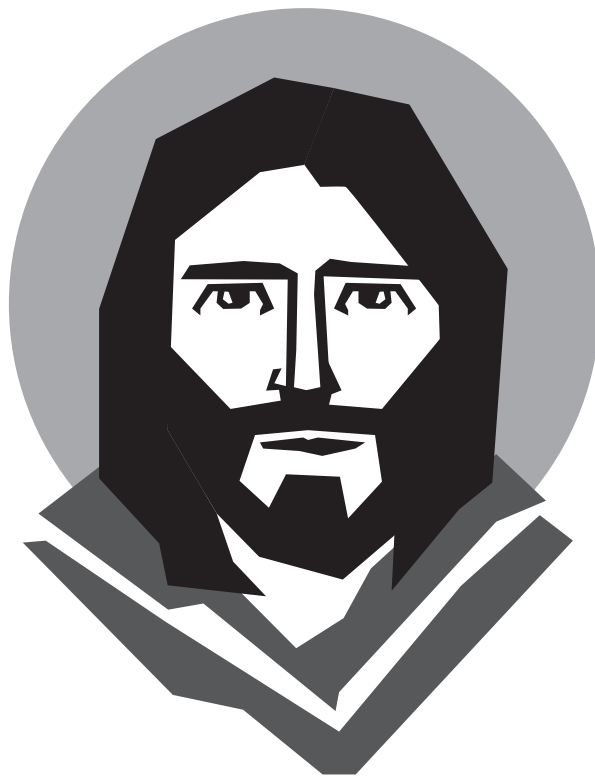


THE REAL **JESUS**



A study through the Gospel of Luke

BOOK 5: HIS RESURRECTION

THE REAL JESUS: HIS RESURRECTION WITNESSED BY THE DISCIPLES

Week Four | October 21, 2018 | Where is Jesus Now?

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's text, Luke 24:50–53. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Jesus ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

The ascension of Jesus is essential to who The Real Jesus is and why He came.

MEDITATE

“And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:52).

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Where is Jesus? What does He do all day?

If you have children or have ever taught children's Sunday school, you've probably heard these innocent, yet

sincere questions before. As endearing as they are, they are really good questions! They carry quite a bit of theological weight with them! Sometimes God uses children to direct our adult minds to the right questions to ask. He invites us to explore these seemingly simple questions and find that they lead to profound and wonderful news for our lives.

Those who have been in or around the church for a while have likely heard many sermons on Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. But how many times have you either heard a sermon or gone through a study on His ascension? Alistair Begg calls Jesus' ascension a neglected essential doctrine of our Christian faith. He states, "It would be one thing if the ascension of Jesus was simply rejected by those who do not believe the Bible, but it is also neglected by those of us who do." Last week, we saw that it's not just liberal scholars or atheists who reject The Real Jesus. Often it's those inside the church who fail to see all of who Jesus really is.

When we think about Jesus, several portraits come to mind. We may think of a distressed Christ praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood, or a tortured Christ hanging on the cross. We may even think of a resurrected Christ showing His doubting disciples the marks on His hands and feet. Each of these portraits on their own are incomplete. A resurrected Jesus without a crucified Jesus is not The Real Jesus. A crucified Jesus without a resurrected Jesus is not The Real Jesus either. But at Jesus' ascension, all these pieces come together to tell the whole story. Luke finishes his account with the picture of Jesus he wants stuck in our heads. The Real Jesus is our ascended King.

🕒: *Which portrait of Jesus sticks in your mind the most?*

🕒: *When you think about Jesus' death and resurrection, do you often forget about His ascension?*

📖 UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In Luke 24:50–53, we learn about Jesus' ascension as well as its implications for our lives. We will see that it is not just a way to wrap up the story or a cool way to go out. Rather, the ascension is something we should cling to for strength and comfort in our Christian life.

1. JESUS' BLESSING

2. JESUS' PARTING

3. THE DISCIPLES' JOY

GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.

JESUS' BLESSING

☐ LUKE 24:50

Q: *What does "being blessed" mean to you?*

Q: *Why do you think Jesus "lifted up His hands?"*

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:5–8 that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred people. This resurrected Lord was not a rumor or legend like sightings of Big Foot or the Loch Ness Monster. He appeared in the flesh before hundreds of eyewitnesses.

Luke also wrote the book of Acts as an orderly and reliable account of historical facts and theological truths. In it, He picks up where his gospel account leaves off, at the ascension of Jesus. Reading Luke 24:50–52 and Acts 1:1–9 give us a full account of what the disciples witnessed at the ascension. In Acts 1:3, Luke tells us that Jesus' ascension did not take place on Easter Sunday, but forty days later. During that time, Jesus continued to teach about the kingdom of God. Imagine how powerful that teaching was now that they all knew who Jesus really was. They had seen the cross and the empty tomb. They not only hoped He was the one who would redeem them, they knew He already had. All of God's redemptive plan hinged on what they had witnessed that weekend in Jerusalem. By mentioning that Jesus continued to teach about the kingdom, Luke reminds us of one truth about who The Real Jesus is, our final and sufficient Prophet.

In Luke 24:50, Luke says Jesus led His disciples as far as Bethany. There He lifted up His hands and blessed

them. In the Bible, blessing someone is not just wishing them well. Blessing is something priests would do. The most famous and commonly used blessing was Aaron's blessing, found in Numbers 6:24–26: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” Blessing comes from God. It is a result of His favor directed toward you. The biblical writers often refer to God's favor as His face shining upon them, His loving gaze noticing, delighting in, and loving His people.

We are made to live under the loving gaze of our Creator God. It is where we flourish, where we experience fullness of joy and perfect peace. Because of sin, however, we were not able to experience God's loving, pleased gaze, but His wrathful gaze that brought judgment, not blessing. But because Jesus drank the full cup of God's wrath, making it possible for us to be united with Him, when God looks at us He sees the perfect righteousness and obedience of Christ. He sees a beloved son or daughter with whom He is well pleased. Those who are in Christ get to experience the loving, pleased gaze of the Father who delights in them and delights in lavishing them with kindness.

We do not know which blessing Jesus prayed over His disciples, but many commentaries suggest it was most likely this one. By blessing His disciples, we see another truth about who The Real Jesus is. He is our Great High Priest. Priests stand between us and God. They bring our petitions to God and ask Him to have favor on us. By lifting His hands, Jesus shows Himself performing this role. He is our perfect mediator, our final and sufficient High Priest before God.

🕒: *Think back to what you said “being blessed” means to you. How does that compare with the meaning in Numbers 6:24–26.*

🕒: *Look up Hebrews 9:11–14. How is Jesus both the Priest and the sacrifice? Why is His sacrifice final and eternal?*

JESUS' PARTING

📖 LUKE 24:51 AND ACTS 1:6–11

Q: *What question did the disciples ask Jesus in Acts 1:6? If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be?*

Q: *What did the two men in white robes tell the disciples to stop doing?*

So where is Jesus and what does He do all day? From the Word of God, we know six answers to these questions.

1) Jesus is ruling the universe at God's right hand.

According to the writer of Hebrews, "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 8:1). Do you know what Jesus' sitting at God's right hand means for us? It means His mission is complete. His work is finished. There is nothing left undone. He has offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins. There is nothing we have to pay, no wrath we have to bear. If we are united in Christ, nothing can take our complete forgiveness away from us. Nothing can stop God's project to transform us more and more into the image of our Savior.

2) Jesus, our Prophet and Priest, is sitting right next to God.

That means that He is reigning and ruling from on high. He is above all things, in control of all things, and holding all things together. Even the biggest things in our life, whether they be wonderful or terrifying, are under His jurisdiction. Here we learn a third truth about who The Real Jesus is—He is our King.

3) Jesus is preparing the New Jerusalem.

Jesus told His disciples where He would go and what He would be doing long before it happened:

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house 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 will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:1-6).

Many people have a mistaken idea of what heaven will be like. They think Jesus is coming to destroy the physical world and sweep us up to a spiritual realm where we will be floating spirits for all eternity. Heaven is described in the Bible as a city, as a real, physical place whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10).

It will be a holy city (Revelation 21:2), uncorrupted by sin and death. It will be a place where God will dwell with His people and they will be fully His. No longer will sin vie for their affections or pull them away from finding their true satisfaction in God. Every single tear they shed will be wiped away. Death—and everything that leads to it and comes with it—“shall be no more” (Revelation 21:4). Death, pain, grief, and sin will become untrue. They won’t exist. This city will have no need of a sun, because God’s glory will give light to every corner (Revelation 21:23). It is a far cry from the picture of heaven as clouds with flying babies playing harps! This place is anything but boring, anything but static and bland. It’s not a spiritual realm; it is a new creation!

In his vision, detailed in Revelation 21, John says he saw the New Jerusalem “coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” This is what Jesus is doing in heaven. He is preparing this place for us.

4) Jesus is ruling over the Church.

Colossians 1:18 says that Jesus is the head, or the ruler, of the Church. That means that the head of the Church is not celebrity pastors or famous authors or speakers. It is not even denominational leaders or figureheads. Jesus is caring for, purifying, growing, and preserving His Church.

5) Jesus enters into our suffering and comforts us.

Have you ever noticed that Luke doesn’t say Jesus “departed,” but that He “parted from them?” This may seem like splitting hairs, but there is a definitional subtlety that is significant. The word “depart” is based on the Latin word that means “to separate” or “to divide.” “To part” simply means “to move away.” Jesus did not evaporate into thin air. He did not abandon us. Acts 1:9 says Jesus was simply lifted out of sight. Why is this important? Because Jesus is not separated from us, He can enter into our suffering and comfort us (Hebrews 4:15).

6) Jesus is interceding for us.

Hebrews 7:25 says Jesus lives to make intercession for us. While our salvation is secured by His finished work, His care for us is continual and will never be finished. His salvation is not a “get out of jail free” card. It is a continual relationship with Him, continued sustainment by Him, and continued growth in Him.

Q: *Which of the truths about where Jesus is and what He is doing did you most need to be reminded of today? Why?*

Q: *What picture of heaven have you always had in your mind? How does it compare to what we read in Revelation 21?*

THE DISCIPLES' JOY

LUKE 24:52-53

Q: *How did the experience of Jesus' ascension impact the disciples' hearts?*

Q: *How did the experience of Jesus' ascension change their lives?*

Luke concludes his gospel, his reliable and orderly account of The Real Jesus, with these words: “And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.” The disciples had seen God’s glory on full display. They witnessed the perfect and final Prophet, Priest, and King. They saw that Jesus’ life and mission was not just an extraordinary event in history. It had eternal consequences. They could do nothing else but worship. Or, as Luke describes in Acts 1:9, to stare up at the sky, most likely with their jaws hanging slack. It was all far more wonderful than they ever could have imagined.

When we see Christ, we see the radiance of God’s glory (Hebrews 1:3). When we see God’s glory, we don’t just learn more things about God, we become captivated by God. We can’t help but marvel. And marveling, as we see in verse 52, leads to worship and joy. When you encounter The Real Jesus, you become a changed person. You become captivated by what truly satisfies and leads to a life of worship and joy.

Q: *In verse 53, Luke says they were continually in the temple blessing God. How does a love for The Real Jesus lead to a love for His bride, the Church?*

Q: *Do worship and joy characterize your life? Do you have a love for and a commitment to Christ's church? If not, how can you keep pressing in to know The Real Jesus more?*

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

Q: *Based on the way you live your life (how you face situations, what you think about, what you fear, what you want to control, what you hope for, etc.), which truth about Jesus do you tend to forget most quickly?*

Q: *How have you seen God's glory through this study of The Real Jesus? What fruit has it produced in your heart?*

Q: *Discuss the idea of witnessing as "public marveling at The Real Jesus." What could that look like in your life?*

PRAY

+ *Use this prayer point to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- Jesus, thank You for allowing us to see Your glory through Your Word. Thank You that we can trust Your Word not just to give us right information about You, but to lead us to You. Thank You that Your work is finished and that You are my Prophet, Priest, and

King. Thank You that Your care for me never ceases. Thank You that you are preparing a place for me. Thank You that You are seated above all things, even the things that feel overwhelming to me.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 24:50 Bethany is a village about two miles outside of Jerusalem. It is almost certainly the modern village of El-Azariyeh. It could be the location of Lazarus' tomb.

LUKE 24:53 The gospel ends where it began, with God's people worshiping in the temple. See Luke 1:5–17, 1:68.

**All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, the Christ Centered Exposition (Luke), and Preaching the Word (Luke).*

