

Jesus' Ascension: Why We Rejoice, Pt 1 **Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:9-11**

The ascension of Jesus Christ is woefully neglected in the life of the church today. Yet, in New Testament categories, this is the acme, or the peak of achievement, perfection, or excellence of Jesus' work, in as much as after He finishes His task of the atonement and the resurrection, He returns to heaven.

It is important to understand that to understand the ascension of Christ, you must understand the descension of Christ. Christ left the splendor of heaven and humiliated himself, taking on the form of a man in his incarnation. Phil. 2:6-8

Jesus humbled Himself—humiliated Himself by leaving the spender of heaven, by laying aside the glory he shared with His father to dwell among sinful mankind. For the God of the universe, the holy and righteous Creator of mankind, who was without sin, who cannot be in the presence of sin, took on flesh and blood and dwelled in the midst of sin and then died for his sinful people so the they may escape the wrath of God, have their sins forgiven, be accepted into God's presence forever through faith in who he is and what he has done for him was humiliating.

Because he humbled himself, the Father rewarded him by exalting him in his ascension, not only restoring the glory he shared with the Father before his coming, but the Father has exalted him even higher. Now, he is exalted to the higher place, the right hand of the Father, where he has been given all honor, majesty and authority. Phil. 2:9-11

Luke has two accounts of the ascension: Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:9-11.

In the Acts version, He was taken up in a cloud. This would be the Shekinah cloud--the glory cloud. The means of transporting our Lord from earth up to heaven was by virtue of the Shekinah glory of God.

Shekinah means *the divine presence of God in a place*.

Shekinah glory refers to *the manifestation of this presence often associated with God's radiance and brilliance*. In the OT it was seen in the pillar of cloud and pillars of fire during the Exodus. While the cloud represents this glory, Jesus is the embodiment of God's glory, who is the ultimate dwelling place of God's glory.

Peter, James, and John get a glimpse of the brilliance of God's glory, the Shekinah glory in the transfiguration of Jesus found in the Synoptic gospels. Matthew 17:1-8

In the Luke 24 passage, we read that Jesus was lifted up out to sight of the disciples, they returned to Jerusalem with *great joy*, and they were constantly praising God. Now, this is interesting, because when Jesus first told them that he was going away, they were anything but joyful. John 16:16-20

The worst thing that Jesus could tell His disciples at that point was that He was leaving them. They didn't want Him ever to leave. And they couldn't imagine how His leaving would be of any

redemptive value whatsoever, but He explained to them that it was to their advantage that He depart.

At first, they didn't get it. And in many ways, the church has gotten it yet. We still seem, as if in a sense of nostalgia, we wish we could have been alive during the earthly sojourn of Jesus, and yet we should understand that His absence from this earth is better for us right now than His presence was during the first century. Somewhere between Jesus' explanation to His disciples that it would be an advantage to them that He depart and His departure, their whole demeanor changed from deep sorrow, from fear and disappointment, now to great joy. Why? Were they happy to see Him go? Of course not. But they understood why he went and where he was going, and that was the cause, of course, for their great joy.

Luke began his gospel with the call to great joy. Luke 2:10

Luke wants us to ponder the thought, "Why did the disciples have great joy when Jesus ascended?"

He also wants us to ask ourselves, "Is my life filled with great joy because Jesus is ascended? Am I continually blessing God because Jesus ascended on high?"

Christ's ascension should cause us, like the disciples, to rejoice and to worship Him.

In the next weeks, we will consider three reason that Christ ascension should cause us to rejoice and worship Him:

- It signifies the completion of His earthly ministry.
- It signifies the commencement of His heavenly ministry.
- It signifies the commencement of our ministry as His earthly representatives.