

## **The Story – Ascended and Seated**

Two weeks ago we talked about the importance of the crucifixion. We pointed out that Jesus died on the cross as the sacrifice for our sins. His life was the ransom paid that freed us from bondage to sin. Redemption was provided through his death upon the cross.

Last week we talked about the importance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is the assurance that the sacrifice offered for our sin has been accepted. Redemption and the forgiveness of sins has been granted through the shed blood of Christ and we know it for certain because God showed us in power by raising Jesus from the dead.

This morning we are talking about Jesus' ascension into heaven. What does that mean? The bible teaches that forty days after the resurrection Jesus was "taken up" or ascended bodily into heaven. It means that Jesus, in his resurrected body, was taken up to heaven where he will forever be our Savior and Lord and Redeemer. It's one of the reasons we know we aren't some kind of disembodied spirit in heaven because it was the resurrected Jesus that they talked with and touched and ate with that they saw ascend into heaven. Luke's gospel tells us, **"When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple praising God."** Luke 24:50-53

Notice Luke said when Jesus ascended into heaven they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Joy? The dearest friend they had ever had, their Savior and Lord just left them. Why are they filled with great joy that Jesus has gone back to heaven? It isn't just where he went, or that he went there in his resurrected and physical body, but it is about what happened when he got there. There are multiple reasons for rejoicing but we are just focusing on one this morning. R.C. Sproul tells us, **"The New Testament idea of ascension means something far more weighty than merely going up into the sky or even to the abode of the heavenlies. In His ascension, Jesus was going to a specific place for a specific reason. He was ascending into heaven for the purpose of his investiture and coronation as the King of kings and Lord of lords."** ...R. C. Sproul

Jesus ascended into heaven and took his place upon the throne as the King of Kings! Understanding that lit a fire in the hearts of the disciples. It became part of all of their preaching in the New Testament, that Jesus died, was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven and

they used this phrase, that he is “seated at the right hand of God.” In fact, do you know which Old Testament verse is quoted or alluded to in the New Testament more than any other verse? According to one source it’s Psalm 110:1 **“The Lord says to my Lord; ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Psalm 110:1** That verse is referred to in the New Testament 23 times. God the Father says to Jesus the Son, “take your rightful place upon the throne and sit at my right hand as King of Kings!” That phrase is part of what lit that fire in the disciples. Stephen Seamands in his book *Give Them Christ* writes, **“...Jesus is not only risen but reigning, not only alive but sovereign, not only central but supreme.”**

**...Stephen Seamands**

That reality, that doctrine was part of New Testament preaching from the beginning. At his ascension they understood, they worshiped, they rejoiced and they proclaimed this truth: **Jesus the risen Savior rules and reigns as King!** In his sermon recorded in Acts 2 Peter told the listeners on the day of Pentecost, **“God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord has said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts 2:32-36** Crucified, raised to life, ascended and seated at the Father’s right hand!

The writer of Hebrews declares, **“When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.” Hebrews 1:3**

Paul, in the book of Romans and speaking of Jesus declares him to be the one **“...who died, yes who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us...” Romans 8:34.**

We could go on, but the point is Jesus is seated in power and authority our permanent advocate and intercessor, reigning as King. We use the term “sitting president” meaning the current president. Barack Obama is a sitting president. Jesus is seated as the King of kings, but it makes no sense to have a king without a kingdom over which to rule. Over what is Jesus ruling? He is the head of the church, ruling over God’s kingdom and God’s people, but that isn’t all. He is ruler over all creation! He is king and ruler over all! He is seated at the right hand of God and all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him.

In Ephesians Paul writes, **“That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 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.”** Ephesians 1:19-23

Do you see that? “Far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title, now and in the age to come.” That about sums it up! Jesus is King, Sovereign. He is the victor and as someone said, “To the victor belong the spoils.” Through his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, the victory is won and the spoils belong to him. Through his victory he triumphs over hell and plunders those sinners that were held captive (that’s us!). We are the spoils of his redemption! To the victor belongs the spoils – us! Now we are part of his royal kingdom. He has been installed and enthroned as King and we are under his protection, his lordship, his sovereignty and he rules and reigns over every power, ruler and authority. He is the ultimate Sovereign and he is able to provide total redemption for us and ultimately for this world.

He is seated in authority and notice that phrase again that Paul uses “God placed all things under his feet.” Once again it’s a reference to the passage from Psalm 110, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” What does that mean? Scholars tell us that ancient kings and conquerors, to demonstrate their complete and total triumph over their enemy, would lay the defeated king or general on the ground before the people and then place their feet upon his neck. Making your enemies a footstool for your feet is a sign of triumph and dominion over your enemy.

When we confess our belief in the ascension of Christ and that he is seated at the right hand of God, we are saying we believe he is crowned with glory and honor because of who he is and what he did for us on the cross, and we believe that he has the ultimate authority over all things and that all enemies will ultimately and finally be under his feet. That is good news because his enemies are our enemies and the day will come, it is assured, guaranteed by his death, resurrection and ascension, that all his enemies will be a footstool under his feet.

Can you see him now, clothed in the royal robes of splendor and glory and authority, seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned as the conquering King of Kings and Lord of

Lords, with his foot on the neck of his enemies? Can you see him with his foot on the neck of Satan and sin, sickness and disease, cancer and alzheimers, diabetes and cerebral palsy and parkinsons and a million other things that bring pain and heartache and sorrow? The reality is it's only a matter of time until all these things are placed before him as his footstool and he will rule and reign over it all. Even though the devil is fighting and trying to destroy us, our victory is certain and sure because Jesus rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and God the Father said to him, "Sit at my right hand until I make you enemies a footstool for your feet." Be encouraged today. It's a done deal. The Father is just wrapping up a few final details, but Jesus is already seated at the right hand of the Father. He is already seated in power and authority. He already rules and reigns in victory as our Sovereign and Lord.

Can you see him at the right hand of the father when things are going wrong in your life? When it seems like the enemy is winning the battle? Stephen was a deacon in the book of Acts who was martyred for his testimony of Jesus. Just before they stoned him to death the bible says, **"But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'" Acts 7:55-56**

With angry men shouting and screaming at him, dragging him out of the city to stone him to death, Stephen saw the risen, ascended, living Lord, crowned in glory, at the right hand of God. For Stephen it was the assurance that Jesus was on the throne and everything would be all right. Even if men were turning against him, even if they killed him, it didn't matter because Jesus was on the throne, King of kings. He was still in control, even when it didn't look like it.

We are living in a time of political and social turmoil like we haven't seen in a while. I won't say it is unprecedented because that's simply not the truth. Every generation thinks our condition is the worst. There have been other times when it seemed the world was about to fall into complete chaos, when religious liberty was threatened, when we were on the brink of war and even nuclear annihilation. What do we do? Panic? Give up? No, we remind ourselves that Jesus is seated on the throne of heaven and he is still in control.

In the Old Testament the prophet Isaiah recalled a time of political unrest. **"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple."** Isaiah 6:1. The year King Uzziah died was a year of turmoil, political unrest and unsettledness. The prophet didn't know what would happen now that the

king died. Who would come to power? Would there be anarchy? Would the king's counselors and advisors be executed? That was important because Isaiah had been an advisor to Uzziah. There were dire predictions about what would happen. It kind of sounds familiar doesn't it?

It was in that fearful period of political and social unrest that Isaiah was granted a glimpse into heaven. He had a revelation of the throne room of God and he saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe, that means the glory of God's tangible presence, reached all the way from heaven to earth where it filled the earthly temple of God.

What Isaiah saw of the glory and majesty of God brought hope and encouragement to him in a troubled time. In fact, it brought fear and trembling to him when he saw the glory and majesty of God. What he saw left him crying, "Woe to me! I am ruined...my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Isaiah 6:5 He was frightened by the political conditions around him until by comparison he saw the power and splendor of the King, the Lord Almighty. That shook him to his core. The power and glory of God was so much greater than anything that threatened him on earth that it overwhelmed him at first but then it left him with the confidence that God was going to handle everything. Whoever the new king would be, whatever policies would change, whatever the outcome, God was sovereign and in control.

In the year King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord seated on his throne. In the year Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump became president of the United States, in the year Vladimir Putin moved intercontinental ballistic missiles around the Baltic, in the year North Korea and Iran rushed to expand their nuclear capabilities, in the year Hillary or Donald did whatever it is you think is going to happen, or whatever does happen, what we need to know, what we need to see, is Jesus high and lifted up, seated in authority at the right hand of God. What we need to see is that our God is still in control. **"The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad." Psalm 97:1**

Listen to me. Jesus isn't going to be unseated as the King of kings, he was seated upon that throne 2,000 years ago when he ascended into heaven and there is no end to his rulership. The Roman Empire and its' cruel emperors couldn't get him off of that throne. Persecutors, skeptics and critics have tried to remove him but he still reigns. The gates of hell haven't prevailed against him or his kingdom. Jesus is going to sit at the Father's right hand and rule and reign until every last enemy is under his feet as his footstool.

Pray. Vote. Take a stand for righteousness, but don't let what's happening shake you. If you've just got your eyes on a candidate, or on what's happening in the world around you,

you're going to be overwhelmed with fear. But if you can get a glimpse of Jesus, seated upon the throne...if you can get a glimpse of Jesus and know that he rules and reigns with authority and power you're going to be okay. The Lord reigns, let the church be glad!

Things may sure enough get worse. In fact, I predict it will get worse regardless of who is sitting in the Oval Office but I'm not going to abandon my faith or quit trusting God or quit serving the Lord and obeying him because I know who is sitting on the throne of Heaven and He rules the universe! Ephesians 4 says, **"He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens in order to fill the whole universe."** Ephesians 4:10. He fills the universe with Himself, with his glory and power. If you don't see Jesus upon the throne and if you don't have him upon the throne of your heart and your life, something else or someone else will take the throne and it will produce only terror and fear. Let Jesus be enthroned upon your life and live with confidence and purpose! I'm not suggesting we stick our heads in the sand or ignore what's going on in our world. But I'm telling you Jesus said, "Don't let your heart be troubled and don't be afraid." The reason to not be afraid is because Jesus ascended to heaven and he is on the throne. He rules and reigns.

John was exiled to the island of Patmos, a prison island off the coast of Turkey. The Roman Emperor Domitian was persecuting and executing Christians at that time. John was granted a glimpse into heaven and what did he see? He saw the risen, ascended and glorified Jesus. He said, "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance." John said, **"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hell.'" Revelation 1:17**

Don't be afraid, He is the First and the Last. He was there at the beginning and he will be there at the end, seated on the throne, ruling and reigning, King of kings and Lord of lords. Look up today! See him in victory! See him as John did, as Stephen did, as Isaiah did. In your time of trouble, see him as the exalted, risen, Sovereign Lord. See him ruling over the circumstances of your life. See him with his foot on the neck of every enemy that is trying to destroy you and your family and your life. See him high and lifted up and exalted above every sin and every struggle of your life. See him, King of kings and Lord of lords!