

Luke 24:45-47 Worship Christ as Lord over all! Ascension May 30, 2019

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God's grace and peace have been won for you by our Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

We learn more about what blessings will result from Jesus ascension in Luke 24:45-47.

These are your words, heavenly Father. Help us to praise Jesus as our Lord. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed of the Lord, sharing in His victory!

People love heroes. It shows in the box office receipts with every popular super-hero movie. Also, when teams win football titles, basketball championships, or the baseball world series, people gather for grand celebrations. If people have such excitement for temporary victories, how much greater the celebration of heaven must have been when Jesus entered as the victor over all His enemies. The Bible states, "[God] raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 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. God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church...." (Ephesians 1:20-22) As Christians, we cannot help but

Worship Christ as Lord over all!

First, what are the benefits of Jesus ruling over all? At Jesus' ascension God placed everything under His control to benefit believers. They would receive gifts from the Holy Spirit to proclaim the truth. Jesus said, "*Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in my name to all nations*" (v.47). We have no record of Jesus appearing to unbelievers after His resurrection, with the exception of St. Paul. The reason is simple: even if they saw Jesus risen from death, people would not believe. Jesus promised that once He ascended He would send the Holy Spirit. He would use the preaching of the disciples to convict the world of sin, to bring them to repentance and to accept by faith the forgiveness that Jesus won. Jesus directed His followers to take the saving truth to all nations including our country. We have been converted as the Holy Spirit worked through God's Word and the waters of baptism and the power of the Gospel of forgiveness. The sinful world and our sinful nature oppose God's Word. That is why we need to pray that Jesus would keep His ascension promise to send His Spirit to guide us by a deeper knowledge and application of God's Word. There are too many times when we doubt God's promises or sin against Him. Too often we lose sight of Christ's purpose for us on earth. We are not seeking God's kingdom first!

That is why Jesus commanded that repentance be preached to us! Then we can approach the Lord and trust in His promise: "*Whoever comes to me I will never drive away*" (John 6:37). So, we daily come to Christ as Lord of all, not boasting of our goodness but focused on His goodness. The Bible promises, "*Once more the humble will rejoice in the Lord; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One...*" (Isaiah 29:19). Although Jesus is ascended, He is available to us at all times and in all situations.

All who repent of their sins and trust in Christ, no matter who they are, have His forgiveness. After committing murder, David wrote, "*I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin*" (Psalms 32:5). As Lord of all, Christ knows every sinful thought, word and action. Yet, due to Christ's pleading for us in heaven, our sins are not held against us! We read in Romans 8, "*Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us*" (8:34). The Ruler of all things is praying for us so that we will stand by faith in Him against evil and temptations, and in the end share in His eternal glory!

Jesus also promised before ascending, that when the Gospel has been preached to all nations and all the elect are brought to faith in Him, He will return in glory. The disciples heard this from the angels when Jesus ascended: *“Why stare up into heaven? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go”* (Acts 1:11). Jesus promised He was going to prepare a place for us and He will return to take us to be with Him (John 14:3). This is what the ascension of Christ should mean to every Christian, without a doubt.

Second, Jesus deserves our praise. When people first settled our country, they sacrificed greatly leaving families and home countries behind. Some died in ships while on the ocean, other died from the harsh conditions of life in our new land, and others died in war as they established our nation in freedom. Those early founders deserve our praise for risking all to form this nation. Christ did so much more! Ever since the fall into sin all people have been enslaved by the devil. There was no way for people to set themselves free from his tyranny. We all were descending to the grave and then to eternal suffering for our sins. But God’s Son left the glory of heaven and entered this hostile world. Throughout His life He served people and honored His heavenly Father. He always did good to help others in their need.

Ultimately He made the greatest sacrifice to win our eternal freedom. By His death, He made a way for God’s love to save sinners. In Old Testament times, God intervened in order to rescue believers. To save Noah and his family, He destroyed the wicked unbelievers. To save Moses and the Israelites, He destroyed Pharaoh’s army. In each case, His rescue resulted in praise and thanks by God’s people. God’s ultimate rescue came through His Son: *“[Jesus] opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day’”* (v.45-46).

God the Father’s story about His Son was clearly written in the Old Testament: His birth, His zeal to serve God, His royal entry into Jerusalem, His suffering for sins, and His innocent death. Also His resurrection was predicted and His ascension. We celebrate Christ’s ascension because it was a height of events of His life that are connected to our lives. He was born sinless in place of us who were born with a sinful nature. He fully served the Lord in place of our serving ourselves. He suffered and died that we might be forgiven and live forever. He ascended to heaven to assure us that heaven’s door is open and as we trust in Him, our souls will be welcomed into heaven the moment we die. We share in His victory through faith. He is worthy of our praise always!

How do we honor Him? We show Him respect by listening to His Word. Whenever we pray the Lord’s Prayer and say, “Thy kingdom come,” we’re asking Christ to rule over our hearts and lives. When we pray, “Thy will be done,” we are asking that He would use our words and actions as instruments for His good will. We praise Him with our mouths as we confess His greatness, we sing hymns to honor Him, and we pray for His power to change our lives. With our ears we hear His Word so that we know the truth. Then, the Holy Spirit will open our understanding to speak about our great loving Savior, especially to people who are still suffering under the devil’s rule.

If we ever have any local teams that win a championship, may God help us enjoy and celebrate the victory! Even more, may God help us always to honor, praise, and love our loving Savior who was sacrificed, rose, and ascended to set us free and serve Him forever! Amen.