hope and unity and hope

- i. Authority: Jesus has it.
  - 1. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Announce it! Tell all peoples that repentance from trusting and serving other things (including oneself) and depending upon Me will receive forgiveness of sins and a place at God's glorious family table."
- ii. Mediation: Jesus gives it.
  - 1. "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:25)
- iii. Help: We receive it
  - 1. "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." (Act 1:8)

The ascension of Jesus is good news because it means that we have an authoritative King in heaven who stands before God on our behalf. He intercedes for us, pleads for us, pours out the Holy Spirit for us, and by His great grace empowers us to complete the tasks until He returns. Luke leaves us here, under His authority, awaiting His blessed Holy Spirit, longing for His return, rejoicing at His reign. All hail the King.