

Ascension

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[0 : 00] So I'm going to read Hebrews chapter 7, picking up at verse 11. I'm going to finish at chapter 8, verse 7. Now if affection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belong to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.

For it's evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

For it's witnessed of him, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. From the one hand, a formal commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the Lord made nothing perfect.

But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God. And it's not without an oath, for those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath. But this one was made a priest with an oath, by the one who said to him, The Lord has sworn, and will not change his mind, you are a priest forever.

[1 : 35] This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.

But he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever. Consequently, he's able to save to the utmost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

He has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifices daily, for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a son who has been made perfect forever. 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, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

[3 : 00] For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, thus it's necessary for this priest to have something to offer. 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.

They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying, see that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is much more excellent than the old, as the covenant he mediates is better, since it's enacted on better promises.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Alright.

Well, if we were to ask people today, I wonder what your discussions were like, where Jesus is now? There'd be a whole range of answers.

[4 : 12] The Australian might say, really? Never even thought about it. Who cares? In fact, that's exactly the response I got from the person I spoke to yesterday, down in the park.

The Muslim would say, that he'd never died, that he's been raised to heaven, but he didn't die. The Jew would say, that his bones are in a grave somewhere.

The Hindu would say, that he was the divine incarnation, who resides in a divine, enlightened state. Other Eastern religions would say, that he's an enlightened teacher, residing in some higher spiritual plane.

The atheist would say, bones in the grave. And strangely enough, some so-called Christian church leaders, would say, that Jesus' bones are in the grave too.

But we would say, we would say, that Jesus rose from the dead, and has ascended into heaven.

[5 : 27] That's what we would say. It's in all the creeds, like the Apostles' Creed. Let me just have a run, I'll just read through the Apostles' Creed, hopefully come up behind me here. Here's the Apostles' Creed, that we say from time to time.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended to the dead. The third day, he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Universal Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

And this is true. This is what we would say. This morning we're looking at the ABC of the Ascension. There you go. Not your radio station, but the ABC of the Ascension.

[6 : 32] The Ascension, blessings, and then comfort, ABC. See how we go. So first of all, back in Acts, come back to Acts chapter 1, that was read for us, back to Acts.

Acts chapter 1. Over Easter, we have examined the death of Jesus. It was no mistake. It was a deliberate act by God that Jesus would be crucified, and a deliberate act by man that Jesus would be crucified.

God knew it had and would happen. It's a divine necessity. It had to happen. And also, the Jewish officials wanted it, and the Romans carried it out.

Jesus truly suffered death on the cross. There in Acts chapter 1, verse 3, he suffered. There it is, verse 3, he presented himself alive to them after his sufferings by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

He was buried in the tomb, God raised him from the dead, and he appeared to the disciples over various places for 40 days. And he gave many proofs that he's alive.

[7 : 47] Can you think of some of the proofs that Jesus was alive? Let's have a couple of them. A couple of proofs that he was alive. He ate food. Ate food, yeah.

Thomas stuck his fingers in his hands, yeah. Yeah. Fed some people some food.

Grave was empty. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He let them touch him. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, Paul says that he appeared to over 500 people at one time.

In verse 4 of Acts chapter 1, he sends, he says, the apostles are to stay in Jerusalem until he sends the Holy Spirit. And it's when he sends the Holy Spirit, right, right, the apostles will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

That's when the New Testament age starts. Right? It only comes up a few times, this idea of being baptised in the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

[8 : 51] The Spirit falls upon them and they believe that Jesus is Lord, is the Christ, and are saved. And so after those 40 days, Jesus appears and then they are gathered.

Jesus shows up against amongst them. You see there in Acts there. And they are wondering if now is the time that Jesus is going to bring about the Kingdom of God. Is now this wonderful Kingdom of God going to come?

Is this the day? When is it going to come, Jesus? Well, instead, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit upon them the same idea as being baptised in the Spirit.

And it's only then that they will receive God's power for witness and that they will be able to take the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth. And then we read that Jesus lifted up, the clouds taking from their sight and He ascends into heaven.

Spectacular, isn't it? That Jesus ascends into heaven. Not by ropes on a stage, not by a rocket ship blasting Him off into space, but God raises Him to heaven, into the heavens.

[10:06] They are the truths of the ascension. That's the A. Let's look at the B, the blessings of the ascension, the blessings of that truth then. There are a number of blessings that flow out from this truth without which Christianity would not exist.

It's what makes Christianity super, super natural. in ways that transcend everything else.

So firstly, we think about Jesus' reign and rule. There's a number of implications and blessings that flow out of Jesus' ascension, but first of all, let's consider His reign and rule.

Come to Acts chapter 2, it's 50 days after Jesus' ascension. The apostles have stayed, they're gathered in Jerusalem as Jesus told them to do that and then the Holy Spirit comes and Peter gives his first sermon Acts chapter 2 verse 34 come to Acts chapter 2 verse 34 with me.

Acts chapter 2 verse 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens but he himself says the Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

[11:19] Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified.

King David didn't ascend into heaven his bones lay in the ground but this Jesus didn't he rose from the dead not to die again but rose from the dead with a resurrection body and ascended to the right hand of the Father he's been made the Lord and Christ now you've got to be thinking something haven't you you're thinking Daniel chapter 7 I know you are alright Daniel chapter 7 so come back to Daniel chapter 7 with me Daniel chapter 7 it's in the Old Testament we're going to be looking at Daniel in a couple of weeks or next weekend actually starting Daniel we'll get Daniel 7 eventually but Daniel 7 it's just after Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel there it is somewhere in there Daniel chapter 7 pick it up at verse 13 Daniel chapter 7 verse 13

I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom and all peoples nations and languages should serve him his dominions the everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed do you see there in verse 13 this one like a son of man comes in the clouds and comes to the ancient of days and is presented before him Jesus is the one who looks like a son of man human but greater than any man and he's been given eternal rule over every people group every nation every language he's given the kingdom that will never be destroyed this is the kingdom that Jesus spoke about during his life and before he ascended into heaven the kingdom of God's righteous eternal king ruling it not some despotic madman not some dystopian dictator but the righteous son of man the righteous son of God that's a great blessing that we've a righteous ruler over a great kingdom one that's indestructible that will like could you imagine what it would be like to be in a kingdom ruled by an unrighteous person who is out for your bad for all eternity now we have a righteous king who rules a perfect kingdom for all eternity one that's not corrupted by sin one that's good for everyone in the world not just a select few well there's

Jesus' reign and righteous reign and righteous rule because of the ascension and because Jesus ascended though it's more than that right we had the blessing of salvation for without Jesus' ascension there would be no salvation let me put it to you from heaven Jesus sends the Holy Spirit he promised that he would go to the father so that he could do that before he was crucified remember John chapter 7 let me read out to you John chapter 7 strange part of the bible John chapter 7 the Pharisees heard the crowds muttering things about him and the chief priest and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him Jesus then said I'll be with you a little longer and then I'm going to him who sent me you will ask you will seek me and you'll not find me where I am you cannot come the Jews said to one another where does this man intend to go that would not find him does he intend to go to the dispersion among the

Greeks among the Gentiles what does he mean by saying you will seek me and you'll not find me and where I am you cannot come where was he going to go some group of Jews who were spread out around the world going to hide amongst them is that where he was going to go no Jesus is going to die rise again and ascend and go to the father a place where they cannot come and so then in Acts chapter 2 Peter explains what's happening about this Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit comes come to Acts chapter 2 with me back to Acts chapter 2 sorry about the Bible flipping but it's important Acts chapter 2 pick it up verse 29 and it'll cover the bit we read before Acts chapter 2 verse 29 brothers

[16:49] I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried in his tombs with us to this day being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn

with an oath to him that he set one of his descendants on his throne he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that is not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption then God raised this Jesus God raised up and we're all witnesses being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit has poured out this that yourselves are seeing and hearing God has poured out the Holy Spirit upon this crowd and they're speaking in various languages everyone's hearing about the gospel of Jesus Jesus the eternal Lord and eternal God of the kingdom of God is currently seated at the right hand of

God the Father that's where he is and he will be there until the time comes to restore all things that's when the apostles looking forward to happening and he will bring about the new heaven and the new earth but right now he is the one who sends the Holy Spirit his Holy Spirit if he didn't ascend right we couldn't actually receive the spirit if he didn't send his spirit we couldn't be saved because it's by the Holy Spirit at work in us bringing us to repentance and faith in him it's all of God's work so unless we've been given the spirit we would never call Jesus Lord and we would go on living in ignorance of him and defiance of Jesus reign and rule but Romans chapter 10 verse 9 tells us if we confess with our mouths that Jesus Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised from the dead we shall certainly be saved and 1 Corinthians anyone can confess that Jesus is Lord so do you get it Jesus has to ascend so that he can reign and send his spirit so that we will then be able to be moved in our hearts to believe and be saved and confess that Jesus is Lord if Jesus didn't ascend there'd be no spirit there'd be no salvation for anybody it's an incredible blessing for us that Jesus has ascended into glory and at the end of Peter's sermon he calls people to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit chapter 2 verse 34 to 39 for David did not descend into heaven but himself says the Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool let all the house of

Israel therefore know for certain that God made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles brothers what shall we do and Peter said to them repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises for you couple of things there do you notice that God cares about how many people are saved 3,000 that day it's the ascension of Jesus into heaven and so the coming of the Holy Spirit that enables us to be saved but not only that with the coming of the Spirit the Spirit of Jesus resides in us and us in him and so Jesus is now able to be closer to us now while he's presently reigning in heaven than it was ever possible for him to do when he's walking around the planet so with the ascension of Jesus the Holy Spirit is sent so that we can be saved so he reigns the rule he now is spirit sent to save and now we have also a pleading priest picks up the stuff from Hebrews chapter 7 not only is Jesus now the one who sends the Holy Spirit he's the one who is our priest pleading on our behalf tending to God for us our advocate to the father without the ascension we would have no one to advocate for us to the father no one who would represent us before

[22 : 07] God himself we read in Hebrews chapter 7 earlier that Jesus become a high priest forever serving as a priest right now in the heavenlies we don't have a priest after priest after priest after priest living and dying living and dying living and dying living and dying we have a priest who now reigns and rules for eternity that separates us from every earthly priest crafty religion in this world and is interceding for us pleading for us saying to the father have mercy on this one and this one and this one and this one and this one because I died for that one and that one and that one and that one have mercy upon them forgive them forgive them forgive them forgive this one because my sacrifice was sufficient for them all and it's Jesus who intercedes for us he's one who prays for us not any other priest not any other person we can approach

Jesus and he's the one who pleads our cause before the father we don't need a priest to intercede for us certainly no other person!

Mary is a wonderful woman no doubt but she would want us to pray to her son through her son to the father not her Jesus stands before God for us no other person is in heaven yet to intercede for us Mary is not there yet because he is the only one he is the first man in heaven because of his resurrection and his ascension get a hold of this the dust that makes mankind is now in the heavenly realm and because he is there he guarantees our access as well to live there flesh and blood now dwells in the heavenlies where he has gone and one day we will follow too when the righteous one returns come back to chapter one we are now waiting aren't we we are now waiting

for the righteous return of the

Lord Jesus that's the promise that the two men dressed in white robes stood with the disciples after sin and said this Jesus verse 11 chapter 1 verse 11 this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven that's the promise of God's word because Jesus has ascended he certainly will return with his return the kingdom of heaven comes fully and finally the righteous one and when he comes God's word says that he judges the world in righteousness so there is witness and warning now when the disciples freed the Holy Spirit he was given to them so that they would be witnesses!

about Jesus there in verse 8 of chapter 1 chapter 1 of verse 8 of Acts but you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit come upon you and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth that is by his ascension and then by his sending of the Spirit he enables his disciples to bear witness testimony about Jesus gives sworn evidence that that Jesus is the Christ that he did die that he did rise again that he is now reigning at the right hand of the Father in God's kingdom and that now is a time for everyone to repent and believe in him he's going to come back again soon not to save the world but to judge the world in righteousness and by extension that same spirit!

[26 : 30] Christ and we are at one level empowered to witness as well so that we can bear witness give sworn testimony about Jesus about what he has done and warn the world about what he will do well there's some things that the blessings and the realities and the outflows but let's consider the comfort then of the ascension having heard the warning there is great comfort for us something to strengthen us something to help us something to support us or actually should I say someone someone to strengthen us someone to help us someone to support us let me highlight a few of the comforts firstly ascension means that I have someone who is pleading to God on my behalf I've got the ascension also guarantees me a place in heaven and ascension means that I have a comforter here now on earth so I've got someone pleading on my behalf when I'm facing the most dangerous day of my life there's a few dangerous days in our lives aren't there the day we're born is a very dangerous day one of the most dangerous days in our life a lot of stuff has got to happen to me to actually be born and stay alive but there's another incredibly dangerous day coming the day when I stand before the one who created me the one who made me when I stand before the judge of the universe the one who will separate the sheep from the goats and by rights it's kind of like re-entering earth's atmosphere at 40,000 clobbs an hour without a heat shield by rights if I stand before

God on that day my sin will condemn me and I shall be shut out of the presence of God forever that's what I deserve but my great high priest will call out I've died for that one he's one of my precious sheep I've rescued that one I've borne the wrath of God the fury of God for that one he's mine she's mine they are mine he won't abandon us forsake us deny us before the father because he's ascended into the throne room of God our great high priest our eternal high priest we won't have to face that day on our own we won't have to represent ourselves before the father on that day Jesus our great high priest will plead for us because he's risen and ascended into glory and so the ascension guarantees me a place in heaven Jesus promised he says in John chapter 14 verses 1 to 4 don't be troubled don't be shaken in my father's house there are many rooms if it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I'll come back again and take you to be where I am that you may be there also what a great confidence Jesus has gone prepared a place for us gone ahead of us to prepare a heavenly home for us and he promised he to come back and take us to be with him there not wishful thinking if Jesus had not conquered death and ascended into heaven he couldn't do what he promised to do but since he has

I can relax I can rejoice there's a place for me in heaven now there's plenty of trouble all around the place now I know the big picture is that Jesus has sorted it out my long term future is guaranteed he's prepared a place for me in the father's house it's fully paid for fully furnished there's no mortgage on it and he's going to come back and lead me there and the door he will open the door and lead me in and say welcome home since he's ascended and is there now and finally the ascension means that we have comfort here on earth right now we can rejoice that Jesus has ascended to the father the comfort of the holy spirit has come

Jesus has ascended to the father's side and asked the father to send his holy spirit to us we're not orphans Jesus didn't leave us alone leave us helpless he's promised to come to us and he has we

can rejoice that Jesus has ascended to the father it's far far better now that Jesus has ascended so he can be with us in ways that he could never be if he was limited in time and space in Jerusalem he sent his holy spirit to dwell in us and be present with us here and now comforting us in our sorrows and our sicknesses and our weaknesses working in us shaping us through his word and through his people to grow more like him with a certain hope of one day being with him giving us a perspective on this world which is a perspective the world just needs and hasn't got let's pray our father we thank you for the ascension of the

[32 : 43] Lord Jesus Christ that he's not abandoned to the grave he raised him to life again and he now intercedes on our behalf please help us to be in awe of what you have done and to live in the certain hope of being brought into your presence for all eternity thank you for the Holy Spirit that he sent thank you that you dwell in us by your spirit guiding and protecting us and leading us home and we long for the day when he returns to bring in your kingdom pray father he would come soon and we pray in your mercy use us to see many others rescued before that day comes we pray in Jesus name Amen