

Christ Ascended Seated (Video)

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon focuses on the ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ, highlighting the significance of His work beyond the cross and resurrection. It delves into the biblical accounts of Christ's ascension in Mark 16 and Luke 24, emphasizing His exaltation and session at the right hand of God. The sermon explores the theological implications of Christ's ascension and enthronement, portraying Him as the ruling King who governs the universe and intercedes for believers. It concludes with a powerful illustration of a nobleman offering to pay off people's debts, paralleling it to Christ's offer of forgiveness and salvation to all who believe.

Scripture: Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50, Acts 2:33, Ephesians 1:20, Hebrews 1:1, 1 Peter 3:22, Psalms 110:1, Psalms 24:7

Topics: "Ascension of Christ", "Christ as King and Intercessor"

Description

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Transcript

I would invite you to turn to Mark's Gospel, chapter 16. Thinking back on one of those songs we just sang by Charles Wesley, I would remind you of his words in one of the stanzas, because it's what the message is on today. Wesley wrote, Jesus the Savior reigns, the God of truth and love.

When He had purged our stains, He took His seat above. Now that phrase, when He had purged our stains, He took His seat above, is a direct reference Wesley draws from Hebrews 1, 3, which says, after He, Christ, had made purification for sins, He sat down on the right hand of God. That's what I want to speak on this morning.

Christ ascended and seated. And I want you to think about it. Have you ever heard a message or a sermon? Have you ever heard about the reality of Christ ascending back to heaven and being seated or being enthroned? Let's read from two places.

We'll read from Mark 16, verse 19, and then we'll turn to Luke 24. Mark 16, verse 19. So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

Notice the language that the manuscript copyist would have added later to Mark's Gospel, which is confirmed as being true in Luke's Gospel. Verse 19, read it again. So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven.

There is ascension. And what? Sat down at the right hand of God. There is session or being seated, being enthroned.

Luke 24, verses 50 and 51. Then He led them out as far as Bethany. Have you ever noticed that it wasn't from the Mount of Olives or it wasn't from Jerusalem that Christ ascended? He led them out to Bethany.

And lifting up His hands, He blessed them. While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. Christ ascended and seated.

Now Matthew and John in their Gospels don't mention the ascension of Christ at all. Only Mark's chapter 16 and Luke record it. Only those two Gospels have it recorded.

And as you know, some translations don't have it at all. Verses 9 through 20. But it is a major emphasis in the New Testament, in the rest of the New Testament.

There are two parts to this. Two aspects, if you will. Two sides of one coin.

The ascension of Jesus Christ back to heaven and His enthronement then after He enters heaven. The theological term for that is the session of Christ. Christ ascends and He's seated.

The ascension and the session of Jesus Christ. Now, this shows us something. That Christ's redemption, His work of redemption does not end with the cross.

And people often just end it with the cross. It doesn't even end with the resurrection. There's stuff after the resurrection that has to happen.

It doesn't even end with the ascension back to heaven because there's something after the ascension that has to happen. He must take His seat in heaven. Now, there's no issues to get into about that the literal seat or little Thonah is actually sitting.

That's not what we're to take from this. These are physical terms that picture heavenly reality. That He really is there.

He really did go back into heaven as the God-man. And He really is there enthroned as King and Lord of the whole universe. His exalted position.

He must ascend and be enthroned and seated as the final consummation of all of His redemptive work. The hymn writer put it this way, the head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now. A royal diadem adorns the mighty victor's brow.

Jesus, remember, was betrayed, tried, convicted, condemned, crucified, dead, raised, revealed to many, seen by over 500 people, and now He's ascended. This is the icing on the cake because it's part of the cake. This is the consummation of everything.

There are not enough songs or hymns written about the ascension and session of Christ. We just sang most of them in our hymnal. But I want us to take this two-sided coin this morning, the ascension and the session or enthronement of Jesus Christ, because the Gospel message finalizes with this.

It's amazing when you read the book of Acts, for instance, and even Paul's letters, how much they address this and we miss it. We don't think about the essential things after the resurrection that happen regarding our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So we'll take this this morning.

His ascension and His session or His being seated in Heaven once and forever. But as we do this, I want us to think big picture. What does the New Testament say in summary about the ascension and the session of Jesus Christ? Who all mentions these realities? Well, the New Testament teaching on the ascension and the enthronement of Jesus Christ is done basically by four individuals.

Luke, Paul, Peter, and the writer to the Hebrews all emphasize this after the resurrection. His ascension and His enthronement. Let me give you the references because you need to know what the New Testament says about this.

The resurrection's not the end. His being seen by many is not the end. Two things happen after that.

In Acts 2, the language of Peter, you don't need to turn to these. Just note them and have them in your minds. This is the material.

Acts 2, Peter's sermon. Verses 33-35. Peter said this to the Jews.

Him being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you see and hear. And then Peter quotes Psalm 110. The Lord said to my Lord, set at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool.

He ascended to heaven, exalted at the right hand of God, and Psalm 110 affirms the session of Christ. Set at My right hand until I make all Your enemies be put under Your feet. Ephesians 1, 20-22.

Paul, speaking of God's great power, says this. This power that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand. That's Paul, Ephesians 1. Hebrews 1. I quoted it earlier, 1-3.

After He had purged or made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And then Peter, think of Peter. Peter's an eyewitness not only of the transfiguration, Peter's an eyewitness of the ascension.

He's with those who are gazing, watching Him go up into heaven. Listen, Peter writes in 1 Peter 3, verse 22, about Christ. Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God.

Angels, authorities, and powers being subject to Him. So, that's the New Testament material. As Peter affirms it at Pentecost, Paul affirms it later in Acts again, Paul affirms it to the Ephesians and other places, and then Hebrews 1 affirms the ascension and the ascension of Christ.

First, let's think about His ascension. Christ ascends to heaven. What does the word ascend mean? Do any of you children know what it means to ascend? What does descend mean? Descend means you go down.

If somebody throws a rock into a lake, guess what the rock does? It descends to the bottom. So what would ascend mean? It means to go up, right? To go up. The Bible says Christ descended from heaven when He came.

He came down. And here, we're talking about Him ascending back to heaven. Acts chapter 1. Now remember this.

He was seen for 40 days by over 500 people. In fact, Acts 1, Luke says, He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many infallible convincing proofs. He presented Himself alive.

Appearing to them during 40 days and speaking to them about the Kingdom of God. But after those 40 days, what comes next? Ascension day. Inauguration day.

This fall, there will be an election. And in January, what will happen? Inauguration day. When the new President takes office.

The ascension day was Jesus' inauguration day. He has to leave earth, and He has to go back where He came from 30 plus years later. He's going back.

Ascension day. And so how does this happen? He's with the disciples in Jerusalem. He'd been teaching them, being with them, making appearances.

And on this day, they didn't know this was going to happen. They did not have a clue. He leads them out to the village of Bethany.

And He speaks blessing to them. Luke says He began to bless them. He lifted up His hands and He blessed them.

And He begins to speak to them. Now, what all did He say to them? We don't know. We don't have it all recorded.

But we do know some of it. Where is that recorded? Acts 1. Turn there with me. Acts 1. And you see His words spoken at His departure.

Acts 1. Beginning of verse 7. He said to them, it is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority, but you will receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And when He had said these things as they were looking on, lift off. He was lifted up.

And a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why don't you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven. Children, have you ever either on TV or on the computer or in person, have you ever seen a helicopter rise off the ground and go up in the sky? We've seen that happen.

This is what happened. It was just like a helicopter. While He was speaking, He began to rise off the ground.

What do you think all those disciples' eyes looked like? You think Peter's jaw dropped open? They're standing there. They see Him start rising. And they're all looking up.

And He's going up and up and up and up. This is His ascension back to heaven. Houston, we do not have a problem.

Some of you are too young to know what I'm talking about. There were no glitches. There was not going to be any interruption of this.

Redemption is done. He's leaving. Finished.

Signed. Concealed. Delivered.

He's gone up. He departed from them. And they stand there gazing.

I would have loved to have seen it. I would have loved to survey every one of their faces and to see if there were grins, to see if Peter and John were turning to each other, looking at each other, laughing. What would it have been like? And then an angel interrupts their gaze and says, what are y'all gawking at? And I've often been quoted, if I'd been there and if I'd been Peter or John, I would have turned to that angel and said, what in the world is wrong with you? Why do you think we're gazing up? And you don't see this every day.

They watched Him soar as high as they could see Him. And they saw a cloud, a special cloud of God's glory carry Him beyond the skies and we don't know what happened after that. Physically, He went through the atmosphere, through the stratosphere, through whatever sphere you want to call it.

He was carried up through the atmosphere past all boundaries of outer space. Luke says He parted from them and was carried into heaven. Peter says He's gone into heaven.

The ascension. The man Jesus Christ in His physical body ascended back all the way to heaven. He took true humanity back into heaven.

Think about this. When He left heaven when He first came, He was just the divine Son. He was just God.

He didn't have a body. He didn't have a human nature. He wasn't a human being.

When He left heaven and He came down and was put in the virgin Mary's womb, that's when He became a human being. His divine nature was joined to the human nature and body made from Mary's physical parts and He became then in her womb the God-man. And He was forever after that.

He is forever after that the God-man. So when He ascended back to heaven, it's a human being going back. And He goes back into heaven and the angels see Him, all of heaven's hosts, see Him back where He was before with the Father, but He's different now.

Angels had come and ministered to Him while He was on earth in His humiliation, but now it's different. He's risen. He's glorified.

He's transformed. He's the risen, glorified Christ, but He's still a man. And He carries humanity back not only into heaven.

Think of this. He carries His humanity. He carries true humanity back into the Godhead, back into the Trinity.

That's headline news. He ascends back to heaven as the God-man. As Vance Habner said, all of man's space exploration sinks into insignificance in light of the ascension of Jesus Christ.

He talked about the last frontier. Star Trek, sorry, you ain't got it. He talked about going where no man has ever gone.

The Lord Jesus Christ as a man, as the God-man, the victorious Savior who's accomplished redemption, He's going to go back to heaven now and do some things to apply redemption. Because Peter said when he was exalted to the Father's right hand, it was Christ Himself that poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He sent His Spirit because He's the Lord of all.

He's the mediator of this new covenant. So He dispenses the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And as Psalm 24 had prophesied, all heaven cried out, lift up your heads, oh you gates.

Be lifted up, you everlasting doors. And let the King of glory come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord mighty in battle.

He's conquered. He's back. He's here.

Celebration language about the ascension. Well, that's ascension. And I can't do it justice.

I wish John Piper was here. He should have preached this message. But after the ascension, what happens? Something else has got to happen.

He enters back in. Can you imagine even the excitement and the joy of the creature angels? They would have been worshiping Him. I mean, the disciples, Luke says, after they saw Him go up into heaven, they worshiped Him.

And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. But, not only ascension, they got to turn the coin over. There's another side of the coin.

The session. Ascension. Session.

The seating of Christ. The exaltation. His infirmity.

Mark 16, the copyist records, He sat down at the right hand of God. Peter says, If Him exalted at the right hand of God, He is now there. All principalities and powers and angels and authorities being now subject to Him.

Stephen the martyr, in the book of Acts, his dying words were this, He said, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Hebrews 1, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on heaven. And Paul said it this way, God raised Him from the dead and God seated Him at His right hand.

Seated. Why this picture? Why this language? Because as John Blanchard puts it, when Jesus went back to heaven, His desk was clear. Some businessmen, they go into work and their secretary or their assistant will have work laid out on the desk for the week.

And some, their goal is for that desk to be cleared and done. Well, picture a man who works as an executive or as a businessman for 50, 60 years. And he retires and he packs up his office and he goes to leave that office for the last time at the end of that last day.

He turns and he looks and the desk is clear. He ain't coming back. There's nothing more he will ever do to accomplish his work that he's finished.

That's what we're looking at when Jesus ascends to heaven and He's seated. The work is done. No more work to do.

Redemption is finished. It's finalized. The ascension and session and enthronement of Jesus Christ in heaven was the inauguration day.

He's in office. The judge is in the courtroom. He's on the bench.

The court is in session. Now what's He doing since then? Well, John Calvin gives us a hint. Christ was taken up into heaven, Calvin says, not to enjoy quiet rest at a distance from us, but to govern the world for the salvation of all believers.

What's He doing now since He's in session? He's running His kingdom. He is governing the entire universe. He's controlling and directing international affairs, though the Pentagon and the U.N. and all the kings of the earth don't believe it and they don't know it.

He is governing all the international affairs. He is ruling, reigning, and maintaining the entire universe. Paul says every moment He's upholding all things by the very word of His power.

He is directing all of history to its appointed end. He is governing, overseeing, and shepherding His church, His people. As King, from heaven, He poured out the Holy Spirit and now Christ is with us here by His Spirit.

But the man Christ Jesus is enthroned out there in a real place. He's really there. And as King, He's ruling over and providing for all of His children.

As prophet, He speaks truth to His sheep to feed them in green pastures of love. As mediator and priest, He intercedes forever for His children. And He forgives and guides and cares for and gives grace to His people.

The King is seated forever enthroned. John Flavel said if Christ had not ascended, He could not intercede for us as He does now. He ever lives to make intercession for His children.

Ascended, seated, more secure as no one ever, than the loved ones of the Savior. And His ascension has a very real application for every Christian. Because He ascended that day and reigns forever, you as a Christian, if you know Christ, you will ascend to Heaven with Him either at your death or at His second coming.

Because Christ ascended, you will ascend too into the very presence of God to be there. Because He is seated and enthroned, you as a Christian one day will rule and reign with Christ on His throne. You'll reign with Him.

His bride, the church of Jesus Christ, you are heirs of God and what? Joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Now this means something that's very wonderful. This means that for anyone anywhere, this side of the ascension, it means that free and full salvation and the forgiveness of sin and eternal life is available to all, to anyone who will believe it and will come to this King and ask for it.

He reigns to give forgiveness and eternal life to anyone who will believe it. Christ offers His King and Savior pardon and salvation to everyone who will come to Him. It's not by coming to church.

It's not by going to a priest. It's not by doing what some preacher tells you. You can't get this salvation and this forgiveness from anyone except Christ directly.

And He's enthroned to offer freely and genuinely personal forgiveness and salvation of sin. I heard a story about a prominent, wealthy nobleman who became a Christian. Very wealthy man.

Very well known. In his area and around his town, he became a Christian. And all he wanted to do was live for Jesus Christ.

And he began sharing with everyone he could, everyone who would listen to him about Christ and the offer of the forgiveness of sin and what Jesus did. He died. He was buried.

He rose again. He lives forever. And he offers salvation to anyone who will come to Him.

This nobleman began to share that with everyone. And in the town and the village, he became known as the crazy nobleman. They just thought he had gone bonkers.

He was just crazy. One day, he went and he had an announcement made and he had posters made up, flyers, however they did it, and he posted it around the town that on a certain day, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, anyone who came to his office and brought their bills with them, any bills, all their bills, he would pay their bills off. This became the buzz of the town, the talk of the town.

The day came and people were standing outside his office in the street just wondering what was going to happen. No one went in there. No one went up to his office until finally, with about 15 minutes left, this old couple came with a handful of bills and they went in.

And he saw them. And they said, did you really mean what you said, that you'd pay our bills off once we brought them to you? He said, yes, I did. And then he told his assistant, total those up and write them a check for the full amount.

And the couple, deeply moved, said, can we run outside and tell the people outside that you did it? He said, no. He said, you had to believe me by faith and so do they. So at 1201, the nobleman and the elderly couple walked outside and somebody asked them, what happened? Did he do it? And they said, yes, he did.

And then people began to beg the nobleman, would you do ours too? And he said, no, it's too late. You didn't believe my offer. You didn't come.

You didn't receive what you could have received. It's too late. I'm sorry.

And at that moment, the nobleman began to tell them the greater offer, the genuine offer of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. He will forgive their sin if they'll believe the message. Christ died and rose again and is a living Savior this morning.

And He's enthroned above and He offers mercy and forgiveness to all who will go to His office and believe Him and receive Him. Christ ascended and seated as Lord and King of all. Let's pray.

Father, thank You that this is the end of the Gospel, that Christ ascends forever and He's enthroned and He reigns forever as the head of the church, as the Savior who offers mercy. Bless Your Word to every heart. And Lord, call some who have not really believed Him before.

They've heard the announcement, but they've not come to Him to receive what He offers. Lord, help today some to come to You and believe and be forgiven. Thank You in Christ's name, Amen.

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