

Articles and Sermons :: The Ascended Lord

The Ascended Lord - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/10/15 0:47

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The Ascended Lord

One of the foundational tenants of the Christian faith is the belief that after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father. It is in this very place that the risen Lord continues to live His life today. Given the secular and modern mindset of the culture we live in, many might see this ancient teaching of the Scriptures as having very little to do with man today. It simply sounds like a nice and fanciful story that has no relevancy for our daily lives.

Yet, I firmly believe that it is in this teaching we find one of the most relevant truths of the Scriptures. If you are looking for a practical and "down-to-earth" message, then I can think of fewer down-to-earth messages than that which centers on the ascended Lord, who sits in heaven. But one might ask how are we to find any relevancy in the message of Jesus way up in the sky somewhere? What possible application is there for us to find in this teaching that has any bearing whatsoever on our daily lives down here on earth? Let us explore.

The Intercessor

Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 11:25)

One of the many functions Jesus Christ carries out today, sitting at the right hand of the Father, is the continual role He plays as our Intercessor. That is, He continually is before God praying on our behalf. He doesn't just do this once in a great while, or every now and then. Rather, "He always lives" to carry out this task. Jesus Christ lives to pray, and He lives to pray for you and me.

I take great comfort in that. In a society where having strong community support and ties can be difficult to come by, and as we become in many ways more and more isolated and individualistic, it can be hard to call on others, even within the Church, to pray for our needs. There are fewer and fewer people who are willing to take time out of their busy day to bombard heaven on our behalf. Yet, in Jesus Christ we have a person who doesn't merely bombard heaven on our behalf, but rather, lives in heaven itself. Not only that, but He is somebody who continually lives to carry out this task of praying to the Father on our behalf, over our very needs.

Additionally, I take great comfort in the thought that Jesus Christ lives to make intercession for me, because sometimes I don't even bother to pray over my needs as often as I should. Sometimes I'm simply so busy that I don't have the time to pray at all. Not only that, but sometimes I don't even know what areas of my life I need to pray over. But whatever the case, while I might not have the time to pray, I can be confident Christ is praying to the Father on my behalf, because it is what He lives to do.

This ministry He holds as the Intercessor challenges me. How so? Because if Jesus Christ is that devoted to prayer, to the point where He LIVES TO PRAY, then far from feeling I can be more slack in my prayer life because of His ministry, I feel the Lord's call to pray all the more. I admit, I don't pray as often as I can or should. But, I feel radically challenged by Christ's present ministry to pray all the more. Because Jesus Christ lives to pray, I feel called to follow His example.

He's Bigger Than Your Problem

Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which

h is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

In part, it was the apostle Paul's prayer that the saints in Ephesus would have a true revelation of the ramifications the doctrine of the ascended Lord could have on their lives. It is my prayer that you understand this as well. One of the ways that the apostle Paul spells out this doctrine is looking at the ascension of the Lord in its cosmic context. Paul wants us to see there are riches, greatness, and power working on our behalf from Christ in light of this truth. How? Because of the unique position of privilege and power Christ occupies as He sits at the right hand of the Father.

What does it mean to be sat at the "right hand" of the Father? In antiquity, the best place to sit at a dinner table was at the right hand of the dinner host. This seat was reserved as a place of honor and favor for whoever occupied that seat. Thus, if you were somebody important, you would be asked to sit at the right hand of your dinner host. Therefore, it is significant that we read that Jesus Christ has been "seated" at the "right hand" of the Father in heaven. Christ sits at a place of honor and favor with our heavenly Father, and as a result of that honor and favor, has all the power that comes with it.

A pastor I know once said we have become too fascinated with the Jesus that hangs on the cross. He went to talk about how when we visit a church, it is very possible we will see a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross somewhere. Yet, as important and central as Christ and Him crucified is to the gospel message, this pastor went on to say that the Jesus on the cross can't do very much for you. For in being so focused on the Jesus hanging on the cross, we have failed to see that Jesus is no longer hanging on that cross. Rather, Jesus Christ now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And it is this Jesus that is able to do something for you!

Indeed, Paul goes on to say that the ascended Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places sits, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and ever name that is to be named, not only in this age but also the age to come." (v. 21) No matter what satanic force might be out there trying to destroy you, and no matter who is out to get you, be assured that Jesus Christ sits "far above" the boogey-man in your life! His heavenly position has placed Him in a unique place that allows Him to deal with whatever is going on in your life.

Is our shambled economy frightening you and your family? Is your job being threatened? Is your wife talking about leaving you? Do your neighbors hate your guts? What other problems do you have in life? The doctrine of the ascended Lord teaches us that no matter what problem you have in life, and no matter what battle you are facing, Jesus Christ is bigger than your problem. So instead of fretting and getting bent out of shape and losing sleep about whatever tribulation has come your way, realize that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, and is in a place to demonstrate "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." (v. 19) Whatever your situation, make sure that you simply put yourself in a place to allow the greatness of His power towards you to be shown.

We Are Seated With Christ

Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

According to the apostle Paul, not only did Jesus Christ ascend into heavenly places to sit at the right hand of the Father, but, through our spiritual union with Christ, we have also been seated with Him at the right hand of the Father as well. Thus, all the blessings that are at the disposal of Christ are ours by faith and virtue of our spiritual union with Him. What does that mean? It means we can enjoy and participate in the life Christ experiences right now, seated at the right hand of the Father!

Though we could focus on many different things in regard to this doctrine, the thing that the Lord usually impresses my mind when I meditate on this topic is the issue of joy. There are no shortage of books and sermons out there dedicated to the issue of finding joy in the Christian life. Joel Osteen is perhaps the most popular modern day author on the subject. Yet in all my reading and listening to sermons, I have yet to hear anybody preach on the issue of joy as it relates to the ascended Lord.

Hebrews 12:2 says in regard to Christ that, it was "for the joy set before Him" that He endured the agonies of cross. That "joy" He experiences right now, in this very instant, sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He experiences "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8) It is a joy that delights in the goodness and glory of God, of continually being in the very presence of Him who created all things. It is a joy that never changes or fades, for it is a joy that is

eternal and everlasting.

With that said, you and I through our union with Christ are made to sit in heaven at the right hand of the Father. The blessings Christ enjoys are also available for us to enjoy, right here and right now, in this life, and in this instant. Thus, the everlasting joy that Christ experiences as He sits at the right hand of the Father is a joy that is available to you and me. And because it is a joy that we experience as we are raised up with Him, "far above" (Ephesians 1:21) all the things in this world, then no matter what situation we find ourselves going through, no matter how horrible our predicament, no matter how dark our night might be, there is an everlasting and eternal source of joy available to us through the heavenly position we share with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Far from being a dry, old, and dusty doctrine that is merely recited as part of some creed, I believe I have shown quite convincingly that the doctrine of the ascension of Jesus Christ has a great practical application that I believe few have even begun to explore. As Christians we believe that Jesus Christ came back to life three days after having been crucified. After offering many convincing proofs of his bodily resurrection to a select group of witnesses, He ascended into heaven where He remains today. And it is in heaven, where Christ carries out His present ministry today—a ministry that still makes a difference in our lives today.

Re: The Ascended Lord - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/10/15 8:34

Just a further thought: It's amazing how "relevant" the gospel message can be. Often when I surf the websites of many contemporary churches today, or read interviews of their pastors, they talk a lot about seeking to be "relevant" with the gospel message. But, instead of showing how the gospel message is relevant, they simply try to show that they as ministers have the same cultural tastes as their would be parishioners. It's not uncommon to read a pastors biography these days who can't help but blurt out that he's a fan of U2, and that his favorite movie of all time is Braveheart.

Never by trying to be more relevant have they become irrelevant. They have yet to see the relevancy of the gospel message, because they have yet to have a personal revelation from the Lord Himself about how each of the essential gospel elements makes a difference in their own personal lives. They can't think about such doctrines except in an abstract, technical, and theological way, because they've yet to truly apply such doctrines to their lives. And because they've yet to apply such doctrines to their lives, such as the truth of the ascended Lord, they have no way of expressing anything about the Lord in the everyday language of people.

It's merely a doctrine to them, it is not a reality by which they live. If they lived be realities such as talked about in this essay, then expressing these things would be no trouble. But, because such well meaning people are flakes, they are unable to bring a word from heaven to the people of this earth, because they have not lived that word in themselves.

I hope to do turn this article into a brief series, one on each of the major elements of the gospel message. The Crucified Lord, The Risen Lord, and The Soon Coming King. Pray for me as I endeavor to do such, so as to make as many practical and down to earth messages such as this for those who would call themselves disciples of Jesus Christ.

Re: - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2009/10/15 10:09

When you get a glimpse of the exalted, risen Savior; it will change your life completely and forever!! Just ask PAUL !!

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/10/15 10:56

Amen. It really comes down to the issue of belief. Do you really "believe" these things, or do you just believe them? If you really "believe" these truths, your life cannot help but be different. They are nothing short of radical and revolutionary claims.