

Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11; He Ascended into Heaven I. His Blessed Presence II. His Physical Departure III. His Joy-filled People

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how do you feel when someone you loves departs? When your grandparents have to go home- or your parents are leaving you alone at home for a little while. How do you feel? Is there a little sense of fear or uncertainty? Well, when Jesus left His disciples in our text- how did they respond? Where they fear filled and anxious? Today we come to our conclusion of our series through the Gospel of Luke. Having started back in 2016, we are almost 5 years into this study of the beloved physician. As we bring this first writing of Luke to a close this morning, we consider this theme: Jesus Christ ascends into glory for the comfort and joy of His people. A few weeks from now will be the actual Ascension Day on the calendar. We confess that Jesus spent 40 days after his resurrection teaching His disciples and giving convincing proof of His life- that He actually did die and physically rose again. Today we see that Jesus not only rose physically- but that He also ascended physically into heaven.

### **I. His Blessed Presence**

In our first point, we consider how the presence of Jesus with His disciples was and is a blessed presence. One of the last things that Jesus did to His disciples before He went to heaven was to bless them- the last words He spoke to them while present in the flesh were words of blessing and peace. As He led them to the mount in v. 50, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. The word used here is eulogos- which is a compound word meaning to speak well- or to pronounce a good word. We would call this a benediction- pronouncing God's blessing upon them. We note that this a pronouncement made by Jesus- it was a declaration. Jesus is not just wishing His disciples well- I hope you are okay after I leave. No, not at all. Nor is Jesus saying I prayer- He is not asking for the Father to bless as a request of the Son. In this act, Jesus was really and truly blessing them! Just as He could pour out His Spirit upon them as He breathed on them- so He could pour out His blessing upon them by simply saying- I bless you! Truly He is fount of every blessing. To continue- in v. 51 we read- as He was blessing them. Jesus did not just say a few words

of blessing- He blessed them and continued to bless them- His hands raised up in the Aaronic priesthood blessing style. As a father would place his hands on his children- so Jesus raises His hands to bless His people. Pouring out blessings on His disciples. But v. 51 brings this continued action into view. As he was – while He was continuing to bless them. The blessing does not stop- the words of good news- the benefitting words continues to flow. While He was blessing them, He was raised up. Jesus does not conclude this blessing- it is an open ended and continuous blessing. In other words- since Jesus did not stop- He continues to bless- even today! We can view Jesus as still raising His hands- still blessing His people as He builds His church- even this morning! And as we read in Acts 1:11- the angels told these men that just as you saw Jesus go, you will see Him return. Well, the disciples saw Jesus ascend while He was blessing- their last vision of Jesus was that of Him raising His hands and pronouncing peace! His peace that was given to them was being received- is still received- and will be received anew when Jesus comes back! He came to bless His people- He left while blessing- He is currently blessing- and one day will return to bless! Now what does it mean that Jesus blessed them? The two most well-known blessings used are from Numbers 6 and II Cor. 13. In Numbers 6 we find the Aaronic blessing- the LORD bless you and keep you and cause His face to shine upon you and give you peace. And in II Cor. 13 we have the trinitarian blessing- the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Now we do not know exactly what words Jesus used- which blessing He was pronouncing- but we do know that when Jesus blesses His people, He always gives them His peace and His presence! He tells them that He was with them- and that they would be receiving His power and Spirit. So we could say, when Jesus blesses His disciples He pronounces the present blessings of the comfort, power and the peace of the Holy Spirit. The firm knowledge that we are so firmly in His hands that nothing can remove us or snatch us away. The assurance of eternal life already enjoyed in our souls. But there is a future blessing that we wait for as well. Remember Jesus will come back blessing us. This future blessing is the destruction of our enemies, the resurrection and glorification of these bodies, and the casting out of sin

and death! So the last thing that Jesus does before He ascends is this- He blesses His people. And every Sunday we are reminded of this blessing- as I raise my hands and echo our Savior as peace is pronounced on you- God's good word of blessing for you as you wait for Jesus's return in like manner.

## **II. His Physical Departure**

Now that Jesus has blessed His people, He is taken up from them in v. 51. While they were watching, Jesus parted from them and was carried up. He parted from them- He left them- He stood apart and traveled away- being removed from their presence. And He was received- He was carried up into heaven- brought up into glory- hidden by the clouds and ushered into His Father's presence. In this we see that Jesus had finished His work of teaching, reminding and convincing His disciples of His physical resurrection. And in His being received by the Father- carried up into heaven- we learn that the Father was well pleased with His Son and received Him with shouts of joy! As we read in Psalm 118 says, the glorious gates of righteousness are opened onto me, that I may enter in. Jesus was received in glory- in the resurrected flesh- because He has done well and finished His task! Now what is Jesus doing in glory today? He continues His work of gathering, protecting and defending His church. The way He does this is by His interceding for us- He is praying for us. By His sending of the Spirit- He is pouring out the Holy Ghost upon us as LD 18 puts it. And He is ruling- He is seated at the right hand of the Father reigning and ruling over all having received the name above all names. In this Jesus has begun His millennial reign- His 1000-year rule spoken of in Rev. 20. Having ascended to the Father in the flesh- with His humanity- Jesus becomes the first-fruit of our future, physical glorification. Not only was Jesus raised and glorified in the flesh- He ascended and was received into the Father's presence in the flesh- which is a promise of our future blessing. In glory He is preparing a place for us, that where He is we may also one day be. Jesus said back in John 16 that it was for our good- for our blessing and benefit that Jesus leave us and go to the Father. And this is why- from the Father's right hand He continues to pour out blessings and by the Spirit He remains present with us! So we still enjoy the Son's presence by the Spirit- and we have the added

benefit of having our flesh in glory- our brother reigning and ruling over all! As He had promised to remain with us always- even the end of the age as Mt. 28 concludes- so He must live and reign over all and dwell in us. In this way, Jesus keeps His promise. But we also learn that just as Jesus ascended into glory- in the flesh- He will also one day return in glory- descend again in the flesh. As we read in Acts 1:11- the same way you saw Him go He will return. So just as Jesus went up into glory- He will return with glory- in the flesh- on that last day! His future return to bless His people and judge the nations is just as certain and sure as the disciples saw Him physically ascend almost 2000 years ago.

### **III. His Joy-filled People**

But how did His disciples respond upon seeing Jesus leave them? What was their reaction? Was it fear- sorrow and dread because they were now all alone? How did they respond when they saw Jesus enter into glory to be received in the glory clouds? Well, the first thing that they did was worship! As v. 52 says, and they worshipped Him! To see the Son glorified and received into heaven- how could they but worship!? Now we know that worship is something that is reserved for God alone. Even Jesus said to Satan back in Luke 4, you shall worship the Lord your God- and Him alone shall you serve. But what did it mean now that these disciples were worshipping Him? They were worshipping Jesus! Seeing all that Jesus had done- seeing His power and His might- witnessing His power over the grave- hearing His ability to forgive sins- they rightly worship Him as God! To worship is to acknowledge something is of great worth. Connected to kissing the hand as a sign of reverence, homage and submission- as we read in Psalm 2- these disciples bow before the Son and kiss his hand as it were- acknowledging Him as the supreme King! The next thing that they did was return to Jerusalem with joy. They go back to the center of the Jewish society which had rejected and crucified Christ- to the seat of religion at the temple which was designed to point to Christ- and here they wait. They wait for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as promised. But while they wait- they are filled with great joy. Think of it- Jesus leaves them and they have great joy! Why would these disciples have joy? Because the redemption that had been promised has been here supplied. The

covenant has been kept, the Law fulfilled, the curse lifted and the blessings received! They are joyful because they have seen and worshipped the Son- they had seen the glory of the only begotten one- and their hearts were moved! As foretold way back in Luke 1:68- The Lord has visited and has redeemed His people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us- that we should be saved from our enemies. Do you think that joy is the normal and expected response of those who have been saved from their sins? Do you think an internal happiness, peace and thanksgiving would be expected when a person has met and been blessed by Jesus and raised to life? What makes a Christian a joyful Christian? Knowing God through Jesus- receiving His benefits, love and blessings! Yes, we long to see Jesus- but He is with us in our heart by His Spirit! We can and will have a great joy and gladness because of what Jesus has done for us! God's people cannot help but be joyful- because our bondage is over and our warfare has ceased! As the angel promised the shepherds in Luke 2- there is good news of great joy for all people- because a Savior has been born to you- He is Christ the Lord! We have good news- because we are witnesses and recipients of His work! And this joy cannot be contained- it needs to be shared. So, where did they go to share this good news? Back to the temple- to witness to all who had hoped for His arrival! Continually going to the temple to bless and praise the name of the Lord.

To conclude, the book of Luke ends where it began. We started in Luke 1 by finding Zechariah in the temple where he meets an angel with a promised blessing. Luke ends with the disciples in the temple again- rejoicing in the blessings that God has given. As our theme states, Jesus Christ ascends into glory for the comfort and joy of His people. His people respond to His blessing with great Joy – by praising God and by being a faithful witness to the truth! The gospel of Luke was written so that we might have certainty concerning these things- so let us believe in the name of Jesus- trust His work as we receive His blessing- and rejoice in Him always because He has and is blessing us!