

“JESUS IS KING AND I WILL EXTOL HIM”

READING: *Acts chapter 1 verses 1 – 11*

INTRODUCTION

Thursday past was Ascension Day, and as we were reminded then, this event took place forty days after the resurrection of Jesus. Over those 40 days, Jesus took time to teach his disciples giving them a fuller understanding about what He had come to accomplish. It seems that the gift of hindsight was good for the disciples then, as they looked back over the events which had happened and now that they had experienced the power of Jesus' resurrection, things were falling into place and they could understand now what Jesus was all about. Then he blessed them and ascended into the heavens until a cloud hid Him from their eyes. Instead of being sad, **Luke's** account in **chapter 24 verse 52** tells us that the disciples were filled with joy, and they had every reason to be joyful because Christ's ascension to the Father's right hand, the place of all authority, is testimony of Christ's eternal glory. Christ our hope is on the throne.

On Thursday we had an indication as to the importance of this event and one of those reasons was that Jesus had successfully accomplished His mission on earth. The work left to be completed was from heaven when the Holy Spirit would be poured out, but not for another 10 days, the day of Pentecost. This was a fulfilment of the promise which Jesus gave to his disciples when he told them that he was going to be leaving them, but not leaving them as orphans that he would send a Comforter, as their guide and counsellor (**John chapter 14 verses 15-21**). His mission on earth was to purchase salvation for a sin filled world and to prepare it for heaven. In his ascension Jesus assures us of our salvation and heaven because not only has every sin been paid for but His righteousness has been credited to our account and we now have an advocate in heaven, one who fights our corner. Christ's ascension also meant that His disciples, and we are included, now have a friend in heaven who occupies a place of authority, seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. We have a friend who intercedes for us bearing in His body the marks of the great price He has paid for our salvation. In that purchased salvation, our past is forgotten. As Corrie Ten Boom says, "God throws our confessed sins into a big pond and puts up a big sign – "No fishing". What is forgiven, is forgotten. OK, even as believers we continue to sin but when we do the Lord Jesus just has to lift His hands and show the marks that prove full payment for our sins, past, present and future. That's why the writer of Hebrews says, **"...He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them"** (**Hebrews 7 verse 25**). Christ' ascension also assures us that Christ will return. The Scriptures attest to this because after Christ had blessed His disciples and ascended into heaven, the angels declared that He would return in the same way. Only when He comes again it will be in power and glory as the king of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus, at the beginning of His public ministry, overcame the Devil in the wilderness. The Devil's temptations for 40 days in the wilderness only strengthened Jesus and humiliated the devil. After His resurrection Jesus triumphantly paraded His victory

over sin, death and the grave for forty days. He again humiliated the Devil and his works and paraded His victory before His faithful followers so that they might share in the joy of His victory. These 40 days were very important to the believers for they established the reality of His Lordship and assured the disciples of His power and authority. His ascension was a further demonstration of His supernatural power. Death and the grave could not hold him when his Father raised him from the dead in a glorified body, and in like manner the earth could not hold him when the time came for him to return to his Father. He was simply lifted up operating under higher supernatural laws. The last thing the disciples saw were the nail marks in His hands as He lifted them up to bless them. The first thing we will see when He comes will be the nail marks in his hands, the symbol that our sins were atoned for on the cross.

Christ has won a victory over Satan and death, but that does not mean the end of the spiritual battle. One of the first things that Christ did from His place of authority on God's right hand is to send the Holy Spirit to believers on the Day of Pentecost, but also to us each and every day to give us strength to face the battles which come our way. Our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit and of his unlimited power. We may be here on earth but we also have heaven within us. His abundant provisions meet our various needs and to fulfil his deepest desire that we live life in all its fulness. Christ wants us to cast aside those burdens which cripple us and to live lives in the victory he has won for us. He has given us everything we need to lead such a life. Sadly, we often fail to believe fully who we are in Christ.

We have been equipped to serve as witnesses of Christ. We are to proclaim the gospel declaring Christ's love for us and how He is preparing a place in heaven for us. If we have given our life to Christ let us renew our thinking and know who we are in Christ. Christ has given us all authority and power to serve Him faithfully and lead a victorious life.

The Ascension Day was also Christ's Coronation Day. Luke records the disciples **"gazing into heaven as He went" (Acts 1 verse 10)** till He disappeared from their sight. Mark's account then continues with what happens at His arrival in heaven. Through the inspiration given to him by the Holy Spirit we are allowed to share the secrets of heaven itself when he writes **"Jesus was received into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16 verse 19)**. **Psalm 24** describes the grandeur of the spectacle associated with the homecoming of the Son of God. The Psalmist tries to help us to visualise the scene as Christ neared the heavenly city the heavenly heralds cried out in preparation for his arrival. **"Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up you ancient doors that the King of glory may come in."** The proclamation prompts the enquiry, **"Who is the Lord of glory?"** The reply declares Christ's right to the title, **"The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle" (7-10)**. Yes, Jesus had triumphed over Satan, the world, death and hell. His resurrection and Ascension proved He was the victor. He has given us the Holy Spirit and blessed us so that we might be a blessing. When Christ entered heaven God crowned Him with glory for "He is the Lord of glory." Have you opened your heart that the King of glory may come in? Amen!

LUKE 24 verses 44-53

⁴⁴ He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Acts 1 verses 1 – 11

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' ⁶ Then they gathered round him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

⁷ He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'

Psalm 24

¹ The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

² for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

³ Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴ The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

⁵ They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Saviour.

⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.

⁷ Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty – he is the King of glory.

ASCENSION DAY SONNET

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place
As earth became a part of Heaven's story
And heaven opened to his human face.
We saw him go and yet we were not parted
He took us with him to the heart of things
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
Is whole and Heaven-centred now, and sings,
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,
Whilst we our selves become his clouds of witness
And sing the waning darkness into light,
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,
Which all creation waits to see revealed .

Malcolm Guite