

Westside Fellowship Sermon Transcript

Title: "AS They were Looking On..."

Series: 50 Days that Changed the World, pt 6

Date: May 17, 2026

Text: Luke 24:44-53, and Acts 1:6-11

Topic: Ascension of Christ

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I wanna read a short story that I heard earlier in the week that I wanna share with all of y'all.

It goes like this. It says, "The CEO of a major corporation left town on short notice. Only a few people knew that he'd even left." I forgot to dismiss the children. If y'all would please be dismissed. Kids, kindergarten through fifth grade, you may be dismissed at this time. Y'all head on out Fantastic.

Yeah, let's start over

All right, very good. All right let's read that first line again. The CEO of a major corporation left town on short notice. Only a few people knew that he'd even left. Knowing that his senior vice presidents and their staff would not be able to operate for very long without guidance he decided to write a lengthy and specific email detailing several key projects that he wanted accomplished while he was away, as well as several important clients that he wanted contacted.

All in all he simply wanted business to resume as normal while he was gone. He was away for a long time, really a lot longer than many in the company expected him to be away. In fact, several months went by before he returned to the office, but when he pulled in when he pulled into the parking lot he immediately sensed that something, something just wasn't right.

Something was wrong, in fact. The corporate campus had not necessarily been cared for. The grass had not been mowed. As he entered the lobby, he heard phones ringing, only to find the receptionists were sitting there painting their nails. When the elevator doors opened to the executive suite, he stepped out and

was absolutely stunned at what he saw.

His senior vice presidents had turned the large workroom into a modified gym. They had everything from weights to pool tables. The staff were in casual clothes. They were just laughing and playing and goofing around. When they noticed the fact that he was standing there, that he had returned from his journey, they all quieted down and they came by and stood by him.

And once the noise had quieted down, he simply asked, "Did y'all receive my email?" The response shocked him. Your email? Yeah. Yeah, we got it, absolutely. In fact we forwarded it around to every employee that we could think of so that everyone could have their own copy." He asked did you read the email?"

"Read it? Yeah. We've got the entire company divided up into smaller groups to study the email. So- some of our more aggressive employees, they've even spent time memorizing it. One man memorized the entire thing. Others, they've written songs about your email. We've got T-shirts, coffee mugs, bumper stickers with quotes from your email all over it.

In fact, we were just talking about taking a couple hours out of each week to get all the employees together for a special discussion on your email so we could know the email even better." And by this time, the CEO of the company he felt weak, but he still asked the question. He said, "Okay. Did anybody do what I asked them to do in the email?"

"Do what you asked us to do?" they replied. "Yeah. The clients that I wanted reached, the projects that I wanted accomplished. Did anybody actually do what I asked you to do?" And at that point, one man came forward and said no, sir. We're still in the process of developing new and creative ways to study the email.

We've not quite yet got around to doing what you wrote." "Oh, I see," said the president And if there is a story that describes the modern-day church in America, it would be that one

Jesus left heaven, came to earth, lived the life that we are called to live, died the death that we are condemned to die in our place, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and has given us His Word, His marching orders for how we are to carry

on business in the time while He is away

At least for Westside Fellowship, I wonder if there's anyone here who might dare to be different from many other Christians in America, who might dare to study God's Word for more than just growing in academic knowledge, but studying God's Word for life transformation so that we might actually go out and do what He instructed us to do, which is to make disciples, to follow Jesus, and to help others follow Jesus too. Look, as we're continuing our series, 50 Days That Changed the World, I wanna invite you to open to Luke chapter 24 with me.

All right, for those of you who are just joining us here at Westside, maybe you're here for graduation Sunday, welcome. Look, the aim of this series has been focused on providing a more intentional look at the 50 days that transpired between when Jesus rose from the dead until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

All right? This is a time that, that we really don't study that many Christians do not study that often because really there, there's not a lot written about that time, but there is some written. A truth that's often overlooked by many Christians today is that following Christ's resurrection from the dead that He actually carried on an earthly ministry for 40 days.

40 days in which He appeared to various people at various times. In fact, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, he provides a little bit of that background for us. He says that Jesus appeared to Peter, appeared to the 12, appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time which I personally am convicted that's the Great Commission in Matthew.

Then He appeared to James, also to Paul on the road to Damascus, which was after the ascension. Then in Acts 1, at the beginning, Luke points out that during this 40 days, Jesus appeared to the apostles for the purpose of bringing them understanding of the Old Testament scriptures and teaching them about the Kingdom of God.

And even though the chronology of this time in history is somewhat hard to determine with great certainty, one thing that, that I hope that this series has helped us all to discover is just how amazing this 40-day interval really is. And yes, the series is entitled 50 Days That Changed the World because there is a 10-day waiting period from the time that Jesus ascended until the Holy Spirit comes

upon the believers and the Church is born.

Today we're actually gonna pick up on day 40. Day 40 in the post-resurrection ministry of Jesus. All right, this is the last day that Jesus was on Earth during His first coming. We're gonna look at the ascension of Christ Per our calendar in 2026, Ascension Day was actually on Thursday. Thursday of this past week was Ascension Day.

See, there's a lot of debate about whether or not we can find out exactly what day Jesus was born and whether or not Christmas is on December 25th, or if it's sometime in the spring. There's a lot of conversation about that. But one thing that we know for certain? It's the day that Jesus ascended.

We know that for certain. And you know what day that was? That was 40 days after Resurrection Sunday. So oftentimes we celebrate Christmas, the incarnation of Christ. We celebrate Resurrection Sunday with the resurrection of Christ. But how many of us really stop to think on Thursday, today's the day my Lord ascended to heaven Sometimes we look right past Ascension Day.

In fact, the staff and I were talking earlier in the week that I think we're gonna start a new celebration. We're gonna start celebrating Ascension Day. One more reason to have food, one more reason to have a party, getting together, celebrating, passing each other encouraging notes that our Lord has ascended to heaven.

Look, if you're like me, perhaps you don't realize how significant that truly is, that Christ ascended to heaven. I pray that by the time we get through with this study that, that just like I was earlier in the week I stepped back from studying this text, and I actually literally walked outside.

There were some people planting flowers. I walked outside, and I literally just exclaimed, "Our Lord and Savior has ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God." And they just kinda looked up at me, and they were like, "Okay, thanks for that." I think when this begins to settle in by the end of today, I pray that this changes the way that you view the current ministry of Jesus Christ in the here and now.

All right, we're gonna actually divide our study up into three sub-focus points. We're gonna see the details of the ascension, the response to the ascension, and the significance of the ascension. With that, we're gonna start in Luke 24. We're gonna read the whole account right here. There's not much to it.

Starts in verse 50 and goes to verse 53. "And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God."

All right, you know why I think that there's not a lot of people who talk about or teach on the ascension often is well, because that's practically all that we have. All right? That's what we know about the ascension. Now, if we remember, though, that Luke, Dr. Luke is the one who wrote this in Luke 24. He's also the one who wrote the book of Acts, right?

This is a two-volume series, the Book of Luke, the Book of Acts. It's a two-volume series that Dr. Luke compiled in order to provide certainty about the things that his friend Theophilus had heard about Christ. So by the time we get to the end of the Book of Luke, we understand that's the end of season one, if I'm gonna put it in y'all's Netflix vernacular, okay?

So we open to Acts chapter 1, and we see it's season two, episode one, all right? And oftentimes in season two, episode one, we have a quick flashback so we can all get on board with the next part of the story. Let's look at what Luke writes in Acts. All right, by the time we see Acts chapter 1, we see That when Jesus, when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up.

All right, so we see that the ascension is revisited here. As they were looking on, 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 do 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."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. All right, I read both accounts because it's gonna require us to, to harmonize these two accounts to really study what's

going on with the ascension. So let's look at the details of the ascension.

We're gonna then look at the response to the ascension, and then we're gonna conclude with some significances of the ascension. All right, knowing, seeing that Luke is really the only one who gives us any detail about what happened that day, a- and although there's not a ton of detail given, we can begin to point out a few things, right?

A- and we can really just kinda leave these two texts on the board. Flip back and forth if you're in your Bibles. Flip back and forth. We're gonna stay in those texts for a while. The first thing we can know about the ascension is this. That Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives. All right, that's very important.

We see that in verse 12, that they returned from the Mount of Olives. We see in Luke 24 that he led them out in the vicinity of Bethany. All right, Bethany is a small town on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, right? Bethany, Jesus spent a lot of time in Bethany during his earthly ministry. It was a town he was familiar with.

He had friends there. Perhaps you know their names, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. All right, he spent time there He would often pull away to this particular area to pray. It w- it was a beautiful area, very rural. Perhaps you've heard of the Garden of Gethsemane. All right, Jesus would withdraw to this area quite often to pray.

And so it's not surprising to me that He leads His disciples out to the very area where He's familiar with, where they're familiar with for this time. All right, so He ascends from the Mount of Olives. The second thing we notice about the ascension is that Jesus ascended to heaven while blessing His disciples, right?

We see this in Luke 24:51, "While He blessed them," all right? He is blessing His disciples. He lifted up His hands, and He blessed them. Now, this is not some mystical or symbolic act. This is a pledge of blessings that they and all believers would receive. And I want you to stop. Before we just read past this quickly, I want you to stop and envision what's going on here, okay?

Jesus is holding up His hands. Guys, these are the same hands that have holes in them. All right, I want you to remember that. These are the same hands that you can see right through, the same hands that healed many people throughout His

earthly ministry, the same hands that were tied when He was then nailed to the cross, the same hands that, that Thomas looked at and touched after the resurrection.

He's lifting up these nail-scarred hands, and He's blessing the people. And what might you think that He's saying? Do you ever ask yourself these questions? I personally think perhaps He's leaning into the Aaronic blessing a little bit from Numbers 6:24. Perhaps He's holding up His hands, and He's saying, "The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you, be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace." Maybe, just maybe, He's going through the list of spiritual blessings in the heavenlies that are ours that we see Paul record in Ephesians 1:3-14. Maybe He's holding up His hands, and He's saying, "Guys every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies is given to you.

You are chosen in Christ. You are adopted in Christ. You are redeemed through the blood of Christ. You are awaiting an inheritance in Christ. You are given, you will be given the Holy Spirit as a down payment of the inheritance." Perhaps Jesus is repeating some of the blessings that He gave to them in John 14 through 17 in the upper room the night before He was crucified.

As He held up His hands there, perhaps He's reminding them of the blessings of heaven and the Holy Spirit of love, of mercy, of grace, power, of answered prayer. Jesus holds up His hands and blesses, pledges a blessing onto the disciples

One other thing that we know about the ascension is that Jesus ascended in plain sight of His disciples there with Him. All right, so we're beginning to put it together. He ascended from the Mount of Olives. He blessed them while He was ascending. He ascended in plain sight, right? We know that very clearly because we see that as they were looking on, He ascended, and we see that in Acts it says that the two men in that appeared to the disciples said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into heaven?"

So what we need to understand is that the ascension was verified by eyewitnesses. All right? Another thing we see is that Jesus ascended in the same way as He will come back. All right, I want you to notice that. He ascended in the same way that

He will come back. What do I mean by that? Two words: literally and physically.

All right? He will come back to the Mount of Olives. How do I know that? Because as we're gonna look at in a little while, not right this second, but Zechariah 14:4 tells me that. He ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives while blessing His disciples in plain view of eyewitnesses and in the same way that He will come back.

How do I know that? Because in Acts chapter 1, we hear the, that the angels say, "Men of Galilee, what is it that you're looking at? Don't you know that Jesus is gonna come back in the same way that He went up?" All right, so we're beginning to understand some details about the ascension. But before we look at the response to the discip- the response to the ascension from the disciples, I- let's take a few moments to see if we can better understand some of these events, because y'all know that I'm passionate about Bible reading.

I'm passionate about biblical literacy. I'm passionate about un- teaching us all how to read the Bible and making sure that we all understand the storyline of the Bible. So two comments are made that lead us to believe that there's more information available about this event that I think we can lean into a little bit.

In Luke 24:50 it says, "And He led them out as far as Bethany." And Acts 1:9 says, "And when He said these things." So if y'all are like me if you have an investigative mind and you're really trying to look and understand the scriptures and dive into, to what is being taught to us, there are a couple of questions that, that you'll ask at this point, right?

One of those questions is this: If He led them out, where did He lead them out of? Where are they? A second question you're gonna see is in Acts 1:9, if He said these things, what are the things that He said? I wanna know this. I wanna put this together. I wanna understand the details leading into the ascension.

All right, to answer the first two questions, who did Jesus lead out to Bethany and where did he lead them from? I actually want us to back up in Luke chapter 24 all the way to verse 44. All right, I want us to read this, verse 44 through 49. This is what it says, "Then he said to them," "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses

and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

I want you to underline that in your Bible, please. "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them: 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that the repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.'" All right, if we wanna know where Jesus led them from, the setting of this pericope is in the upper room in Jerusalem. I believe that they are in the upper room in Jerusalem.

There, there certainly there's a little bit of question because if you're reading your Bibles, you see the context that verse 44 in Luke 24 follows verse 43. 'Cause that's how numbers work. But we have to remember that there were no verse markings in the original text, okay? We also have to remember that a lot of times i- in Greek, there are conjunctions used that simply move a narrative onward but aren't necessarily immediately chronological in how they are talking, all right?

So what we see in the previous part of Luke, verses 36 through 43 is this is Resurrection Sunday. All right, this is Resurrection Sunday. It's after the two disciples have seen Jesus on the road to Emmaus. They had come back. Jesus has now a- appeared to them. They're sitting there, and they're sharing some food.

And we see in verses 42 and 43 that, that Jesus asked, "Do you have anything to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish. He took it and ate before them. I am personally convicted that is actually the end of what happened on Resurrection Sunday, and that by the time we get to verse 44, that some time has passed.

Why do I think that? I would have to go into a very long explanation of the way conjunctions are used in Greek. I'm not gonna do that. But suffice it to say right this moment... I'll be happy to if you wanna come talk to me later. That's wonderful. But suffice it to say right this moment that I am greatly convicted that at the end of verse 43, we can take John chapter 20, the last part, John chapter 21, and Matthew 28, and we can slap it right in between verses 43 and 44.

I know I'm getting a little bit technical, but I promise y'all hold on with me because th- you're gonna see why people rarely study the Ascension. But at the end, you're gonna, your mind, you're just gonna be like, "Oh my goodness, why don't we ever study this? This is amazing

What I believe has transpired is after Resurrection Sunday, we know that Jesus gave instructions to the women that saw him. He said, "Hey, go tell my disciples to meet me in Galilee." We know this. We've talked about this. Why? 'Cause he's got something he wants to tell them all. And so while they are migrating up to Galilee, seven of them decide that, eh, they're just gonna go fishing.

They're just kinda k- gonna go back to their previous life. Okay. Jesus meets them there. They share a meal by a campfire. And then we see in Matthew 28 that we're on the mountainside in Galilee, and he is giving them what we refer to as the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations."

And then I believe that they've journeyed back to Jerusalem, and that they are in Jerusalem and they are back in the upper room at this point, and it's gonna make sense as to why I think that here in just a moment. And that after having these things transpired already, that now they're gathered and Jesus reiterates to them...

this is later on, I believe, in the 40 days after the resurrection. Jesus reiterates to them what? He r- he reiterates in other words, "Hey guys, I've not come to abolish the law. I've come to fulfill it." Remember he said that earlier in his ministry? He said, "Hey guys, all that's written about me in the Old Testament," all right?

They wouldn't have called it the Old Testament. He called it the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. From a Jewish mind the Hebrew Bible is the Law of the Prophets and the Writings. All right, you see it right there, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, the Writings. Jesus is saying, "Hey guys, there's something I need y'all to understand, okay?"

Listen to me. Something I need you to understand. Everything that is written about me in the Hebrew scriptures will be fulfilled. Everything. Every dot, every iota." And then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Wouldn't

you love to take a Bible interpretation class with Jesus?

Wouldn't you love that? To sit there and just hear him expound on the text. He taught them the Old Testament, and he leaned in specifically to the fact that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

See, these guys didn't need any help interpreting the Messianic passages about a ruling king who would come to establish a kingdom in Israel and overthrow the Gentiles. They understood that well. In fact, that's what they were looking for when Jesus came. A- and ultimately, that's kinda what caught some people off guard wh- when he rode in to Jerusalem that we see in Matthew 21 on what we call Palm Sunday, and they're shouting, "Hosanna.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Th- they are looking ahead to this Messianic king to establish the kingdom in Israel. But what they didn't quite grasp is that the Old Testament not only looks ahead to Messiah as a ruling and reigning king, but the Old Testament also looks ahead to Messiah as a suffering servant Who would be slain on behalf of the sins of people.

Who would be slain on behalf of the sins of Israel

And so Christ taught them the scriptures as to how the Old Testament specifically teaches the death, the resurrection, and the gospel of Jesus Christ and I think personally that we begin to see what Jesus taught them. I think we see this oozing out of them in the Book of Acts. Why? Because for the first couple of decades of the church, all they had were the Old Testament scriptures.

Don't forget that. And Peter stands in Solomon's Portico, and he's just letting them have it. "Men of Israel, did you not know that the Christ would come and die on behalf of your sins and rise from the dead? This Jesus is the one whom God has sent to pay for your sins." What do you think Paul used when he went from synagogue to synagogue expounding the Gospel of Messiah?

He used the Old Testament. And I think when we're reading some stuff in Acts, I think we're getting, we are getting taught the very things that perhaps Jesus taught them that night. "Peter, you're gonna teach them this." And we read in

Acts 4 much of what we see there, Acts 3 and 4

But see, not only do we see that the Christ should suffer, that the Old Testament talks about Christ suffering and Christ rising from the dead, but the Old Testament clearly also teaches that the repentance, that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations.

When we read through various passages in Isaiah and elsewhere, we see that God's program has always included the nations. We studied that in Genesis as we went all the way back to the beginning, and we saw how from Noah, 70 nations came from Noah, and they all rebelled against Yahweh. And so out of those 70, Yahweh called one, namely Israel.

And He used them as a light to the nations and a repository of the truth through whom the Holy Scriptures would come. Paul tells us it's to them they are given the covenants, to them they are given the temple worship, to them they are given even the scriptures that come through and the adoption as sons.

And we see this in Paul's writing in Romans, but we see this all throughout Deuteronomy. We see this all throughout the entire Old Testament, that Israel was intended to be used for the purpose of bringing the nations back to Yahweh. And what Jesus is telling the disciples right here is, "Guys, can you not see how throughout all of the Old Testament, what this is pointing towards is that there is forgiveness for sin through faith in me?"

That's Jesus speaking

That all nations should hear this message, and it's a message of repentance. Would you see that? Elizabeth and I watched a movie earlier in the week of George Whitefield and the First Great Awakening, and they were preaching a message of repentance. When did we stop preaching the message of repentance, of turning from sin, of opening our eyes to see that the life of darkness is not the life we are called into, but that we are to see that the Father of lights has come and offered forgiveness for sin?

When are we... When did we stop preaching the message that we are to repent, that we are to change the way we think about Jesus, that we are to turn from the way we think about sin, that we are to turn from the way that we think that we

can carry out our own our own judicial payment for sin, that we can handle our own sin?

When did we stop preaching about the fact that we must turn unto Christ and give Him our full allegiance as our Lord and Messiah, and that brings forgiveness of sin based on the blood of Jesus shed on the cross? That's the message that Jesus told them. That's what He wanted them to see. "Go and preach repentance.

Go and preach that forgiveness is offered in my name, and take it to the nations so that all would hear."

But he keeps going. He says, "You are witnesses of these things." And behold

Verse 49, "I'm sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power." What's the promise of His Father? It's the Holy Spirit. Why does he refer to it as the promise of His Father? Because in John 14, 15, and 16, we see that Jesus promised that the Father would send another helper to be with them, to lead them into truth, to help them to walk in righteousness, to give them boldness, to give them courage, to guide them, to direct them to point them towards wisdom

But see, the promise of the Father also goes back to the Old Testament, and that's what Jesus is saying. Because very clearly in passages like Jeremiah 31, passages like Ezekiel 36, the Father promises that there will come a time when a new covenant will be given. A new covenant will be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah and a part of that new covenant, God will forgive their sins.

He will cleanse them of their sins. He will put within them a new heart He will put the Spirit inside of them, give them His Holy Spirit, His Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ

And in all of those contexts, in all of those contexts of the new covenant, we see that there's also a very clear context of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel Because they all went together. They all went hand in the Old Testament

And so Jesus, after saying these things, he then instructs them to stay in the city, stay in the city until you're clothed with power from on high

In other words stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes This is why I believe this pericope is after Resurrection Sunday. Because Jesus clearly told them earlier, "Go to Galilee and I'll meet you there," and now he tells them, "Stay in the city till the Spirit comes." Do you see now? I'm just convicted that they're two separate instances here

And verse 50 of Luke 24 tells us that he led them out as far as Bethany. All right, so these are the events leading up to the ascension. All right, I know if y'all thought that I just took a hard left and chased a squirrel to talk about something else. No. I wanted to lead you into the fact that this is what's going on prior, I believe this is what's going on prior to Jesus leading them out to the vicinity of Bethany to the Mount of Olives one last time.

A place they're very familiar with, by the way. A walk they've taken numerous times together

And they left the upper room. This is a place, this just kinda, it became their headquarters. They left the upper room, headed out to the Mount of Olives, and I believe this is where Acts 1:6 picks up

Season two, episode one. Remember So when they had come together, they asked him, probably Peter, maybe more, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" I want you to hold onto that question for just a second, okay?

This question has been looked at by many Bible scholars as a mistake This question has been looked at by some to teach, these guys just didn't understand what was going on. How could they be so foolish as to ask about the national restoration of Israel? They just didn't understand that the gospel was to go to the nations.

They just didn't get it yet. These guys were just foolish with what we just looked at in Luke 24, do you really think you can ask those questions? If I've just sat through a Bible interpretation class with Jesus You think they don't understand what they're asking? I think they fully understand what they're asking.

And you know why I think they fully understand what they're asking? It's because the Old Testament teaches that when Messiah comes, he will restore the kingdom

to Israel

And they were looking for this restoration of the kingdom prior to Jesus' crucifixion. And Jesus just spent time walking through how the Old Testament points ahead to a suffering servant. How it is necessary for the Christ to die for the payment of sin, to rise from the dead showing that payment was sufficient so that the forgiveness of sins could be proclaimed in His name.

Do we see? He has just told them this

Moreover, you wanna know what I think moreover? In Zechariah 14:4, let's throw that on the screen and look at what Zechariah says. "On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the mount shall move northward, and the other half southward."

Now there are a lot of people who think that perhaps this is just metaphor, this is just typology that we must reinterpret to be something else. But let me ask you, when the disciples ask Jesus, "Is it now that the kingdom will come to Israel?" Where are they standing?

on the Mount of Olives

I'm convinced that this question was not a mistake at all. I'm convinced that they had just gone through Bible Interpretation 101 with Jesus and seen that everything in the Old Testament must be fulfilled, and they just walked out to the Mount of Olives with the risen Messiah. And I think their question is, "Is it now?"

Is it coming? Everything else has been taken care of. The suffering servant, the resurrection from the dead. Is it, is this it? We're standing on the Mount of Olives and it's coming. Here comes the kingdom." This is no mistake. This is a very legitimate biblical question. And look at how Jesus responds. He doesn't rebuke them.

He doesn't say, "How could you guys still think that this is gonna be a literal kingdom? Don't you know that I've metaphorically changed this? Don't you know that was typology? Didn't you hear that?" He didn't say that at all. He simply responded by saying, "Guys, it's not for you to know the times or seasons that the

Father has fixed by his own authority.

It's not for you to know the times or the seasons. You'll receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." So I think Jesus has just repeated what he said a little bit earlier in the upper room in Luke 24. "Hey guys, listen to me.

Listen to me." I know you're super excited that the next thing on God's time clock is I'm gonna restore the kingdom to Israel. You're pumped. You're juiced. You can't wait

But don't worry about when it's gonna happen. You've got something to do in the meantime You've got a mission to carry out. What's that mission? It's, it's what he told them standing on the mountain in Galilee. "You're gonna make disciples of all nations. You're gonna teach them everything that I commanded.

You you're gonna, you're gonna baptize them as a public proclamation that they've trusted in me. And you're gonna take this message to the ends of the earth so that everyone might hear that Jesus is Lord." He doesn't tell them they're wrong for thinking what they thought. He doesn't tell them that they've asked the wrong question.

He doesn't tell them that they're mistaken. He simply says, "Guys, don't focus on things that are yet to come. Focus on the assignment of now." And like the CEO in the email at the beginning of the sermon, the CEO returned to ask all of those working in the company, "I see that you've read the letter, but have you done what I asked you to do?"

How many of us need to be reminded of the same thing? This is essentially what Jesus has just instructed the disciples. "Guys, you've read the Old Testament. You understand it, I know But I need you to go. I need you to go and make disciples, and I need you to do that. And for us today, is it okay for us to study end times events?

Sure it is. Sure it is. It's totally fine with me Where we make the mistake often is if we sit around trying to figure out what's coming next and don't actually go out and do what our commander-in-chief told us to do It's where we make a big mistake There's only one thing that we can in fact for certain know about the next

eschatological thing to come that that Christ w- referring to the rapture of the church.

The only thing we know for certain about that is that it did not happen yesterday

I'm not certain anybody got that. Let me say that again. The only thing we know about the Rapture is that it did not happen yesterday. Okay? I know that for certain. I'm standing here So can we look ahead to things? Yes, we can look ahead to things. Do we have hope? Yes, we have hope. Do we have encouragement?

Yes, we have encouragement. Am I gonna spend my time trying to figure out what's going on in Iran right now, or am I gonna get out and teach people how to read the Bible? I'm gonna get out and teach people how to read the Bible. Am I gonna be looking around for all the m- marks of the beast here and the mark of the beast there, and all this different kind of stuff, trying to figure out if Russia's moved in, and this and that?

No. I'm gonna go out and teach people how to read the Bible. Now, part of that's in the Bible, that kind of stuff, talking about end times, so I'll teach them how to read that, too. But I'm gonna go out and make disciples. I'm gonna go out and follow Jesus. I'm gonna help others follow Jesus, too. I'm gonna do what the Commander-in-Chief told me to do so that when He comes back, He doesn't stand before me and ask, "Hey, did you get my letter?"

And me say, "Yeah, Lord, I got your letter. I've got a doctorate in your letter." And He says did you even do any of it?" I don't wanna have to say it, stand there and say not yet. But let me finish this next degree and I'll go out and do it." He says, "Go out and make disciples." But look at what he also says.

Not only is it not for us to know the times or the seasons, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth. You know what that tells me? Is I am fully incapable of carrying out the mission that Jesus has given me without the Holy Spirit, and that's what we see in the Book of Acts.

And Jesus says, "I need you guys just to wait. Wait just a little bit longer, 10 days." So it's a hurry up and wait process. Wait 10 days because if you guys set out and go try to make disciples now, you'll fail miserably. You know how I know

that? Because the Holy Spirit has not yet come. But when the Holy Spirit comes, you will be enabled with power.

All right? Don't think about shooting lightning bolts out of your hands. That's not what we're talking about, right? That's not what we're talking about. This word power is... It just means enablement. Dunamis, dynamic. You'll be given a dynamic ability to do something. You'll be enabled by the Holy Spirit to go and do what I've commissioned you to do.

You'll be enabled by the Holy Spirit to have boldness to preach the gospel, to be able to teach others how to read the word. The Spirit's gonna gift people in the church with different unique blends of giftings so that the church might be grown unto maturity. But the Holy Spirit's the one who is going to lead us into doing these things and verse nine says, "And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, 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 do 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.'" And right there, their systematic theology class number four was complete.

They understood what I'm talking about end times events. They understood right then, "Okay, that stuff's not gonna happen until Jesus comes back, and he's coming back in the same way that he went up. You know how I know? Because these messengers from God just told me and they're gonna write it down and tell us."

And look at their response, verse 52 of Luke 24, "They worshiped him. They worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, were continually in the temple blessing God."

Walking through the details of the ascension took the entire sermon. I'm gonna briefly say the response. You know what it is? They did what he told them to do. That's how they responded. They responded in worship, obedience. They're standing on the Mount of Olives. They walk back to Jerusalem, just about a Sabbath day's journey away.

They go back to the upper room. We see that at the end of Acts 1. They gather with the disciples in the upper room, and they pray. And then at some point, they go to the temple, and they're worshipping Yahweh. They're worshipping. They're worshipping. They're worshipping. They responded exactly how they should have responded, in worship leading to praise culminating in prayer and obedience to the Word of God

And just like that We see that Christ ascended into heaven. Wow!

What does that mean for our lives?

Why is that significant?

I'll give you a few things that the rest of the Bible begins to expound as to why this is so significant The first reason, and it's not on the board, y'all just listen, right? The first reason why the ascension is so significant is because as the writer of Hebrews tells us, it assures us that the work of salvation is complete in the book of Hebrews, we see that Christ, when He ascended to heaven, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

We even see later that as other priests must stand offering sacrifice continually, that once Christ completed this once for all sacrifice and ascended to heaven, His work was complete. He sat down. The work of salvation is finished, and I know that because of the ascension of Jesus Christ. Another thing is the ascension vindicates that Jesus is who He said He is.

We see that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. In fact, that claim is what got Him executed. He rose from the dead, proving that He is the Son of God. But you know what I'm really thankful for? I'm really thankful that there is no possible way that Jesus just rose from the dead only to go die again.

Without the ascension, we would never know what happened to Jesus. But because of the ascension, we know that the Lord who rose from the dead did not die again, but ascended into heaven where He was welcomed by the Father. You know something else the ascension teaches me is that it clarifies that heaven is a real place.

I want you to think about that. Heaven's a real place. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will take you to be with me so that where I am, you may be with me also." Heaven's a real place. Jesus ascended in a literal, physical, glorified body. He went somewhere Where'd he go? He went to heaven.

Where is heaven? Can't answer that for you. Is it a real place? Yes. Yes it is. The ascension confirmed that the Father answered Jesus' prayer. John 17, Jesus prays, "Father, glorify the Son. The time has come for you to now glorify the Son as I glorify you." And he answered his prayer Christ ascended to heaven The ascension certifies, listen to me, the ascension certifies that Jesus has authority.

He has authority. We see that in Matthew 28, that all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth. We see that in Ephesians. Paul tells us that Christ has authority over all rulers and authorities and dominions of the world, talking about the spiritual realm, the spiritual forces. In Ephesians 6, Paul, in the spiritual warfare exclamation, he says, "So you can stand firm therefore in the strength of his might," because he has conquered.

He has full authority over the spiritual realm. And you wanna know how I know that? Because the writer of Hebrews tells us that when he ascended to heaven, he sat down and the Father placed under his feet all the angelic realm and everything, for he rules supreme Therefore, I need not worry about all of the things that I feel like are going on around me that I cannot see, that, that may cause me to be afraid at times, because I serve a risen and ascended Savior who has authority over heaven and Earth.

The ascension ensures, listen to me, the ascension ensures that Jesus lives to make intercession for us. At least that's what the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 7. We see in 1 John 2:1 that, "My little children, I really wish that," I'm paraphrasing, "I really wish that you wouldn't sin, but when you do, you've got an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous."

You know why you have an advocate with the Father? Because Jesus ascended to heaven.

That also means that because Jesus has ascended to heaven, it means that one day, listen to me, it means that one day I will be welcomed into the Father's presence too I need you to remember that. Because already the Father has

received the Son unto himself and already has certified that the work of redemption is complete.

And therefore, Paul tells me in Ephesians that I, in Christ, am practically already seated with him in the heavenly places so that one day when I do breathe my last on this earth, I have a place in the presence of God. I am already welcome into the presence of God based on the completed work of Jesus Christ, and the ascension certifies that to me.

The ascension confirms that the work of Christ's disciples have begun He ascended to heaven and He gave the commission to go and make disciples

Lastly, the ascension was necessary for the new covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit to begin

Jesus said, "If I do not go away, then I cannot send him to indwell you."

And for those of you wondering why the new covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit is so important, please rejoin us next Sunday 'Cause that's what we're gonna talk about

Because what we will see is that Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven and has sent us the Spirit of God to enable us to go out and carry out the commission that He gave us. We live in a unique time in history And we have a very specific instruction from our CEO What are we gonna do with it? Amen. As the band's coming up, and as we close this morning, to the graduates specifically, to the graduates specifically, look

I pray that each and every one of you Will see that Jesus Christ loves you dearly. That Christ has accomplished already, He's already accomplished on the cross the full payment for your sin. I pray that you will see that there is forgiveness for your sin in His name, and that upon trusting in the work of Christ on the cross, that you will be saved.

Graduates, I pray that you will hear this morning that upon trusting in Christ, that He will give you His Holy Spirit to live in you, to guide you, to walk with you, to enable you to live righteously, to walk in the victory over sin that Christ has already accomplished. I pray this morning that you will take seriously what the

charge is to go out into the world and make disciples.

And I pray that when you think back on graduation Sunday and all of what we've talked about and all of what we've celebrated, that you will remember that because Christ ascended, I can trust that He's coming back for me. And therefore, we of all people have hope. In fact, we can live with expectancy, awaiting the return of our Lord and Savior in the same way that He went up.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, God, thank you. God, thank you for your graciousness and your loving kindness. Lord, you are holy and righteous. Lord, I'm so thankful for the gospel. I'm thankful for the life and ministry of Christ. I'm thankful for the ascension of Christ. God, I pray that we will live every day remembering that we are in Christ and have an advocate in heaven.

We have an intercessor in heaven. Someone standing in the gap, someone mediating, one mediator between God and man, and it is Jesus Christ. Lord, would we walk in the freedom of what that means for our lives today. God, I pray a blessing over these graduates, Lord. God, I pray that they will see that in Christ they have been given every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, that they will see that in Christ they are chosen, in Christ they are adopted, in Christ they are redeemed, in Christ they are given the inheritance of the promised Holy Spirit.

In Christ, they have hope for Christ to return and finish everything that you have planned to do to bring glory to your name. Oh God, we love you. We praise your name, and in Jesus' name. Amen.