

The Ascension Of Jesus Acts 1:1-11

Before the days of modern navigational aids a traveler made the Atlantic crossing in a boat equipped with two compasses. One was fixed to the deck where the man at the wheel could see it. The other compass was fastened up on one of the masts, and often a sailor would be seen climbing up to inspect it.

The passenger asked the captain, **“Why do you have two compasses?”** **“This is an iron vessel,”** replied the captain, **“and the compass on the deck is often affected by its surroundings. Such is not the case with the compass at the masthead; that one is above the influence. We steer by the compass above”.**

As Christians, where is our compass? Is it on the earth, or is it in things above? Today, I'd like to look at the story of the ascension and examine both what it means in the ministry of Jesus, as well as how it affects us today. What was the ascension, and why should we spend time looking up?

In the Old Testament, Jesus was the messiah predicted from long ago. The prophecies of old talked about a coming messiah. Throughout the scriptures that our Jewish fathers followed, the words spoke of savior who would rescue men from sin and lead the world to redemption.

When Jesus finally came on the scene, it was with much fanfare: a star leading the way for wise men and angels rejoicing the birth of new king. We celebrate Christmas with a bang and it's a very big deal. We remember the coming of our Lord into this world. We don't forget that Jesus came into the world.

Similarly, leading up to Easter, we remember the week prior with mid-week services during the season of Lent. We get palm leaves to celebrate Palm Sunday and the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Some choose not to eat meat on Fridays during this remembrance period. During Holy Week, we remember the first communion that Jesus celebrated with his disciples and the events that eventually lead to the cross and His death. The celebration really begins with Easter as we celebrate His resurrection and the defeat of death!

But we don't give the same attention to the ascension of our Lord. **For 40 days, Jesus walked the earth after His resurrection. For 40 days, He continued to meet with and witness to many. When His final earthly message was delivered, He rose up into a cloud with a few disciples as witnesses.**

God added credence to the truth that Jesus was truly raised by allowing 40 days on earth to walk, talk, and reach out.

He did these things to show that it was not a dream.

He did these things to give credit to the stories that would follow.

He talked with his disciples during this period and gave them directions of what to do next.

In Matthew 28, Jesus gave a direct command to His disciples. He **said “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** (ESV, Matthew 28: 18-20)

At this point, the disciples had seen numerous miracles. Jesus had healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, raised the dead and even risen from the dead! For 40 days he continued his ministry with the disciples preparing them for the things to come. He used this time to build them up and send them on their way.

Jesus had no intention on continuing this phase of his ministry forever. When the time was right, He chose to return to the Heavenly realm and allow the disciples to enter into their own ministry. The ascension ended Jesus' ministry on earth and began the phase of the Apostles.

It was more than a dividing line. It also demonstrated God's power. Jesus defeated death, then defeated gravity. Jesus showed that He was able to go beyond the normal rules that apply to men and showed the power of God. The ascension demonstrated that Jesus is still alive.

Before He took this journey, Jesus explained what He was going to do. In John 14, Jesus **said “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.”** (ESV, John 14:2-4) Jesus is going to prepare a place for us and we are to join him.

The words “in the same way” show that Jesus will come again. Just like his first coming was a physical appearance and a visible body, so again the next coming will also be a physical appearance with a visible body.

Jesus resurrection was truly in body and not just in spirit. He ate with the disciples. He allowed Thomas to touch his wounds and his side. He walked, talked, breathed and interacted with those around Him. The disciples had no idea that He was going to leave them. Jesus left the world into a cloud and left in a miraculous way just as his resurrection was miraculous.

But that's not the end of the story The Angels who spoke gave us a promise that Jesus would again come. His coming would not be in a vision or a dream, but would be a physical appearance. He will come back in another unexpected way just as he left in an unexpected way. As he ascended to on high, He will one day return.

Just as the disciples didn't know that Jesus was going to leave them, we don't know when Jesus will return. We don't know when Jesus will come again to take His followers to the place He has prepared. The disciples were prepared by Jesus Himself to begin their ministry as the Apostles. We don't have the physical Jesus to prepare ourselves, but we continue to have His words of wisdom and the promise that He will always be there for us in the future. We must be ready when He chooses to come back.

The waiting began many years ago with the ascension of Jesus into the Heavenly Kingdom. He left because his earthly ministry was over. He had another phase of service to prepare a place for our arrival. As believers, that Heavenly home is waiting for us just as we wait for the coming of our savior, it's up to us to be prepared for He will arrive when we least expect it.

Amen.