

Intro. One of the most well-known physical laws of science which affects us at all times is Newton’s Universal Law of Gravity. Sir Isaac Newton observed an apple fall from a tree & realized there had to be a force at work to take the apple from zero motion to acceleration & he called that force “gravity.” This law is universal—we all deal with gravity, whether we have old legs or big bodies with very little vertical jumps or youthful legs & light bodies which explode for 40+” verticals, gravity brings everyone down. But 2,000 years ago, gravity could not hold “Jesus the Messiah.” This message concludes that series as we look at the end of Luke 24 & beginning of Acts 1 & “The Ascension of Jesus the Messiah.”

Theme: Christ’s ascension

Background: Luke closes out his Gospel, which is volume 1 of a 2-volume work, with a brief note on Jesus’ ascension after His crucifixion & resurrection. Then, at the beginning of his 2nd volume in Acts, Luke gives a bit more details on Jesus’ ascension, even mentioning Jesus’ 40 days of ministry between the resurrection & ascension.

➤ In light of “The Ascension of Jesus the Messiah,” let me give you a few actions to take:

1. Before the ascension of Jesus the Messiah, His final instructions were for us to witness (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:8)—We proclaim that the Messiah has come!

- Luke records both at the end of Luke 24 & at the beginning of Acts 1 the command of Jesus to witness to others, beginning in Jerusalem. Though they were to begin in Jerusalem, they weren’t supposed to stop there
- Acts 1:8 serves as an outline for the rest of the book—chapters 1-7 show the disciples witnessing in Jerusalem; chapters 8-12 focus on Judea & Samaria; chapters 13-28 hone in on the ends of the earth
- One of the main themes of Acts is witnessing—telling unbelievers what they had seen & heard & knew of Jesus of Nazareth who, in light of the crucifixion & resurrection, was the Messiah & Lord

Illus: Did you know in some places it is illegal to be an eyewitness at the scene of a certain type of crime & not report it or give your testimony? Most states this isn’t the case, but in Texas, you can be charged with a Class A misdemeanor for failing to report an offense that resulted in serious bodily injury or death. In Ohio, on the other hand, it’s illegal to knowingly fail to report a felony (criminal.findlaw.com/criminal-charges/failure-to-report-a-crime)—what if it were illegal for a Christian not to tell spiritually lost people of the hope they have in Jesus, once-crucified-yet-risen-and-ascended? Let us proclaim that the Messiah has come!

2. After the ascension of Jesus the Messiah, He empowered His followers with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8)—We know that the Spirit has come!

- When you read the book of Acts, you see the continuation of Jesus’ ministry through the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles
- The miracles & mission-work of the apostles would have never been possible without the enabling & empowering work of the Spirit of God

Illus: You can watch any number of sporting events & discern which players have put in more time &/or have more natural talent than others because of the way they dominate in the sport—if we can discern certain abilities in athletes, it should come as no surprise for believers to discern the work of the Spirit in others

- Beginning with Pentecost in Acts 2, the disciples often witnessed the role of the Spirit in & through their lives as He empowered them in preaching, miracles & mission

- The Spirit enables & empowers believers today to preach, witness & work as we yield ourselves to His control & leadership in our lives—He will always work in accordance with His Word, because He inspired it—so if you or someone you know ever claim to be led by the Spirit into sin (adultery, heresy, etc.), then it isn't the Spirit leading them

3. After the ascension of Jesus the Messiah, His disciples received powerful news about His return (Luke 24:51-53; Acts 1:9-11)—We hope that the Messiah is coming again!

- When I use the word “hope,” I use it biblically, not the way we often use it today—today, we use “hope” for “wishful thinking”—I hope it doesn't rain when I go to the beach; the teenage girl says “I hope that cute guy calls me”; I hope my loved one comes through the surgery okay—those contexts of hope are what we want to happen, but there's no guarantee or assurance it will happen
- The biblical word “hope” means “confident trust”—Hebrews 11:1 says “Faith is the substance of things hoped for...”—not wishful thinking but confident trust of what is true
- The angels question the disciples why they kept staring into the skies—“this same Jesus will come again just as you saw Him”—He left physically & visibly & that's exactly how He will return

Illus: Jehovah's Witnesses predicted Jesus would return in 1914 & once WWI started, they said He did return then, but spiritually—that isn't what the angels said!

➤ **So what do we do while we wait? We pray to the Lord & proclaim the Lord**

- That Jesus has ascended to the Father means He is interceding on our behalf & we depend on Him & the work of His Spirit in our lives, so we pray to Him for direction

Illus: There's a story told of a wounded soldier whose hands had been blown off in battle returning home to his father & his father ran down off his porch & embraced his son & the wounds by which he fought for us. Now think of our ascended Lord. He stepped into the pearly gates & the Father stepped down from His throne & embraced His Son & His wounds, by which He had given His life & became our High Priest, to Whom we pray

- While we pray, we also continue to proclaim Him as Messiah & Lord to those who don't know Him
- These are two of the weaker areas of our church—prayer & witnessing—I don't mean no one prays & witnesses, but few do, partly because we expect the staff to do it all & partly because I don't emphasize it enough
- What if we turned the front of this gathering place into a place of prayer each Sunday with believers coming forward to pray for themselves, their friends & this church? It means we have to do away with pride & not care what others think about us
- What if we left this place each Sunday & stepped outside with the mindset of entering the mission field, empowered by the Spirit to tell others Jesus the Messiah has come & is coming again?

Conc. Jesus' resurrection was the firstfruits & guarantee of the future resurrection of believers.

Likewise, His ascension & conquest over gravity is the firstfruits of the future rapture & gathering of the resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air. One of my favorite songs about the Lord's return is “The King Is Coming,” but I cannot help but wonder if an earlier version of that song exists, a song sung in heaven at the Lord's ascension to heaven & return there—did the angels sing, “O the King is coming, the King is coming, I just heard the saints a-shouting! And now His face I see; O the King is coming, the King is coming, praise God, He's coming to intercede!” But because He now intercedes for us, we pray to Him & long for His return when He comes again. Will you turn from your sins & trust in Him? Will you come & pray for His work in your life & the life of this church?