

What is the gospel #6: the ascension of Christ.

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Introduction:

Over the last few weeks we have seen that on the cross Jesus, the Son of God, paid the full price, by sacrifice as our substitute, for our sins, furthermore because he himself was sinless, he was not himself personally under the consequences of sin, so 'death could not hold him' Acts 2.24, and he was raised to life. Rom 4.22-24 says he died for our sins and was raised for our justification

We have also seen that it was through our symbolic identification with Adam when he sinned and was expelled from the garden that we were born and lived 'the wrong side of the tracks', but through our identification with Jesus by faith, not only do we benefit from the legal, historical work he accomplished on the cross, but also there is a vital, present tense benefit: last time we saw from Paul's writings that we have been crucified with Christ, buried with him in baptism so that we may be raised with him and walk in newness of life, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is one last vital phase we must look at in overview before we double back and look at the consequences for us all as revealed in this glorious gospel; and that is the ascension – it is not enough for us that he died and rose as the representative man, the second Adam; that would be good, but our human weakness would still sabotage the work of God in our lives, salvation truly has to be idiot proof, for people like me, so God had an even better plan.....

In the OT the roles of Priest and King were always separate, and as Baptists we would applaud that, because we believe that church and state should be separate, because if power can corrupt, then both physical and spiritual 'power' would corrupt completely, as can be seen in various stages of church history. The exception is in the person of Melchizedek, in Genesis 14 he brings out bread and wine to Abraham, and is called the king of salem (peace, where we get shalom). Psalm 110 and Hebrews go further and say that Messiah (Jesus) will be a priest like Melchizedek – i.e. a king and a priest; these two roles are essential to an understanding of the ascension.

In Jesus these two are combined again with amazing consequences

[Hebrews 1.3](#)

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Jesus is priest and king

Lamb on the throne – sacrifice and authority:

We see the same concepts in Philippians: he emptied himself, was obedient even to death on a cross and now God has highly exalted him and given him a name far above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

Let's see how this works:

The high priest

Day of Atonement – high priestly offering

Jesus, our high priest: the high priest of the old covenant was a type of Jesus, the high priest of the new covenant, once every year the high priest entered the tabernacle or temple with the blood of bulls and goats to make a yearly atonement

The only time the holy of holies was entered was once a year on the Day of Atonement when the high priest, without his beautiful garments but dressed in just linen clothes went in alone to make atonement for the sins of the nation. Because he was imperfect he had to first sprinkle the blood of a bullock for his own sins and only then could the blood of a goat be poured out for the nation. Because the **sacrifice** and the high priest were imperfect, he could never sit down, for his job was never done, the same ceremony had to be repeated every year because the sin problem was never solved. When Jesus died, the veil in the temple, which signified the same as that of the tabernacle, was torn in two to signify that God and man were reconciled at last. At his ascension Jesus, the perfect high priest entered into heaven and was able to sit down because God had accepted him and the infinite sacrifice of his blood once and for all.

On the Day of Atonement the high priest would then come out and show the people the sacrifice was **accepted, proclaiming (peace)** and that they were ok until **next year**.

But Jesus as our great high priest, offered himself, the spotless Son of God, he was able to make one offering to end all offerings.
Once and for all

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Heb 9:25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. **Heb 9:26** Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. **Heb 10:12** But when **this** priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. **Heb 10:13** Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, **Heb 10:14** because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Notice that he still comes out and declares peace (this makes sense of the interview in the garden with Mary – do not cling to me, I am ascending, and then later appearing to disciples and saying ‘touch me a spirit does not have flesh and bone’) he had completed his priestly duties at the end of the day. Jesus came and said ‘peace be with you’, and then spent time instructing them, and in a way that they could understand went back into the holy of holies and sat down as king and lord and priest.

But Jesus sacrifice is perfect, and he doesn’t sin, therefore he is welcome to stay,

So after reassuring the disciples for 40 days he goes back to the throne room, far above all other powers and sits down.

From there he also pours out the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that instead of being limited to one locality at a time, he can be with all who believe, all the time. Acts 2.33

This is what happened on day of Pentecost, the Spirit poured out, and Jesus declared as LORD Acts 2.32-33

Raised as Lord, sat down cp Psalm 110.1,4

Far **above all powers** and timeless Eph 1.19b-23

“He is no longer the meek and lowly man of Galilee, he is no longer the Son made sin, forsaken of God. He is the lord of all who conquered Satan, sin, disease and death; he is the one who possesses all authority in heaven and on earth”

He has **sat down in the place of all authority**

So he is Lord, and he is our high priest: what is he doing now?

Present day ministry:

High priest: 1 Pet 2.5; every prayer, every worship is accepted by the Father when it is presented in the name of Jesus

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He is a merciful and faithful high priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities: he is in the presence of the Father for us, and he understands what we are going through. [Heb 4:15](#) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. [Heb 4:16](#) Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Let us approach the throne of grace (notice throne = king, grace = priest) we have someone on our side, we do have friends in high places

[Jesus, the mediator](#): 1 Tim 2.5

He is our mediator because he can fully represent both sides; man and God, because he is the union of God and man, he is the word made flesh, he is the one who is equal with God, made in the likeness of man Phil 2.8-9

But it is more than that, because man had sinned Jesus is mediator because he paid the penalty and reconciled us to God, brought us together with him having removed the barrier (as we will see in subsequent weeks), therefore we have a right to approach God through Christ, our mediator. He is mediator by his nature and by his work.

[Jesus, the intercessor](#)

Jesus as high priest carried his blood into the holy of holies, satisfying the claims of justice that were against us, as mediator he introduces us and reconciles us to God (John 14.6 no man comes to the father except by me)

He is mediator for the sinner, but intercessor for the Christian: why do we need one? Because although we have received new life and the Holy Spirit, our minds and lives need to be changed and transformed, we need to learn to live in freedom – during this time of growth, there are times when we strain our fellowship with the Father, as in our ignorance of his will we many times say and do things that are not pleasing to him. Nevertheless he is able to save us to the uttermost because he ever lives to pray for us [Heb 7.25](#) there is no condemnation to us because Jesus has died and now lives to pray for us [Rom 8.34](#) Who is he that condemns? 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.

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Jesus the advocate, sometimes we go beyond ignorance and into wilful sin, if we had no advocate, someone to speak on our behalf, we would be in a sad position.

1 John 1.3-9 (which we will study in a few weeks) is God's remedy for our sin; that we confess, own up – our forgiveness has already been eternally purchased on the cross, but we will not experience the joy of that forgiveness until we speak to our advocate, he then takes up the case before his Father, points to his completed sacrifice, and then we know our fellowship with the Father is restored.

Jesus, our surety; Hebrews 7.22 under the old covenant, if the high priest failed it interrupted the relationship between God and Israel,

Under the new covenant, Jesus is our high priest and guarantee – he has been accepted once and for all, and has sat down – that means our position is absolutely secure, we need never doubt our relationship with God again. This is why we can pray in his name and have confidence that he hears and answers them: John 14.13

One last thing is that he is **preparing a place for us**, and when it is complete, he will come back and we will be with him: Keith Green once made the observation that if God could make all of the beauty and majesty of the natural created world in just six days, how much more amazing will be this new creation which he has been working on for 2000 years!

We have the assurance of Jesus, not only that we have a friend in high places who speaks for us and has all power and authority, and the indwelling holy spirit to give us power for living, but that our final home will be in heaven with him and live with him forever.