

Introduction The only difference between Peter and the community of Faith before Pentecost and after it was the life-transforming and empowering presence of the Spirit. Before the outpouring, all they can accomplish is a **Bible study and a business meeting**. Nothing wrong with a Bible study or a business meeting. After God invaded their lives with transforming presence, they began their mission.

Last week we spoke about the Mandate to wait for the Means—the enablement of the Spirit.

And what do we learn about that mission?

1. The Mission

Acts 1:8 But you will **receive power** when the **Holy Spirit has come on you**, and you will be **my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**”

- The **scope** of this mission is local and global. It's here and there; near and far.
- The **means** of this mission is Spirit empowerment.
- The **message** is the apostolic witness of Christ's life, death, and resurrection for the salvation of sins.

That apostolic witness is discontinuous—in that no one beyond the 12 Apostles could claim to have witnessed Jesus's earthly life from John's baptism of Jesus to his ascension. Paul, though he was an apostle, won't even put himself in that category. Paul refers to them as “the twelve” though he vigorously defends his own apostleship. Meaning, not even people living at this time that saw most of what Jesus did could meet this high bar.

That apostolic witness is continuous in that all who embrace *their message* and their testimony of Christ share in that testimony. We don't add to it. **We don't modify it or augment it; we don't update it with new revelation. Nope.** We believe their testimony about the life, the teachings, the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. This is **Geographical** and **theological** “first to the Jew then the Gentile”

But it's also a matter of **wisdom**. This is a wisdom principle. God has called us to reach the people we are most suited to reach. **As a matter of wisdom and prudence Christ expects us to evangelize where we are and to reach the people we are best suited to reach.**

Right after the mission is given, comes...

2. The Ascension (Ps 24; 47; 68; 110; 118). This is acceding to throne to become a ruler language.

1:9 "After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight."

What is the purpose of this ascension event?

Jesus ascends to take his place as the exalted Lord of the world. This is a positional enthronement in order to receive all glory; it is a Sovereign reign over the expansion of the nations.

Psalm 24:3, 7-10 Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? 7 Lift up your heads, you gates! Rise up, ancient doors! Then the King of glory will come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, you gates! Rise up, ancient doors! Then the King of glory will come in. 10 Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD of Armies, he is the King of glory. *Selah*

Daniel sees a vision of four successive kings leading up to anointing, persecution, and vindication of the final Messianic King. Then he sees the Ancient of Days who takes his throne above all thrones.

Daniel 7:13-14 "I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a **Son of Man** was coming **with the clouds** of heaven. He approached the **Ancient of Days** and was escorted before him. 14 He was **given dominion and glory** and a **kingdom**, so that those of every people, nation, and language should **serve him**. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed."

Daniel was so perplexed by the vision, he asked the angelic messenger what it meant. And here was his response:

17 "These huge beasts, four in number, are four kings who will rise from the earth. 18 But the **holy ones** of the Most High will **receive the kingdom** and possess it **forever, yes, forever and ever.**" This is why Caiaphas loses his mind

when Jesus cites this verse self-referentially. **They interpreted v. 18 to mean them—and Jesus is claiming this promise for himself!** He is the Holy one who receives the everlasting Kingdom; and all who are in Christ by Faith receive the everlasting Kingdom—the NT referring to the Church as "the holy ones." "Saint" is the Greek word *hagioi* meaning "holy ones."

By contrast, notice what Satan does when he attempts a coup to overthrow God's throne:

Jesus quoted this passage in Luke 10:18

Isaiah 14:12-14 "Shining morning star (**Lucifer**) how you have fallen from the heavens! You destroyer (**Heb. Abbadon; Gk. Appollyon; Rev. 9**) of nations, you have been cut down to the ground. You said to yourself, 'I will **ascend** to the heavens; I will set up my **throne** above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the gods' assembly, in the remotest parts of the North. ¹⁴ I will **ascend** above the **highest clouds**; I will make myself like the Most High.'" God's response, "No, actually you won't."

Now, if Satan's attempted ascension above the highest clouds was to make himself like the most high then Jesus's ordained ascension is to legitimately claim that throne at the right hand of God Almighty.

Jesus ascends, not like some space man, or being beamed up by the star ship enterprise. He ascends through the clouds of heaven to receive all power, glory, and the Kingdom the Father promised him.

But the angel doesn't just mention his ascension to the exalted position of cosmic Lord—but his return.

3. His Return

Acts 1:10 While he was going, they were gazing into heaven (why were they doing this? Amazement; shock; awe; the disciples are probably hard to impress at this point) and suddenly two men in white clothes (always a reference to Angels) stood by them. ¹¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This **same Jesus**, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in **the same way** that you have seen him going into heaven.”

Why is Jesus seen leaving through a cloud enveloping him?

- Yahweh is depicted as “coming on the clouds with great glory” (Ps 97:2; 104:3; Isa 19:1; Dan 7:13). Israel's God is portrayed in this imagery of arriving on the clouds in great glory in salvation of his people and the judgment of the nations.¹
- Yahweh's throne is portrayed as above the clouds (Exod 16:10; 24:16; 40:34–35; Num 16:42; 1 Kgs 8:11; 2 Chr 5:14; Isa 4:5; Ezek 10:4).² This communicates that his throne is high and lifted up above all others.

How do the NT authors use this language?

Jesus uses this very imagery to describe his return in the Olivet Discourse

Matt 24:27-28 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (**his coming is glorious and visible to all**). ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather (this is classic battlefield imagery—bodies are going to be left on the ground). Immediately **after the tribulation** (after a period of incommensurable, unequaled distress) of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken (see Joel 2:10-11; 3:15; Isa 13:10;). ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man (**the Son of Man is the sign**), and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn (again, they will mourn because Christ's return signals their defeat), and they will see the **Son of Man coming on the clouds** of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1–14:28*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–2013), 727.

² Ibid.

out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will **gather his elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. This passage is about the same Son who ascended to receive all glory, power, and authority is now returning to bring his heavenly dominion to the earth. He saves the elect/righteous, and he judges the wicked.

Look with me over in the book of Revelation...

Rev 1:7 “Look, he is **coming with the clouds**, and **every eye** will see him, even **those who pierced** him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.” John directs us to see Christ in all his resplendent glory—returning on the clouds of heaven.

Why will the nations mourn at his coming?

Rev. 19:11-16 “Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a **white horse** (Caesar always rode in on a white horse—a symbol of power and absolute supremacy). Its rider is called Faithful and True, and with justice he judges and **makes war**.¹² His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head. He had a name written that no one knows except himself.¹³ He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.¹⁴ The armies that were in heaven followed him on white horses, wearing pure white linen (**this garment stands for the righteous acts of the saints**).¹⁵ A sharp **sword** came from his mouth, so that he might **strike the nations** with it. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty.¹⁶ And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: **King of Kings and Lord of Lords (that was Caesar's title)**).

I don't know where people got this idea that the OT we have this vengeful wrathful God; and in the NT we have this big softy, mushy doting old grandpa who spoils us, his little grand kids. Listen, there is grace and lovingkindness in the OT and there is Wrath in the OT. There is grace and lovingkindness in the NT and wrath in the NT.

The angel reminds the disciples in Acts 1 that this same Jesus will return in like manner.

In Summary

The ascension of Jesus is about his positional exaltation to **receive glory, power, and dominion over the earth**. His return will be to **bring that authority and dominion to the earth**—to save the righteous in Christ and judge **the unrighteous and the sinner**. For those who by faith have trusted in Jesus for salvation—their future will be unending unceasing bliss in the glorious Kingdom of God. For the unbeliever God will pronounce an ultimate verdict—an unbearably final and irreversible decision.

Application

1. We must take **personal responsibility** to engage our local and global mission. We must embrace the idea that every member is a minister. Every church is a local outpost planted in hostile territory. And this calls for fervent defenders of the unity of our faith and mission. We must zealously guard our unity to that end.

We have no hope whatsoever of fulfilling this mission:

(1) **If we demonize the very people we are commissioned to evangelize (some have broken fellowship with me and us because I refuse to demonize our incoming administration).**

(2) **If we divide over things that are debatable, non-essential, and not the Gospel. (some have broken faith with me over debatable matters. Things we can agree to disagree on).** If you hold a personal article of faith; or your political ideology has become your new gospel you hold a false gospel. This grieves God's heart.

2. We must take the **posture of surrender** under the Sovereign rule of the ascended and exalted Christ. There are attitudes and desires that frankly war against our souls. And we must begin to see ourselves as citizens of a heavenly administration, under the reign of Christ's Word.

Jesus said "When I am lifted up I will draw all men to myself" And as he corals us in his fold—we are draw together in him.

3. We must take a **hopeful** outlook on our future. **Caveat: You are entitled to be a human being.** You have permission to have a bad day. **This does not give us a pass to have bad character.** This same Jesus who acceded to the throne of heaven to receive all glory power and dominion will return in like fashion to assert fully his glory power and dominion. **In doing so he is going to save believers from whatever befalls us; calamity, persecution, martyrdom, losses—Jesus will gather his elect from one end of heaven to the other to join him in his kingdom. He will bring justice and bring all nations under his sovereign rule.**

4. We must take an **urgent** mindset.

We must reach our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and foreign cultures with a sense of urgency because we want all men everywhere to experience the joy of His salvation. And we want no one to experience the retribution and judgment he brings at his glorious coming. Amen?

If we think lightly of the disease we will loiter on the way to the physician – William White