



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: WHO IS JESUS?

TITLE: THE ASCENDED ONE

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 1:1-11

DATE: APRIL 12, 2026

INTRODUCTION

This morning we will look at Jesus ascension. As we continue to answer the question, “Who is Jesus?”, we will see that He is the Ascended One. Perhaps for many of us, we tend to think more about Jesus’s life as recorded in the Gospels, or His death and resurrection. We tend to stress these events in Jesus’ life. Yet, if we are not careful, we can lose sight that Jesus is also the Ascended One. As a result, we may tend to think of Jesus more in term of what he has done for us mor than what he continually does for us.

Our aim in this lesson is to describe the event of the ascension and then show why the ascension matters theologically for us.

Text

Acts 1:1-11

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 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.

4 And while staying^[a] 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; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

The Ascension

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 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.” 9 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. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 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.”

Explanation

Background

The book of Acts was written by Luke, the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke. Luke addressed both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts to a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). We do not know much about Theophilus other than that his name means “lover of God,” and Luke refers to him as “most excellent” in his Gospel (Luke 1:3). Scholars speculate that he may have had high social status and may have financially supported Luke’s writing.

Luke explains that in his first book (the Gospel of Luke), he “dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.” The Gospel of Luke includes large sections covering Jesus’ birth, ministry, and teaching. It concludes with His death, resurrection, and a brief account of His ascension. It is important to note that Luke describes his Gospel as what Jesus *began* to do and teach. For Luke, Jesus continues to live and work through the Holy Spirit and the apostles.

Acts refers to Jesus' twelve disciples as "apostles," which means "sent ones." During His ministry, Jesus intentionally designated twelve followers to be apostles (Luke 6:12–13). Mark tells us that Jesus called to Himself "those whom He desired" so that "they might be with Him and He might send them out" (Mark 3:13–14).

Jesus gave the apostles special authority, and they held a position of leadership in the church. He prepared them for His departure and told them ahead of time in John 16:12–15:

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

With these words, Jesus was telling His disciples that the Holy Spirit would guide them in truth and reveal what they needed to lead the church.

After Jesus' Resurrection He Appeared to the Apostles

Acts 1:3 tells us that Jesus appeared to the apostles for forty days after His resurrection. During that time, He gave many proofs that He was alive and spoke to them about the kingdom of God.

For example, In the Gospel of Luke we have record that Mary Magdalene and other women were the first to discover the empty tomb and hear that Jesus had risen (Luke 24:1–12). Later that day, Jesus appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus. At first, they did not recognize Him, but when He revealed Himself, their eyes were opened. They later said their hearts burned within them as He spoke to them (Luke 24:13–32). That same evening, Jesus stood among the disciples and ate with them. He taught them that His death and resurrection fulfilled the Law and the Prophets and opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

Other appearances are recorded as well. John describes Jesus appearing to seven disciples and restoring Peter from his previous denials of Jesus (John 21). Paul writes that more than five hundred people saw the risen Christ and that He also appeared to James, Jesus' brother (1 Corinthians 15:6–7).

Disciples Must Wait for the Holy Spirit

Jesus had already taught His disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit after His departure. This was not a new plan but part of God's design from the beginning. John the Baptist, the one who announced Jesus' coming and who even baptized Him, once said that while he baptized with water, Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16).

Additionally, Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit would be for them a Helper (Jn. 14:16) who would teach and remind them of Jesus' words (Jn. 14:26), guide them in truth to come (Jn. 16:13), and empower their message so that people might experience conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8; 14). Jesus even told them that it was to their good that He go away. In His going away, Jesus would then be able to send the Spirit (Jn. 16:7).

As the time for His ascension approached, Jesus commanded the apostles to remain in Jerusalem. One reason was that many Jews would be gathered there for Pentecost, providing an opportunity for witness (Acts 2:8-12; 37-41).

For the time being, the apostles had to wait. They remained in Jerusalem, devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14), and replaced Judas Iscariot with a man named Matthias who had also been with Jesus from the beginning (Acts 1:21-26).

“Will You at this Time Restore the Kingdom to Israel?”

Understandably, the disciples have questions. They asked Jesus if He would restore the kingdom to Israel. This question reflected a common expectation among Jews that the Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom and overthrow Roman rule. To be honest, the disciples have for the most part had this question in their minds long before. After all, one of Jesus' primary messages was that the “Kingdom of God is *near*” (Mark 1:14-15). Now that Jesus had died and risen again, what could possibly stop him for establishing His kingdom on earth? Yet, while asking the question is understandable, it is, however, very misinformed for several reasons.

First, they asked Jesus a question that only the Father knows. Jesus tells them, “it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.” This may be strange to consider, but Jesus acknowledges that the

Father knows something that He doesn't. Once before, Jesus had told his disciples, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son¹ but the Father only (Matthew 24:36).

Second, they misunderstood the nature of the kingdom. While God's kingdom will one day be fully realized on earth (Revelation 21:1), it currently advances spiritually in the hearts of people through the work of the Holy Spirit. Now... one day God's kingdom will certainly be fully realized on earth; yet this will not happen until Christ's second coming when a new heaven and new earth will be formed (Revelation 21:1). But until then, the kingdom will begin but will advance spiritually. The reign of God's kingdom will not come through Jesus' presence on earth, but will come through the Holy Spirit working within the apostles and other believers.

Third, they misunderstood the scope of the kingdom. It was not just for Israel but for all people. Jesus tells them that once the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they are to be His witness "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." We should note the expansion in Jesus' words: Jerusalem is a city and hub of Jewish life, Judea and Samaria are regions nearby, and the end of the earth encompasses an expanded reach in every direction. The reach of God's kingdom is to have no boundaries.

Jesus' Ascension

Having answered the disciples, Jesus then ascended to heaven. With the apostles "looking on," Jesus "was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight." Luke seems to stress that the apostles were eyewitnesses to the ascension. They are said to have "looked," and Jesus was taken "out of their sight." Then they were left "gazing into heaven as He went."

To be clear, the disciples saw Jesus leave this earth. This may seem obvious, but it is significant that Jesus did not rise from the dead only to die a second time. Nor should we think that Jesus was only present on earth in a spirit form, able to come and go between earth and heaven as He pleased. He rose from the grave bodily, and He departed the earth bodily. He physically ascended into heaven. As proof that Jesus lives, we have the apostles as eyewitnesses.

Jesus Will Return the Same Way He Ascended

It must have been an amazing sight to see Jesus ascending higher and higher with a cloud. The ascension seemed to happen fairly quickly. After Jesus had disappeared from their sight, they continued standing there, gazing upward.

Then, quite suddenly, two men in white robes stood beside them. The fact that these men were dressed in white robes and appeared out of nowhere indicated that they were angels. In an almost mocking tone, they 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.”

The message from these angels emphasized three primary truths. First, Jesus was definitely gone for the time being. Jesus has officially departed. Yet, second, His departure from earth would come to an end. He was not leaving forever. Though they did not know how long He would be gone, He would come back. And third, the proper way to wait for His return was not by looking up into the sky. Rather, the best way to wait was to be actively fulfilling Jesus’ Great Commission. They were first to wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them, and then they were to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Waiting will clearly not mean idleness, but passionately bearing witness.

Discussion Questions

- In your estimation, why is Jesus’ ascension important or necessary?
- Do you see any significance to Jesus choosing to ascend to heaven in the timing that He did—that being 40 days after His resurrection?
- Does anything about the apostles stand out to you from our text?
- What about our story today gives evidence that Jesus really did rise from the dead?
- From our text, how do we see the Trinity referenced? Is there anything that we can conclude as far as how the Trinity relates to one another?
- Why do you think Jesus commanded the apostles to wait for the Holy Spirit before beginning the mission?
- Do you think there are times today when we must wait for the Holy Spirit? Why or why not? Or how so?
- Can you recall any examples from the book of Acts where the apostles were witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth?
- What does the promise that Jesus will return “in the same way” teach us about His second coming?

Conclusions or Applications

JESUS THE ASCENDED ONE

It can sometimes be easy to overlook the theological significance of Jesus' ascension to heaven. We tend to place a great deal of emphasis on Jesus' death and resurrection, which is understandable—and perhaps even appropriate. As a result, however, we may speak less about His ascension. Because of this, we may tend often focus more on what Jesus *has done* for us more than on what He *continues to do* now that He has ascended.

In concluding our lesson, it is helpful to note several reasons why Jesus' ascension holds theological significance.

The Ascension Demonstrates that Jesus Finished God's Task on Earth

First, it shows that Jesus finished His earthly task. This is significant—Jesus ascended because the Father approved of His work on earth. His task was accomplished completely and perfectly. Hebrews 1:3 makes this clear: “*After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*” In John 17:4, Jesus prayed, “I glorified You on earth, *having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do.*” Hebrews 10:12 adds, “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.”

The Ascension Gives Evidence that Jesus Has Received Glory and Honor

Second, by ascending to heaven, Jesus was crowned with glory and honor. Scripture stresses Jesus as *sitting at the right hand* of God the Father (Acts 2:33–34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). This position reflects the honor and authority He receives for what He accomplished on earth. He once suffered, but now He is exalted. Following His death, God the Father “has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9). We also read that God “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion... not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Ephesians 1:20–21).

The Ascension Enables Jesus to Serve as Our High Priest

Third, His ascension enables Him to serve as our high priest. Admittedly, this point can feel complex and understanding some background from the Old Testament can prove helpful. In the Old Testament, God instructed the

Israelites to build a tabernacle so that He might dwell among them. These instructions included specific requirements to honor God's holiness while sinful people approached Him. Among these were regulations concerning priests and sacrifices. The average Israelite could not offer sacrifices independently; only priests could do so, and even they had to meet strict requirements. Moreover, there was one high priest who would enter a room called the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The New Testament book of Hebrews explains that the tabernacle was not randomly designed—it was patterned after a heavenly reality. Earthly priests mediated between God and man on earth within the tabernacle, but we need a greater priest who mediates in the heavenly realm. This is why Jesus could not remain on earth after his resurrection. He ascended so that He might serve as our high priest in heaven—the true reality, not merely the earthly copy. Amazingly, Jesus is both our sacrifice and our high priest.

Hebrews 8:1–5 explains:

“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.”

This passage shows that Jesus serves as our high priest *in heaven*, in the “true tent.” It explains that He could not fulfill this role if He remained on earth.

The Ascension Enables Jesus to Send the Holy Spirit

Fourth, because Jesus serves as our high priest, He is able to send the Holy Spirit. At His ascension, Jesus completes the work of salvation and applies it on our behalf. Hebrews describes that Jesus entered the true heavenly sanctuary—not with animal blood, but with His own blood—securing eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:11–26 emphasizes this:

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption...

23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not His own, 26 for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Admittedly, this concept can be difficult to grasp, but it is deeply significant. Jesus completed our salvation by ascending to the Father. Thus, since our salvation is now complete, He is able to send the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. In order for the Spirit to live in us, we must be made right with God. And our righteousness depends on Jesus' completed work and His ongoing ministry in heaven. Therefore, it was necessary for Him to go so that the Spirit could come. Jesus Himself said in John 16:7, “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”