

# Acts Chapter 1 v 9 - 11

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Good evening. This morning we began thinking about the ascension of our Lord Jesus, his being at the right hand of the Father, and we read from Colossians chapter 3, where we're told to set our hearts on things above where Christ is.

Verse 2 says, Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Our hearts and our minds are to be set upon the Lord Jesus, and where we have been raised with him. Our first hymn is a hymn that speaks of the triumph of Jesus in his ascension, the glory that he accomplished.

289. Look, you saints, the sight is glorious. See the man of sorrows now. 289. Let's come to God in prayer together.

Let us pray. Almighty and all-glorious God in heaven, we come to you this evening, and we rejoice because you are our God and our Lord, because you are our heavenly Father, because you are to us so very dear, so very lovely, so very gracious.

[ 1 : 39 ]     We thank you, O Lord, that you are seated upon your throne in glory in heaven. You are the one who is supreme, who has the first place, who has all power.

We thank you that at your right hand, seated upon that throne, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that he is indeed crowned, crowned with glory and honor and power and praise.

Thank you that together you rule and reign over this universe and this world. We thank you again that we are able to crown you, Lord of our lives and Lord of this church.

Lord, we can't put you in a higher place than you already have, but we can acknowledge your rule over us. We can bow before you in adoration and in submission.

We can, O Lord, say and declare and seek to live as those whose king is Jesus. By the way we speak, by the way we think, by the way we act, Lord, we long and desire that we would crown you and that, Lord, you would have your rightful place over every part of our lives, not just over our lives on a Sunday evening, not just over our lives for those few moments or minutes when we spend time in prayer through the week, but, Lord, over every part, our comings and our goings, our rising and our lying down.

[ 3 : 17 ]     We pray, O Lord, that in every aspect and every part of our lives we may be aware that we are subjects of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, that we are those who you have commissioned to serve you in this world, to be your messengers, to be your people, to be your servants.

We praise you and thank you again, O Lord, that in doing so we find the very reason for life. In doing so we find the very purpose for our existence. For you made us and created us for yourself.

You saved us and rescued us from sin for yourself. That we might be a people that displays your glory, that enjoys our God by glorifying him.

We pray, O Lord, that you would help us even now as we come to your word, as we come to sing your praises, as we hear your word read and preached. May this be, again, you at work in us, changing and fitting us to live these purpose-driven lives, these lives of reason, these lives of fulfillment and contentment, these lives, O Lord, that you've privileged us with, that we may glorify you.

For we ask these things, as we ask again, for the very help and grace of your Holy Spirit to be with us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to read from Ephesians and chapter 1.

[ 4 : 54 ] If you'd like to turn there, please. Ephesians and chapter 1. And we're going to start at verse 11 and read through into chapter 2.

So, if you have one of the church Bibles, that's page 1173. 1, 1, 7, 3. Reading from chapter 1, verse 11, we'll read into chapter 2, up to verse 10.

Remembering that we are particularly thinking about the ascension of the Lord Jesus, keep an eye out, as it were, as we read through this passage to how Paul speaks of, makes mention of, and draws our attention to the fact that Jesus has ascended into heaven.

So, Ephesians 1, verse 11. In Him, that's Christ, we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him, pardon me, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

In order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. And you were also included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

[ 6 : 23 ] When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of His glory.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I've not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know Him better.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

[ 7 : 36 ] And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath, but because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

It is by grace you've been saved and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast, for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

[ 9 : 07 ] And we'll be thinking about some of those aspects there in those chapters in a moment or two. Please, have your Bibles.

Just turn with me for a moment to Acts and chapter 1. We read this passage this morning and we're going to be dipping into it again and thinking about it once more but particularly just the final few verses that we read this morning.

Verses 9 and 10. Verses 9 and 10 of Acts and chapter 1. After Jesus said this He was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. Men of Galilee they said, why do you stand here looking into the sky?

This same Jesus who's been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you've seen Him go into heaven. As I said this morning this coming Thursday is Ascension Day a day which is often neglected not only by the world which likes Christmas and Easter and other Christian events but also by us as Christians.

[ 10 : 32 ] We sort of let it pass us by and yet it is an event of immense importance of immense encouragement and of wonderful truth when people may say to us where is this Jesus now?

Well the reality is that He is in heaven. He is at the Father's right hand. We've read there that He has gone back to heaven been taken to heaven. A real event historical event as historical and real as the crucifixion and death burial resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

and we thought just this morning very briefly about the time that Jesus between His resurrection and Ascension was in the world still in His resurrection body as He met with the disciples to encourage to comfort to convince to commission them into the work of the gospel.

So I want us as I said this morning to think about the Ascension what does it mean for us why is it important what are the ramifications for the apostles and also for us and I just want to make four very brief thoughts and points partly from what we read of here in Acts but also what we've read in Ephesians and throughout the scriptures.

The first thing is this the Ascension of Jesus speaks to us of a work completed speaks to us of completion the Ascension was the very final act of Jesus in His life upon earth that final event in His earthly life until of course He comes again.

[ 12 : 11 ] But it speaks of the completion of the work that He has done. In Hebrews in chapter 1 we thought of it this morning verse 3 when He, Jesus had made purification for sins He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

He sat down I've said this before and I think you've picked it up before that when you're busy and you're working and you've done a job outside you come in and you sit down there's a sense of rest isn't there?

The work is done for the day the job is completed for the day you sit and rest there's a sense in which all the way back to creation on that seventh day when the Lord God had finished that work of creation we're told He rested not until He sat down but He rested doesn't mean that God stopped working doesn't mean that Jesus stops working but it means that He's completed that once for all work that was necessary.

Our Lord Jesus' life had all been always been about the work of God the Father in John chapter 19 at the cross that incredible cry the penultimate cry that we read of it is finished it's one word in the original Greek finished completed not I'm finished it's finished the work is finished that's His proclamation from the cross everything for our salvation He has done for us He's coming into the world being born as that babe in Bethlehem had one purpose one mission a rescue mission a contract as it were to fulfil a purpose but now as Jesus returns to the Father everything is done everything is complete everything is finished Jesus' life

He spoke of as being one of work He said in John 4 after He'd met with a Samaritan woman at the well and the disciples had come to give Him some food He said to them my food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work He ate slept and drank the work of the Father to carry out the ordained task that the Messiah had been given to rescue and to save and He had finished it completed it when He returned to heaven I wonder if you're one of those people who has to finish the job you start on the moment from the moment you start it to finish you can't put it off even if you're working late into the night I've got to get it finished before I go to bed it's got to be done or are you like me quite happy that it's it's half done and I'll finish it later it'll get done in a while or even worse perhaps some of us we do half a job and then we find something else to do we're distracted with something else and then we're distracted with something else and so all around the house there are all sorts of unfinished projects

[ 15 : 23 ] Jesus isn't like that Jesus came to finish the work to fulfill the will of God the Father all that God had promised throughout the Old Testament that the Messiah would do Jesus came to do in Luke in chapter 24 as he's walking and talking with the disciples on the Emmaus road he explains to them everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses the prophets and the Psalms the whole of the Old Testament is filled with those promises all looking forward to Jesus coming and finishing the work we read there didn't we in Ephesians in chapter 1 about the plan of God God having predestined us according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will a plan that was made before Jesus came into the world before the world was made an architect's drawing we might say that was put together between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and Jesus was commissioned to build the church commissioned to finish the work from start to finish it's his work to bring it all to completion now dear friends why am I stressing this because I think it's so important for us it's such an encouragement for us to know that our salvation has been accomplished and completed by Jesus when he left the earth to ascend back to the Father there was nothing left undone there was nothing to be added to our salvation nothing that we need to do to make ourselves right with God he has done everything for us we aren't sort of half finished it isn't as if

God says well I've done all this for you I've given you all these things now it's over to you it's up to you all that God requires of us in terms of righteousness that's law keeping and in atoning for our sins all has been done by Jesus and finished I've never lived in a new house I've been and seen a show house perhaps you've bought a new house before now and the builders have gone and they said there's the keys get into your new house and enjoy it inevitably there's going to be some snags isn't there there's going to be a door that doesn't quite close as it should or there's going to be there's going to be a radiator that just develops that tiny little leak which only drops one drop a day but it's enough to be so annoying that you've got to call them back not with Jesus one of the great comforts for us dear friends with Jesus is that he is a perfect saviour that his standards are way and above anything human they are divine they are perfect we don't have to wait we can enjoy fully and completely the newness of life that Christ has done for us his ascension assures us that there's nothing for us to add or do don't you feel at times dear friends even as a believer that

I've got to do something it's up to me or I've somehow failed the Lord or in some way that because I made that mistake or got that wrong somehow that's diminished in some way my relationship with God or my salvation we have those struggles don't we that go on in our minds we can't really comprehend grace as it truly is but the ascension of Jesus the leaving of Jesus from the earth is a declaration I've done it all you don't have to do anything more nothing dear friends let me just put it even in this way you never have to go to church you never have to read your Bible you never have to pray again you never have to serve you never have to witness none of those things being absent from your life will take away from you any part of God's salvation in Christ everything we do we do from love everything we do we do from thankfulness everything we do we do from joy joy because serving the Lord is joy but even if you never did anything else again because Jesus has completed and finished that work for you you can be certain and sure that you shall be received in heaven with him what about the ascension of Jesus then it means also not just the completion of his work but it means the glorification of his name when our Lord

Jesus returned to the Father he was to return in splendor and glory remember that prayer that wonderful high priestly prayer of John 17 where he prayed now Father glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began in this world his glory we might say was veiled people didn't see him as glorious they saw him as ordinary they saw him as well un un that's the word I'm thinking of never mind not that brilliant not that special not that extraordinary they saw him as just being Jesus of Nazareth Jesus the son of Joseph the carpenter they even saw him as worse things than that they saw him as a man who didn't deserve to live a man who was unworthy of life a man who did not deserve respect or even kindness no but now

Jesus has ascended ascended to the Father's right hand and he's returned to the glory that was his before the world was made and because of his finished work because of his ministry of salvation in fact Paul tells us in Philippians he's received even greater glory therefore God highly exalted him we're told in Philippians 2 and bestowed on him the name which is above every name in the ascension God is confirming that this man who walked amongst us was indeed sent from heaven the son of God who lived in this world no one was there to see him coming from heaven as it were into the world that miracle of conception in the virgin womb of Mary but they were there standing to see him return as the father received him and accepted into heaven he was acknowledging him as who he truly is

[ 22 : 46 ] Ephesians 4 verse 10 reminds us he who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens in order to fill the universe as we thought and we sang in that first hymn he is crowned with many crowns he is the one who exercises authority and power we read there in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 20 he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority power and dominion every name that is invoked not only in the present age but in the one to come Jesus is glorified in heaven if we were to see him in his glory if we were to see him as he is now while we are in this feeble human natural state it would be too much for us to take it would blow us away but in heaven he is glorious we saw in his life just a few little glimpses didn't we when he was on the mountain transfiguration and the disciples were there the three disciples

James John and Peter and they couldn't look because the glory of Jesus was peeking out now the glory of Jesus is great Jesus has ascended to show that he has brought his work to completion he has ascended so that he might receive glorification but he's ascended as well because there's a continuation you see the ascension is a connecting link between Jesus his first coming and his second coming there's a continuation in which he is working in between those two events Jesus has finished the work of our salvation but it doesn't mean he's finished his ministry or his work for us he's still working for us he's applying what he accomplished into our lives by his Holy Spirit Acts chapter 1 verse 1 remember what we read there

Luke begins by saying this is in my former book Theophilus I told you about all that Jesus began to do that he began to do in other words the work of Jesus is ongoing in the book of Acts we now have in heaven one who is at work for us as our great high priest we now have one who is sympathetic with all our weaknesses who's experienced affliction and grief and sorrow and hardship and loss we have one who is in heaven who now lives that he might make sure and certain that we shall be saved Hebrews 7 verse 25 therefore he's able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them Jesus hasn't left us he hasn't given up he hasn't said well

I've done everything necessary for your salvation so now off you go again he continues to pour out grace and help into our lives he's continuing to work continuing to teach continuing to carry on that work in us yes we are completely utterly eternally safe and saved but God didn't just save us for heaven he saved us that he might transform us into the likeness of his son he saved us that he might work in our lives very practically in such a way that we might be changed and transformed and so we have that wonderful promise in 2 Corinthians 3 18 we are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the spirit dear friends one of the surest signs that we are

Christ's that we are enjoying the finished work of the cross is this that Jesus is still at work that Jesus is still transforming that Jesus is still changing that he is putting to death those habits and sins in our lives which we know are wrong and contrary to his grace and he is bringing out from us the blooms and the blossoms and the fruit of the spirits saving work is done the continuing work goes on what is Jesus doing for us Jude tells us he's sustaining us and keeping us from falling away to him who is able to keep you from falling present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy that's our Jesus he's pouring out into our weak bodies the strength that we need day by day he says to

[ 28 : 17 ] Paul in 2 corinthians 12 my grace is sufficient for you my power is made perfect in weakness moment by moment day by day Christ is at work in us and for us Paul writes to the Philippians being convinced of this that he who began a good work in you will carry on to completion and so yes I've already said quite rightly and I hope you agree that there's nothing we can add to nothing that we can do which will make us more saved more converted more heading for heaven than what Christ has done but the way that Christ works in us and through us is through the means of his grace through worship together with God's people through the reading of scripture through prayer through witness through fellowship these are the things that Christ works in and through to shape to change to continue finally dear friends the

Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven that he might make preparation there's three things that Jesus is preparing well the ascension of Jesus was to prepare for first of all of course his ascension was to prepare for the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the church we looked at this verse this morning John 16 verse 7 tell you the truth it's for your good that I'm going away unless I go away the counselor will not come to you but if I go I'll send him to you Jesus was preparing he ascended that he might send the Holy Spirit down upon the church down upon his people the disciples down upon us to equip to keep to strengthen to work in us that was why he ascended but he also ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us in his father's house that's what he told the disciples wasn't it in John 14 in my father's house so many rooms if it were not so I would have told you

I'm going there to prepare a place for you it's a mystery isn't it how is Jesus preparing a place for you and for I don't know if you can remember when you were expecting your first child and maybe you put aside a room in the house this is going to be the nursery room for the baby or for the child and perhaps if you had the money you were able to decorate it get all the equipment needed and so on you were looking forward to that arrival I don't know how Jesus is preparing a place for me and for you but he is so that when we arrive in his perfect time everything will be ready for us to enter in and enjoy his fellowship in his home for eternity yes he's preparing preparing for the spirit to come preparing a place for us but he's also preparing to return again that's what Jesus said as he spoke to the disciples about the many rooms if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back take you to be with me that you may be where I am the ascension of

Jesus going into heaven gives us that sense of anticipation he's coming again he's coming again that's what the disciples were told weren't they in Acts chapter 1 why are you looking into the sky you can imagine they're all sort of looking out isn't it amazing have you done that have you ever just for a bit of fun stood on the street corner and looked up people will come and stand and go won't they they'll just stand and look what's he seeing is it a bird is it a plane is it superman no it's a seagull they will looking out you can imagine the disciples all standing looking up and they say what are you looking up for in one sense he's coming again get on with the work he's coming back the same Jesus who's been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you've seen him go into heaven surely this above all else dear friends is what we are gaining from the ascension one of the things that we are being moved towards and caused to think about when we realize that

Christ has gone into heaven is the promise that he will return just as he came that first time according to promise and to plan just as he said to his disciples according to promise and plan I must finish the work that God has given me to do and then return to my father just as surely then we know he'll come again again and again he said this again and again he promised are we ready are you prepared for Jesus to come again is your house and your life in order we don't know when that will be we are not told when that will be but we are told to be ready be prepared to be living our lives in such a way that when we come we shall not be taken by surprise Jesus told many parables didn't he of those who who Jesus said as a king had given talents and he went away and he came back and they were surprised they weren't ready for him they hadn't put their house in order they had misused the gifts that God had given them so dear friends what about you what about me are we ready are we prepared are we looking forward to or are we dreading the return of the

[ 34 : 01 ] Lord Jesus Christ what a terrible thing it will be for those who have not looked for his coming with anticipation for those who are dreading his coming it will be a terrible day when he comes again he comes and every eye will see him and every everyone will acknowledge who he really is as the God and king that he is and those who have not trusted and those who have not followed and those who have not put their faith in him it will be a day of sorrow and grief like they've never known but for the believer what a day it will be of unimaginable joy to see our Jesus coming we're in that transition period we're in that exciting time dear friends between Jesus' ascension and his return we're in that place where he's continuing his work to build his church where he's continuing his work to transform and change us we're in that exciting time where he's given us a message that we thought of this morning this gospel of life changing power by the Holy

Spirit and we're to do it and to share it and to keep on working until the day comes when we too will be taken up to sit at his right hand in glory now we labor then we shall rest now he works and we are to work also let's sing together as we prepare to come to the communion table as we prepare to think and come to celebrate our savior and his sacrifice for us let's stand and sing 298 you may not know the words all that well but you'll certainly know the tune 298 the savior to glory is gone let us say together the words of the grace the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all  
evermore Amen Amen