



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.2.3 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Jesus' Ascension to Heaven

Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after His resurrection. Since Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday, the ascension of Jesus took place on a Thursday. Jesus used those forty days to appear to His disciples from time to time and explain to them how His suffering, death, and resurrection was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Luke 24:27, 44-45). **“He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures”** (Luke 24:45). He spoke to them concerning **“the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”** (Acts 1:3). Their question concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) showed that they still needed such instruction.

Jesus' last words to them before His ascension are recorded in Luke's two writings: the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Among His last words we find this directive: **“Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high”** (Luke 24:47-49). The Promise of His Father refers to what John the Baptist had foretold at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry: that Jesus would baptize them **“with the Holy Spirit and fire”** (Matthew 3:11). **“He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father”** (Acts 1:4). Jesus then explained: **“John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”** (Acts 1:5, 8).

It is possible that at this same time Jesus spoke the words recorded in Mark 16:15-18, although He could have spoken these words earlier when He gave the Great Commission to His disciples on the mountain in Galilee: **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:15-16). He also told them of the signs that would accompany their preaching of the Word, such as the driving out of demons, the speaking in tongues, the curing of the sick, and supernatural protection against serpents and deadly poison.

According to the witnesses, Jesus' ascension to heaven was a bodily and physical going up into the sky for a certain distance until a cloud made it impossible to see Him. Mark tells us: **“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God”** (Mark 16:19). Luke informs us where the ascension of Jesus took place: **“He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven”** (Luke 24:50-51).

Luke provides more details in the book of Acts: **“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath days' journey”** (Acts 1:9-12).

Questions

1. When and where did Jesus' ascension to heaven take place?
2. How did Jesus spend the forty days before His ascension?
3. What did Jesus promise to send to His disciples in a short time?
4. When was this promise fulfilled?
5. What last instructions did Jesus give His disciples before He went up?
6. Why did the disciples need the Holy Spirit to come upon them?
7. What was Jesus doing as He went up?
8. What was the message of the two angels who spoke after Jesus went up?