

Luke 24:50-53

⁵⁰When Jesus had led them out as far as Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While He was blessing them, He left them and was carried up into Heaven. ⁵²And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³praising God continually in the temple.

Berean Standard Bible-UK

1

This changes everything – or changes nothing. Luke 24:50-53

Walking the last mile. 24:50

Jesus led them. 50a “Jesus led them out”

Jesus blessed them. 50b “He blessed them”

Receiving the last gift. 24:51

Jesus left them. 51a “While blessing them, He left them”

Jesus went up. 51b “carried up into Heaven”

Giving the right attitude. 24:52

They worshipped. 52a “they worshiped Him”

They rejoiced. 52b “with great joy”

Living the next phase. 24:53

In God’s presence. 53a “praising God continually”

In God’s house. 53b “continually in the temple”

2

Blessed to be a blessing. Luke 24:50-53

My current place of blessing. 24:50

Jesus wants time with us. 50a “Jesus led them out”

Jesus wants to bless us. 50b “He blessed them”

My eternal place of blessing. 24:51

Blessing never stops. 51a “While blessing them, He left them”

Heaven never stops. 51b “carried up into Heaven”

My actions of blessing. 24:52

Elevated action. 52a “they worshiped Him”

Elevated attitude. 52b “with great joy”

My display of blessing. 24:53

Lift God’s name. 53a “praising God continually”

In God’s house. 53b “continually in the temple”

3

Heaven is in my heart. Luke 24:50-53

I am ready for Heaven. 24:50

Jesus leads us. 50a “Jesus led them out”

Jesus lifts us. 50b “lifted His hands and blessed them”

I know the way to Heaven. 24:51

Jesus brings Heaven to us. 51a “While blessing them, He left them”

Jesus is found in Heaven. 51b “carried up into Heaven”

I share the life of Heaven. 24:52

Worship is given. 52a “they worshiped Him”

Joy is generated. 52b “with great joy”

I display the celebration of Heaven. 24:53

Praising God is important. 53a “praising God continually”

God’s house is important. 53b “continually in the temple”

4

This is the new ‘normal.’ Luke 24:50-53

I have a new way of living. 24:50

Part of the normal journey. 50a “Jesus led them out”

Part of the normal practice. 50b “lifted His hands and blessed them”

I have a new way of seeing. 24:51-52

Return to Heaven. 51 “He left them and was carried up into Heaven”

Return to home. 52 “returned to Jerusalem”

I have a new way of thinking. 24:52-53

Joy is generated. 52b “with great joy”

Praising God is important. 53a “praising God continually”

5

Take me to my leader. Luke 24:50-53

Jesus is my leader for where I go. 24:50-51

Jesus is my leader on earth. 50 "Jesus led them out... and blessed them"

Jesus is my leader into Heaven. 51 "left them... carried up into Heaven"

Jesus is my leader for what I become. 24:52-53

Jesus is my leader in attitudes. 52 "they worshiped Him... with great joy"

Jesus is my leader in actions. 53 "praising God continually in the temple"

6

This is you, blessed. Luke 24:50-53

How to be blessed. 24:50-51

I am blessed because I travel with Jesus. 50 "Jesus led them out... and blessed them"

I am blessed because Jesus' work is finished. 51 "left them... carried up into Heaven"

Why am I blessed. 24:52-53

I am blessed to connect with Jesus. 52 "they worshiped Him... with great joy"

I am blessed to connect with others. 53 "praising God continually in the temple"

7

Maximise your blessings. Luke 24:50-53

What Jesus says blesses me. 24:50-51

My blessing is symbolised. 50 "lifted up His hands"

My blessing is spoken. 50-51 "blessed... blessing them"

What Jesus does blesses me. 24:51

My blessings flow from where Jesus is. 51 "carried up into Heaven"

My blessings flow from where I am.

What I do blesses me. 24:52-53

My blessings are in relationship with God. 52 "worshipped Him"

My blessings are in relationship with myself. "with great joy"

My blessings are in relationship with others. "praising God continually in the temple"

Other possible titles

Famous last words
The end of the beginning
Never-ending story
What to do when Jesus is not here
What's next?
Jesus is in Heaven, but I'm stuck on earth
End of Part 1
Left behind
Happy returns
Where are you going?

Quotes and illustrations

When Jesus first came from Heaven to earth, the shepherds were the first witnesses of His arrival. Then “the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.” (Luke 2:20) And, “all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.” (Luke 2:18)

Now, as Jesus finally returns from earth to Heaven, the apostles were the final witnesses of His departure. Then, “they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:52) And, they were “praising God continually in the temple.” (Luke 24:53)

Commentary

What is the ascension

The word, ‘ascension’ simply means ‘going up’. It refers to Jesus ascending into Heaven. He came from Heaven to be born on the first Christmas Day, then, by His ascension, He physically and visually returned from earth to Heaven.

The ascension is included in one of the first formal declarations of faith.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

Timeline of the ascension

There would be 40 days between His resurrection and His return back to Heaven by His ascension. We can calculate the date of the ascension.

After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of **forty days** and spoke about the Kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

Jesus was crucified on the Day of Preparation, 13 Nisan, and He rose again on the First Day of the Week, 17 Nisan. The day we call Resurrection Sunday, was Day 1 of that 40-day timeframe. Therefore Day 40 was 27 Iyar, or **Thursday 18 April 30 AD**.

Proof of the date of His ascension is shown along with the ancient Jewish calendar, an extrapolated Gregorian calendar, and the simplified calculations, can be found in the free e-book 'Timeline' chapter 51, Ascension, found at www.sermoninspiration.net

Location of Jesus' ascension

The journey from Bethany to Jerusalem was familiar to the disciples. It was a path they had walked many times with Jesus in their midst. We are given two statements, both by Luke, telling us the location of Jesus' ascension.

⁹After He had said this, they watched as He was taken up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from **the Mount of Olives**, which is near the city, a Sabbath day's journey away. (Acts 1:7-12)

The Mount of Olives overlooks the city of Jerusalem. It is only "a Sabbath day's journey away" from the city. A Sabbath day's journey is a Pharisaic, not a Biblical, definition. The Jewish authorities decreed a Sabbath day's journey was a distance of 2,000 cubits. That is about a kilometre (about 1,000 yards).

The area covered by the Mount of Olives was vast. It was an area larger than the city of Jerusalem. So, from where on the Mount did Jesus ascend? We are also given a more specific location for the ascension.

⁵⁰ Jesus had led them out as far as **Bethany**. He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

⁵¹While He was blessing them, He left them, and was carried up into Heaven. ⁵² They worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³praising God continually in the temple. (Luke 24:50-53)

Jerusalem is no longer the focus of God's work. Jesus takes them out of sight of the big city, and into the country. Perhaps this was to emphasise His final teaching that they were to go

first to Jerusalem, but to continue through Judea, and Samaria, into all the world in their disciple-making (Matthew 28:18-20).

Famous last words

Scripture does not record Jesus final words, but Luke twice tells us His words are words of blessing.

⁵⁰ Jesus had led them out as far as Bethany. He lifted up His hands and **blessed** them.

⁵¹ While He was **blessing** them, He left them, and was carried up into Heaven. (Luke 24:50-51)

It is often assumed that the Great Commission was Jesus last words. It is true that it was His last recorded teaching, but it was not His final words. The Great Commission were the final words of Matthew's Gospel. But no, Jesus did not leave us with a task to complete. He left us with His blessing.

What did the followers of Jesus do with His blessing? They respond to Him personally, "they worshipped Him" v52. They responded within themselves privately, "with great joy" v52. And they responded very publicly, "praising God continually in the temple" v53.

What is a blessing?

A blessing is a pronouncement of God's grace which enables good to be accomplished.

The first two blessings were given in Genesis 1; first to the animals which were created on Day 5, then the blessing given to humanity on Day 6.

The fullest expressions of blessing are the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:1-12, and Ephesians 1:3-14.

Jesus did not go into Heaven alone

Jesus ascended alone, from the Mount of Olives near Bethany, but as He passed from the physical realm into the eternal realm, He was joined by a vast throng of rejoicing people. We are given a clue as to Jesus' triumphal entry into Heaven by this Scripture:

⁷ Now to each one of us grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ⁸ This is why it says:

"Having ascended on high, He led captive captivity."

And gave gifts to men.

⁹What does “He ascended” mean, except that He also descended to the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the very One who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things. (Ephesians 4:7-10)

Who are these who are “captive”, and why did they have to be led by the ascended Christ?

These were the faithful souls who had been in Paradise. They had died in obedience and in faith, but until Christ they could not enter into Heaven. When Jesus died on the cross, His soul went to Paradise. But when Jesus ascended into Heaven, everyone who was in Paradise went with Him. Paradise is now empty, and believers who die today, go directly to Heaven.

We are confident that when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord, in Heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8).

But why? Why could the believers of old not go directly to Heaven, as we will? This is the power of the cross that is now in operation. This is the power of propitiation.

Atonement and propitiation

When Jesus died on the cross, He did something that could not be achieved by the millions of animals that had been sacrificed at the tabernacle and the temple. When an innocent animal was sacrificed, it was an inadequate sacrifice for the sin of a human. However, by the grace of God, He accepted that animal’s shed blood as an atonement for human sin. The blood of atonement means to cover sin. The word is ‘atonement’.

But, when Jesus died on the cross, He did not simply make another, but better, atonement. Jesus made propitiation. This word, propitiation, is not a common word, so many Bible translations make the mistake of translating it as “atoning sacrifice” or something similar.

- In Hebrews 2:17, Jesus does not ‘make atonement for the sins of the people’; He “propitiates the sins of the people”.
- The word in 1 John 2:2 is not ‘He is the atonement for our sins’; it is “He is the propitiation for our sins”.
- In 1 John 4:10, it is not ‘His Son to be the atonement for our sins’; it is “His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”.

The blood of Jesus does far more than cover (literally “atone for”) our sin. The blood of Jesus removes (literally “propitiates for”) our sin.

When Jesus died on the cross, our sin died with Him.

Propitiation is also used

- Jesus told of a Pharisee and a tax collector both going to pray. The repentant tax collector did not ask for God to atone for his sins. Atonement was available to him through animal sacrifice. Most Bible translations have him asking for mercy; ‘God be

merciful to me'. But literally, the tax collector cried out, "God, be propitious to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13) He was crying out to God to obliterate his sin.

- In Hebrews 9:5 there is a description of the Ark of the Covenant that was the centrepiece in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and the temple. The top of the Ark is traditionally called the Mercy Seat. Once each year, the High Priest passed beyond the veil and entered this Most Holy Place. There, he sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat. However, when the Mercy Seat is described in Hebrews 9:5 it is called "the Propitiation". In the Old Testament, the Mercy Seat was the ultimate place for dealing with sin.

There is a place which is called, in English, 'The realm of the dead.' In Old Testament Hebrew it is called 'Sheol', sometimes unhelpfully mistranslated as 'the grave.' In the Greek of the New Testament it is called 'Hades', sometimes unhelpfully mistranslated as 'Hell.' The realm of the dead was subdivided into two parts, Paradise, and Torment (Luke 16:19-31). Righteous people who died went to Paradise. The unrighteous went to Torment.

So, why did Paradise exist? The believers in Paradise had their sins atoned, that is, their sins were covered by innocent blood. But their sin still existed. They could not enter into the sinless perfection of God's presence in Heaven, while ever there existed a record of their sin. When Jesus died and rose again, He made propitiation, obliterating the sin of every believer.

God forgave us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. He removed it, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13b-14)

Jesus not only removed sin, He also removed every record of sin. With the record of sin wiped out, God could say,

I will forgive their iniquities and will remember their sins no more. (Jeremiah 31:34, and Hebrews 8:12)

Every impediment has been removed. The way is now open and clear. Every believer who dies today goes directly and immediately into Heaven. There, we meet with our Lord and Saviour, and with every believer of every time and nation.

Jesus ascended to the throne of Heaven

The ascension of Jesus also accomplished other majestic realities. He has taken His rightful place on Heaven's throne.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Hebrews 1:3)

Jesus is now enthroned in Heaven as King of Kings and Lord of Lord.

Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him. (1 Peter 3:22)

This fulfills the prophetic Word,

The Lord says to My Lord: "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

This means that Jesus truly does have all authority in Heaven and on earth. This means that everyone is accountable to Him. This means that His will, will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. This means that Jesus is Sovereign, Master, and Ruler. This means that I must bow before Him in constant adoration, praise, and appreciation.

Verses about Jesus being at God's right hand:

Psalm 110:1, Matthew 22:44, Matthew 26:64, Mark 12:36, Mark 14:62, Mark 16:19, Luke 22:69, Acts 2:33, Acts 5:31, Acts 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 1:13, Hebrews 8:1, Hebrews 10:12, Hebrews, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22

Jesus' eternal reign has already begun

We don't have to wait for the Second Coming for Jesus to begin His universal reign.

²⁰He [the Glorious Father] exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Ephesians 1:20-21)

Note the timing in this Scripture. Begin with the past tense, with present consequences. Jesus has already been raised from the dead and seated in Heaven. He has begun to, and continues to, reign far above all other authorities in this present age. This same rule will continue into the future tense of the age to come.

The only change we can expect at the Second Coming is the unveiling of the Truth. Jesus will be revealed for who He really is – Lord of all.

Jesus is preparing a place for us in Heaven

What is Jesus doing in Heaven right now? He is preparing for our arrival in our eternal home.

I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again, and I will take you to myself, so that where I am, you may be also. John 14:3

When we arrive in Heaven it will be perfect. Not just perfect in its holiness, or perfect in its orderliness, but perfect in that it has been fitted exactly to us, as our best selves. We will fit into Heaven like a hand fits into a comfortable glove.

We are already in Heaven

When we get to Heaven, we will fit right in, because we will be in the place - physically, that we already occupy - spiritually.

God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:6

Before salvation, we were spiritually dead in our sins because our “sinful nature was not yet cut away,” but then God made us “alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins” (Colossians 2:13, NLT; see also 1 Corinthians 15:22).

Christians are united with Jesus Christ in His resurrected life (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4). Romans 8:11

This makes us more than conquerors through Christ (Romans 8:37; see also 1 John 5:4–5) who gives us the victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Jesus intercedes for sinners

When Jesus died on the cross, His death paid for every sin that had ever been committed up until that point. That is those in Paradise were able to go into Heaven. But Jesus’ death also paid for all future sin. That is why believers today are able to go directly to Heaven. The current ministry of Jesus in Heaven is to intercede for every person who seeks salvation through Him. His blood is sufficient to cover their sins, too.

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 7:25)

The intercessory ministry of Jesus is also confirmed in:

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died; more than that, who was raised; is at the right hand of God, and is indeed interceding for us. (Romans 8:34)

We are saved by the saving work of Jesus. No one else can do His work. We have one, and only one, mediator or intercessor in Heaven.

There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

This makes it clear that praying to 'saints', or to Mary, is a waste of time, and is nothing more than superstition. We can come to the throne of Heaven directly and confidently.

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit

In the upper room, hours before His death, Jesus said,

I tell you the truth, it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. (John 16:7)

Why is it advantageous that the Holy Spirit be given to all of us? Because the ministry of the Holy Spirit includes making our witness in the world effective. The Holy Spirit partners with us. When we are witnessing for Jesus, the Holy Spirit is using our words.

When He comes, He will convict the world in regard to sin, and righteousness, and judgment. (John 16:8)

In this way, our witness does not depend on our cleverness, or our arguments. The Holy Spirit takes our obedience and applies it to our hearers.

Jesus then continued and explained a little of the interconnected, but different, roles of each Person of the Trinity.

¹²I still have much to tell you, but you cannot yet bear to hear it. ¹³However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all Truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come.

¹⁴He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine, and disclosing it to you. (John 16:12-14)

One of the primary roles of Jesus was to be the Saviour. With that task complete, He would step aside and allow the Holy Spirit to fulfil one of His main roles, which is to teach all believers everywhere. Today, every believer is given the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the Spirit guides each of us deeper and deeper into God's Truth. I pray that the Holy Spirit will use these studies to take you deeper into God's Word, and that this will enrich your whole life, and the lives of the people in your care.

Service suggestion

Include, visually and/or verbally, as part of your worship service, one of the first formal declarations of faith, from the First Century. Note the inclusion of the ascension.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,

proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

Music and Songs

Songs about being blessed, v50-51

Blessed assurance... This is my story, H 687
Count your many blessings see what God has done, H 723
Doxology – Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Greatly blessed, highly favoured, Ot 96

Songs about Jesus in Heaven, v51

Before the throne of God above

Songs about worshipping Jesus, v52

Celebrate Jesus
The Lord reigns

Songs about joy, and praise, v52-53

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, H 1

Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion

1. When people say they have been “blessed” what do they mean; and what is the source of these blessings?
 2. Why do you think Jesus made His final words a blessing rather than a command?
 3. What is the significance of Jesus continuing to bless His people as He ascended into Heaven?
 4. List some potential problems of seeing the Kingdom of God like the British monarchy, with the monarch as a nominal ruler, far away, but the real power divested to the people. Suggest a better way of seeing the Kingdom of God.
 5. In what ways is it important that Jesus is King of Glory right now, rather than waiting for Him to become King after the Second Coming?
 6. List some benefits to us now that Jesus is in Heaven.
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