

Bible Study – Ascension and Its Applications

In the Apostle's Creed we confess, "...he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father, from there he will come to judge the living and the dead." We focus a lot on his birth, death and resurrection, but perhaps Ascension and the events to follow slip past quickly as we move on to Pentecost and the birth of the Christian church and the spread of the Christian faith. So let's pause for a minute on each of those statements of faith. Why is each so important?

1. He ascended into heaven.

Acts 1:6 So when they met together, they 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.

John 20:17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

⁹ (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

- a. What does the Ascension of Jesus say about who he was?
- b. What does the Ascension of Jesus say about what he did?
- c. What does the Ascension of Jesus mean for me?

2. He sits at the right hand of the Father.

Mark 12:35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

" 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." ' "

³⁷ David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

Mark 16:19-20 ¹⁹ After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. ²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

- a. What is Jesus doing “at the right hand of the Father?” What does that mean for me?
- b. Consider that “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body.” Look back in history (world, yours, etc.) how have you seen something work out for the benefit of God’s people, even when it was bad.

3. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Acts 1:10 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.”

Matthew 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

- a. What does Jesus’ ascension teach us about Jesus’ return?