

Ascension Declaration (Acts 1:1-11)

Introduction – Happy Mother’s Day. Setting aside a day to honor mothers is a great idea, for the office of mother is a high and honorable and glorious gift of God. Our calendars are set with national civil holidays (4th of July, Thanksgiving) or “Hallmark” holidays (Mothers Day, Father’s Day). As families, we mark our years with birthdays and anniversaries as well. What events are important to celebrate in human history? Should we commemorate Ascension Day? Is it really that significant of a day?

Ascension Day, rightly understood, is the day of the Great Coronation, where Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, took His rightful place at the throne of God. It signaled the transition from the old heavens and earth to the new heavens and earth. The Son of Man was given the kingdoms of this world. Why would this not be commemorated? Is it possible we do not comprehend (and maybe we do not believe) the implications of this event?

Forty Days After The Resurrection (vv1-3) – For forty days Jesus instructed His apostles whom He had chosen; things pertaining to the kingdom of God. The book of Acts gives us the account of the application of that instruction by the apostles.

Waiting For Power from on High (vv4-5) – Jesus had given them the Great Commission, but while He had all authority, they were to wait to be granted power from that authority, the promise of the Father. That took place ten days later, on Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks.

Questions and Answers (vv7-8) – Having conquered death, the disciples wanted to know when He would restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus warned them that it was not for them to know such times and seasons, and the history of the church is littered with the folly of those who have not heeded this admonition from Christ. We are to understand, however, this season – this is the season of witness (v8). More on this ‘witnessing’ later.

The Ascension and Promise (vv9-11) – This curious passage leaves us with some questions. Why are the disciples admonished for looking up into the heavens? It appears that they are to take confidence in Christ’s promised return and get to the business at hand here upon the earth.

What Happened? – Jesus did not simply disappear. He ascended. This did not happen simply because Jesus was done with His work here. His ascension had a particular purpose for Himself, and for us, His body. Calvin states, “...*though he departed from us, it was that his departure might be more useful to us than that presence which was confined in a humble tabernacle of flesh during his abode on the earth.*”

Clouds Received Him (Acts 1:9) – The clouds took Him out of their sight and somewhere else.

Where Did the Clouds Take Him? (Dan 7:13-14) – When we are given a picture of Jesus coming in the clouds, He is not coming to earth. He is coming to the Ancient of Days in heaven.

Coming in the Clouds of Heaven (Mark 14:61-64) – The high priest knew that Jesus was referring to Dan 7 (and to Psalm 110) and was claiming to be God, taking the name of God “I AM” for Himself. Christ’s death was going to overthrow those very powers that put Him to death. This would be accomplished in His death, resurrection, and ascension to a throne. The high priest did not comprehend this (1 Cor 2:7-8).

Kingdoms of This World (Rev 11:15-16) – Christ’s physical departure from the world was to take the throne of the world. This throne is in heaven before God. Hence, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus – by His ascension to that throne.

At God’s Right Hand (Psalm 110:1-2) – “*The LORD has said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies Your footstool.’ The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies.*”

Ascension Declaration: The Crown Rights of King Jesus – Sitting on His throne, this means that Jesus has been given the name above every name. It means that He is Lord of every kingdom, every institution, and every power upon this earth. And this means that our ‘witness’ to the ends of the earth is that the kingdom of darkness has been defeated (the capital city has been taken) and all are called upon to bow the knee and confess “Jesus is Lord.”

Dressed For the Coronation – All are called to come and celebrate this King of kings. But you can’t come dressed like that. You’re covered with the guilt of the first Adam and your own sin. Death isn’t allowed into heaven, and in the first Adam, we died. Our ‘witness’ must include that you are summoned and will be brought to this throne. But you will be severely and rightly judged if you come in the shame of your rebellion and sin. You must be dressed in the righteous white-ropes of the Messiah Himself. And this you can only do by faith. But we must remember that the personal robe you wear, “Jesus is Lord,” is only true because Jesus has been given authority over heaven and earth.

Crown Rights “out there” – We aren’t to stand staring up into heaven as though His authority was only up there. His ascension declares His Lordship here over all of your family, the institution you work for or own, the nation in which you reside and all the nations of this earth. When we apprehend this by faith, we will no longer be embarrassed to say in the public square, “no king but Jesus,” and we will no longer bow to what has become the idolatrous, “God bless America.” But this makes them nervous, and so Hallmark isn’t setting up large displays of “Ascension Day” cards. The world is not planning great celebrations for Ascension and Pentecost. Not yet.

The Manifold Advantages of Christ’s Ascension – Ascending to the throne, Jesus sits upon the throne of grace, whereupon we may boldly come to receive mercy and grace in our time of need. He sits there as our Perfect Mediator, our Advocate before the Father. From that throne of authority, He gives gifts to men, adorning His Church with various graces. From that throne, He sent His Holy Spirit to us that the Perfect Counselor might reside in us. And because we have seen His ascension, we see the end of His being the firstfruits. Christ was not reincarnated, He was resurrected, glorified and presented in heaven. And this is the hope of all who are in Christ. Final resurrection. Final glorification. Final presentation. Happy Ascension Sunday.