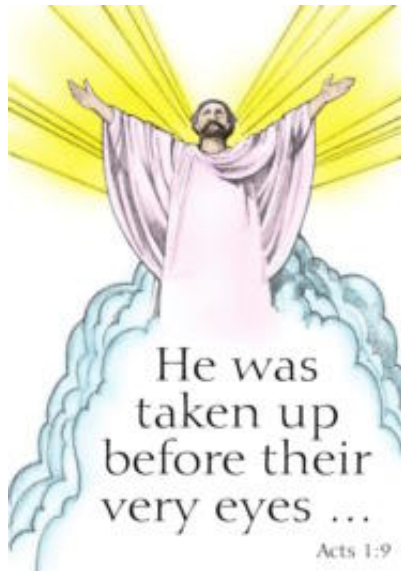


LESSON 9



JESUS' ASCENSION

Scripture Texts: Acts 1:1-12; John 14:3

Jesus showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs. To the Jews, Jesus is a martyr who died for a great cause two thousand years ago. But He is set forth in the New Testament as more than a martyr. God raised Him from the dead, and He is a glorified and risen Savior. He returned from the grave to be with His disciples for a period of forty days, appearing to them time and again during this time.

Jesus' leaving of the world was as unique as the rest of His life. It was a miracle. His death was not the end. The Resurrection was not all. His ascension out of the world was not the end. Every step but leads on to the next one. Today we look at what the Scripture tells of His ascension.

MEMORY VERSE: *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* *John 14:3*

Seen Forty Days

Acts 1:1-3 The former treatise—a written composition on a particular subject. The same writer wrote the Book of Luke for the same friend, Theophilus. In the Book of Luke he had given Christ's doings and teachings until His Ascension—**the day in which he was taken up**. In Acts he tells of the Ascension more fully and goes on with the history of the church immediately following. **After that he (Jesus) through the Holy Ghost had given commandments**—He and the Holy Ghost worked together, as well as with the Father. **To whom**—to the Apostles—**he shewed himself alive . . . by many infallible proofs . . . forty days**—we have studied some of these proofs.

Stay at Jerusalem

Acts 1:4-5 Assembled together . . . commanded . . . not depart from Jerusalem—without His command they probably would have returned to Galilee. The Resurrection had changed the mood of the disciples from despair to joy. But there was uncertainty as to what they were expected to do, and they were reluctant to take the first step, whatever it might be. Jesus settled this by charging them not to **depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father**. What promise? Read Luke 24:49—**Ye be endued with power from on high**—a promise of power from God for the great work ahead of them. **John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost . . .** This promise was about to be fulfilled.

Acts 1:6-8 They asked . . . wilt thou at this time restore . . . the kingdom . . . ? Israel was under the foreign rule of Rome. The disciples had a mistaken idea that Jesus' mission was to win independence for Israel. **It is not for you to know . . .** They did not understand, as yet, the real nature of Christ's kingdom. Holy Spirit baptism would give them understanding. **But ye shall receive power**—not political power but spiritual—**after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses**—He turned their eyes toward their true life's work. **Unto me both in Jerusalem (at home), and in all Judaea (next door), and in Samaria (home missions), and unto the uttermost part of the earth (foreign missions).**

Here is one of the great verses of the Bible. It makes very plain that any spiritual success we gain depends upon

our having received God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Intelligence is not enough. Great effort is not enough. Nothing is sufficient for the salvation of our souls or for the success of our work with others but the gift of the Holy Spirit. He guides, enlightens, and supports us. There is no other way, and the quicker we learn this the better. Jesus warned His disciples to stay at Jerusalem. He warns us today not to seek our help from Washington or London or Moscow, those symbols of great earthly power, but from Jerusalem, that symbol of God's spiritual dealing with men.

The Ascension

Acts 1:9-11 While they beheld—in plain view, not secret—**he was taken up**—the law of gravity lost its effect, He ascended in the air—a **cloud received him**. He went into or beyond a cloud, similar to the way the saints will go up at Christ's Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Luke 24:50-51 reads, ". . . he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And . . . while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." **They looked steadfastly**—in rapt attention, wonder, and expectation. **Two men stood by them**—so absorbed in watching Jesus they had not seen them come. **In white apparel**—their clothing and their message identified them as angels. **Which also said . . . this same Jesus . . . shall so come**—they were told what to expect. **In like manner as ye have seen him go**—He will come **in the clouds**. It will not be secret. **Every eye shall see him** (Matthew 24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Revelation 1:7). It was necessary that Jesus go away. Why?

Obedied Christ's Command

Acts 1:12 Returned . . . unto Jerusalem—in obedience to His command—**from the mount called Olivet**. The disciples returned to Jerusalem, not forsaken and forlorn, but with a living hope of seeing Him again and a definite goal of waiting for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Jesus had told them where to go, how long to stay, what to look for, and what to expect.

John 14:3 If I go and prepare a place for you—He promised to do this—**I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am**—in Heaven—**ye may be also**. What a bright hope this is! The disciples did what they were told to do, and they did it without murmuring. They went where they were told to go. They waited, no doubt a difficult thing for them to do. They prayed steadfastly with one accord. God kept His promise. This Jesus is alive today!

What a place mountains occupy in our Lord's ministry! On a mount, He preached His most famous sermon. On a mountain, He was transfigured. On a hill called Golgotha, He was crucified. On a mountain, He appeared to His disciples after He arose. And from the side of a mountain, He ascended into His eternal glory!

JUST A THOUGHT

If you don't think cooperation is necessary, watch what happens to a wagon if one wheel comes off.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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