

Jesus' Glory

Read

Acts 1:1-11

Jesus Ascended into Heaven

The Creed moves from the events of Easter Sunday to what happened forty days later, when we are told that Jesus ascended “into heaven” and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

There are a few things to keep straight when talking about Jesus' ascension:

1. ***Jesus' ascension was physical, not merely spiritual.***

Jesus remained fully human in ascending to be with God in heaven. We tend to think of Jesus' ascension in strictly spiritual terms. Jesus ascended to be with the father in his earthly resurrected body.

Question: What do you think of when you think of heaven? Does this fit with the physical ideas I am suggesting?

2. ***The ascension of Jesus made way for God's presence, his Holy Spirit, to be more accessible to people.***

John 16:5-15 - “Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you...when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

3. ***The ascension of Jesus looks forward to his return.***

While Jesus has gone to be with God the Father in heaven, we await the day when he will return to make heaven's rule on earth complete.

Jesus' Return And Judgment

The next line in the creed reads, “He will come again to judge the living and the dead.”

Discuss

What comes to mind when you hear the term “second coming?”

The “Second Coming”

While at present Jesus has ascended into heaven, we await the day when Jesus returns to this earth in order to set things straight once-and-for-all.

There is confusion about the second coming. We should keep in mind these things:

1. We shouldn't get caught up in trying to set a precise sequence of events or a timeline of what some will call the “end times.” The Scriptures rather focus on the bigger picture that Jesus is returning to earth like a King in order to establish his new world order.

2. The term “end times” is misleading. The bible gives no indication that time ends at all. Rather we get a picture of restoration and renewal. Jesus says, “Look I am making all things new!”
3. In theology the study of these so called “end times” is called eschatology. A 1st Century eschatology was the belief that God was moving history to a cataclysmic change where God would restore the world to its intended and rightful ways.

The Judgment

The Creed reminds us that when Jesus returns to set the world right, he does so as righteous judge. As such, the Creed highlights an absolutely vital and nonnegotiable Christian belief: that there will indeed be a judgment in which the creator God will set the world right once and for all.¹

Discuss

What things come to mind when you hear the word “judgement”? Discuss this first and then read Psalm 98 to see how the psalmist views judgement.

Throughout the Bible, God’s coming judgment is a good thing. In a world riddled with injustice the thought that there will come a day when the wicked are firmly put in their place and the poor, weak, and faithful are given their due is good news!

“Faced with a world in rebellion, a world full of exploitation and wickedness, a good God must be a God of judgment.” -NT Wright

The future judgment is good news because Jesus himself is the one doing the judging. In addition, we are not judged arbitrarily, but rather we’re judged based on our response to Jesus. **Romans 5:1** - “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Although our “salvation” is born out of faith, it moves forward through our actions. **2 Corinthians 5:10** – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

Our faith is the basis of our salvation, but as God’s people we are designed to do good works. In essence, being made new means that we begin to live the way God intended. Our good works flow from our faith.

Discuss

How could you talk about Jesus’ ascension, return, and judgement with your non-christian friends in ways that they would want to listen?

¹ This section has largely been drawn from NT Wright’s, *Surprised By Hope*, pp. 137-145.