

**The Book of Acts (#3);
The Ascension of our Lord Jesus (Acts 1:9-11)**

This morning we return to our study of the first chapter of the book of Acts in which we read of the post resurrection ministry of our Lord to His disciples. The Lord had met repeatedly with His apostles during the forty days following His resurrection from the dead. He had taught them about many “things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” The inauguration of that kingdom would take place upon our Lord’s His ascension unto the Father in heaven. Upon His ascension into heaven, Jesus came to the Ancient of Days—God the Father--and received from Him authority to reign over the kingdom promised to Israel. This was the fulfillment of prophecy that we read in Daniel 7:13 and 14:

I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.
¹⁴Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

The first great manifestation of the heavenly enthronement of the Lord Jesus was when He baptized His disciples with the Holy Spirit, who Himself was the Promise of the Father.

In order to maintain our sense of context, let us read of His departure from the earth and His ascension into heaven in Acts 1:1-11.

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ²until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

⁴And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise¹ of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; ⁵for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

⁹Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand

¹ Take note that the “Promise” is capitalized in the NKJV, which indicates that the NKJV translators believed that the Holy Spirit Himself was “the Promise.” Galatians 3:24 may substantiate this interpretation: “...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith.”

gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Although we have already addressed verses 1 through 8 in our first two studies of this first chapter of Acts, I desire that we consider them more fully within the larger context, culminating in the angel’s words to the disciples in verse 11.

We read in verses 1 through 3 a summary of our Lord’s post resurrection appearances to His disciples. Jesus proved beyond any doubt that He had risen from the dead. The disciples were hard to convince initially of our Lord’s resurrection. But in the following days Jesus showed Himself to have risen from the dead “by many infallible proofs.” Jesus had taught His disciples during these days. The chief subject that He taught them involved “the things concerning the kingdom of God.” His disciples had never understood the importance and necessity of Jesus suffering and death on His cross. But the Lord took this occasion to ground and teach them this vital historical reality. As He had taught His disciples recorded at the end of Luke 24, we read Jesus’ words, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46f).

We read of the Lord’s command to remain in Jerusalem until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit (1:4-8). This would empower them with wisdom and boldness to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God throughout the known world. This had been taught to them throughout both the ministry of the Lord Jesus and even before through the ministry of John the Baptist. The Messiah would baptize in the Holy Spirit all those that embrace Him as their Lord and Savior.

The Holy Spirit was the Promise of God the Father. God had promised Abram long before that He would give Him the Holy Spirit to enable him to live godly and righteously in the world. The Holy Spirit is the greatest gift of the enthroned Lord Jesus to His subjects, the citizens of His kingdom. To be given the Holy Spirit as an indwelling presence is the imparting of spiritual life in its fullness. This was promised in the Old Testament to be the great blessing of the new covenant in Jesus Christ. We have read the promise of God in Isaiah 40:2ff.:

‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
³For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring;
⁴They will spring up among the grass
Like willows by the watercourses.’
⁵One will say, ‘I am the Lord’s’;
Another will call himself by the name of Jacob;
Another will write with his hand, ‘The Lord’s,’
And name himself by the name of Israel.

It was the puritan, **Thomas Goodwin** (1600-1680), who wrote,

“Our Savior Jesus Christ was the great promise of the Old Testament, but the Holy Ghost is the great promise of the New. You that believe are to wait for this promise; as the Jews waited for the coming of Christ, so are you to wait for the coming of the Holy Ghost into your hearts.”²

Goodwin’s contemporary, **John Owen** (1616-1683), wrote of the gift of the Holy Spirit:

² From a footnote in the **Church History Study Bible** (Crossway, 2023), 1620.

“The empowering of the Holy Spirit was the great legacy that our Lord Jesus Christ, departing out of this world, bequeathed to His sorrowful disciples. This He promises unto them as a sufficient relief against all their troubles, and a faithful guide in all their ways. And because of the importance of it unto them He frequently repeats it, and enlarges upon the benefits that they should receive thereby, giving them a particular account why it would be more advantageous unto them than His own bodily presence. And therefore after His resurrection He minds them again of this promise, commanding them to act nothing toward the building of the church, until it was accomplished towards them.”³

It was on this occasion that the disciples posed the question to Jesus that is recorded in verse 6. It reads, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” We commented last time regarding the popular, but errant interpretation of Acts 1:6, which we wish to reiterate this morning. But first, let us consider the right understanding of the context and the reason for the question of the disciples. The Lord had been teaching His disciples over the course of forty days “the things concerning the kingdom.” But in verse 6 we read, “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’” We affirmed last time that they were inquiring when the kingdom of God would be restored to the Jewish people. Although most all the disciples during our Lord’s earthly ministry had been Jewish men and women, they were few in number. The vast majority of those belonging to Israel had failed or refused to believe on Jesus Christ as the promised king of Israel. With their rejection of Jesus, Jesus had rejected them and had pronounced judgment upon them. Let us recall the declaration of Jesus in His parable of the wicked vine dressers. Jesus said,

³³“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ³⁴Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. ³⁵And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. ³⁷Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir, come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ ³⁹So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?”

⁴¹They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.”

⁴²Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

‘The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the Lord’s doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes’?

⁴³“Therefore I say to you, ***the kingdom of God will be taken from you*** and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. ⁴⁴And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” Matthew 21:33-44

We read in Matthew 23 of our Lord’s pronouncement of His rejection of Israel due to their obstinacy toward Him and their unbelief in Him. Jesus pronounced their judgment:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’” (Matt. 23:37-39)

³ Ibid.

Here in Acts 1:6 our Lord's disciples, knowing that His departure was at hand and that He was soon to be enthroned in heaven over the kingdom of God, asked Him if at this time the kingdom would be restored to Israel; that is, if He was about to bring the Jewish people to salvation, to bring them into His kingdom, the kingdom of God. Of course Jesus did not answer them directly. He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."

But the popular, but errant interpretation of this question of the disciples is that they were asking Jesus when a future earthly kingdom of Israel would be inaugurated, that is, a future Jewish millennium on earth. Those who espouse this understanding do not believe that our Lord was about to be seated on the throne of His earthly father, King David. They teach that there are two promised kingdoms that God would establish after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The first kingdom is spiritual, which coincides with this church age. They reason that this church age was not explicitly taught in the Old Testament. And so, they teach there will be a second kingdom--another kingdom--which is a literal, earthly kingdom of Israel promised to ethnic Jewish people. They teach that this other kingdom will be inaugurated at the second coming of Christ, which will encompass the world for 1,000 years. They argue that the disciples were asking Jesus when this second kingdom would be established.

Here is one commentator's interpretation of the disciples' question of Acts 1:6:

The apostles shared the fervent hope of their nation that Messiah would come and take up His earthly kingdom. Often Jesus had taught them prophetically about the future (Matt. 13:40-50, 24, 25; Luke 12:36-40; 17:20-37; 21:5-36). The enthusiastic question **they were asking Him, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'** is thus perfectly understandable. After all, here was the resurrected Messiah speaking with them about His kingdom. They knew of no reason the earthly form of the kingdom could not be set up immediately, since the messianic work signaling the end of the age had arrived. It must be remembered that the interval between the two comings of Messiah was not explicitly taught in the Old Testament...⁴

We might pause here to state that this last statement is completely erroneous. This position teaches that the Old Testament did not foretell this church age. We would say that the interval between the two comings of Messiah *was* explicitly taught in the Old Testament. The reason the comment was made that this church age was never explicitly taught in the Old Testament is due to a belief that is held very firmly and is tenaciously defended; namely, that the prophecies of the Old Testament have to do with the ethnic Jewish people and national Israel, and that they have no fulfillment or application to the New Testament church. This writer quoted above made this statement in a footnote of His study Bible:

OT prophets didn't see the great time period between the two comings. The church age was a "mystery" hidden from them.⁵

He also made known his interpretive assumption in these words:

The kingdom promised to David belongs to Israel, not the church. The future exaltation of Jerusalem will be on earth, not in heaven. Christ will reign personally on this earth as we know it, as well as in the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 22:1, 3).⁶

⁴ John MacArthur, **The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Acts 1-12** (Moody Press, 1994), 19f. It is not my desire or intention to denigrate this good and faithful man's reputation. My purpose in citing him is because he has been the leading defender of errant dispensationalism that dominated 20th century and present day evangelical views regarding the end times. Dispensationalism is error and the people of God need to be informed and corrected by the evidence and authority of the Word of God.

⁵ John MacArthur, **The MacArthur Study Bible** (Thomas Nelson, 1997), 1350.

⁶ Ibid., 953.

The Holy Scriptures teach otherwise. The earthly city of Jerusalem and the political nation of Israel was cursed by the Lord Jesus because of their refusal to embrace Him as their promised Messiah. That curse of God will not be removed unless and until they repent of their refusal to believe and submit unto Jesus the Lord. Jesus declared of them, “See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’” (Luke 13:35).

Paul referred to the earthly Jerusalem comprised of a people who are in bondage to their sin, who are condemned under the Mosaic covenant given at Mount Sinai. He likened unbelieving Jews to be children of Hagar (cf. Gal. 4:26). In contrast to earthly Jerusalem and ethnic Jewish people who refuse to believe on Jesus as their Messiah, Paul wrote that “the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all”, that is, of all Christians (cf. Gal. 4:26). The book of Revelation refers to the earthly Jerusalem as “the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8). We read in the Holy Scriptures that Abraham never desired or anticipated the earthly city of Jerusalem to become his future homeland. The writer to the Hebrews--Jewish Christians--wrote of him,

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Heb. 11:8-10)

Abraham was not looking for the fulfillment of God’s promises to be realized in an earthly, physical city, but in the New Jerusalem that would be on a new earth in eternity.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But now they desire a better, that is, *a heavenly country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Heb. 11:13-16)

We will now continue with the comments on Acts 1:6 of the dispensational writer mentioned above:

That Jesus does not deny their expectation of a literal, earthly kingdom involving Israel is highly significant. It shows that their understanding of the promised kingdom was correct, except for the time of its coming. If they were mistaken about such a critical point in His kingdom teaching, His failure to correct them is mystifying and deceptive. A far more likely explanation is that the apostles’ expectation of a literal, earthly kingdom mirrored the Lord’s own teaching and the plan of God clearly revealed in the Old Testament.⁷

But this reasoning is faulty on several points. First, to repeat what we have already said, the statement is false which reads, “It must be remembered that the interval between the two comings of Messiah was not explicitly taught in the Old Testament.” That is wrong, for the interval between the two comings of Christ is taught everywhere in the Old Testament. We will later consider Peter’s words affirming this teaching regarding the Old Testament. Peter proclaimed to the unbelieving Jewish people of Jerusalem who had crucified their messiah, their king:

“Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Acts 1-12* (Moody Press, 1994), 19f.

¹⁹Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. ²²For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. ²³And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ ²⁴***Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days.*** ²⁵You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ ²⁶To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.” (Acts 3:17-26)

The view of the disciples asking Jesus when a Jewish kingdom (millennium) would commence violates the context in which the question is posed. That view would have “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” in verse 3--the kingdom that Jesus had been instructing them about for forty days after His resurrection--to be a different kingdom than the kingdom the disciples asked about in verse 6: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” This is non-sensical. Jesus taught His disciples of only one everlasting kingdom, not two. Moreover, it is not plausible that these apostles continued to believe in a future, earthly, political, and ethnic kingdom of Israel. They knew better after all the instruction and correction that Jesus gave them, in which He taught repeatedly through His three year ministry that the kingdom of God would not be a physical, earthly kingdom within this world, but rather the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom that would be inaugurated through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the throne of God. These disciples were asking Jesus if He was now going to bring salvation to the Jews, to bring them into His kingdom. These disciples were concerned about their Jewish brethren and that they desired their salvation.

Let us now consider Luke’s account of...

I. The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven (Acts 1:9-11)

⁹Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:1-11)

We commonly teach and proclaim the biblical truth that when Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead, that He ascended into heaven, at which time God the Father conferred upon Him kingly authority over the kingdom of God. Since His ascension into heaven, the Lord Jesus has reigned as King of kings and Lord of lords. But when we consider the resurrection of our Lord on that first Sunday morning--resurrection Sunday--and when we consider the many appearances of the risen Lord Jesus on that day through the evening, and on many occasions for the following 40 days, we might ask ourselves, when did the risen Lord Jesus ascend into heaven and receive His glory? Some advocate that His ascension occurred immediately upon Him rising from the dead. In a single movement He was caught up into heaven and there received His kingdom authority. Others have argued that our Lord ascended into heaven at the end of that long first day, after He had appeared at night to His gathered disciples. Others assert that Jesus did not ascend into heaven to receive His kingly authority until the conclusion of His 40 days of post resurrection instruction to His disciples. But if He had not already ascended into heaven until after 40 days, it would be problematic to imagine where the Lord “went” or “was” during the forty day period of post-resurrection appearances,. It is probably best, therefore, to understand Jesus coming forth from the grave on the Day of His resurrection and immediately ascending into heaven and then and there received the kingdom from His Father. **Peter Toon** , who wrote a book on the ascension of Christ, was right when he wrote these words:

Therefore, the best way to handle the biblical evidence and the theological problems is to think of one great act of God, the exaltation of Jesus from death (*hades*) into heaven to sit at His right hand. This occurred on Easter morning and may be seen as having two aspects, both secret and invisible--Resurrection and Ascension. That is, Jesus was raised from the dead by the Father and then immediately received into heaven in His resurrected, spiritual body to be crowned King of kings.⁸

If this is true, that Jesus ascended immediately upon being raised from the dead, going into heaven to receive His kingly authority, then what of His post-resurrection appearances? The risen and enthroned Lord Jesus condescended to come among His disciples, after He had been glorified, in order to instruct and prepare them for their gospel ministry. He manifested Himself to them in a form that they could relate to Him and learn from Him.

II. Some important and abiding implications of the ascension of Jesus Christ

The ascension of our Lord from His grave into the presence of His Father signaled a number of very important events and truths.

1. The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven “follows and completes the resurrection.”⁹

The resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot be severed from its connection to His ascension. There is one movement from His tomb to His throne. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven. We should not think of the resurrection of Jesus Christ apart from Him ascending to God in order to assume the royal authority promised Him through all the prophets. Jesus rose to become Lord, to be King over the kingdom of God.

2. The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven secured His role as the firstfruits of His people. Because His people are in union with Him, when He died upon His cross, they died with Him. When He was buried, they, too, were buried with Him. And when Jesus Christ came forth from the grave and ascended into heaven, His people were in union with Him. His resurrection from the dead and ascent into heaven assured our future resurrection from the dead and ascent into heaven. We will share in His glory because He is the firstfruits of His people.

3. The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven implies His exaltation. We have already emphasized this. He did not rise from the dead in order to dwell in heaven. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven in order that He would rule in heaven over all creation.

The ascension is the victorious march from Hades into heaven, for Christ entered heaven as the conqueror of sin, death, and Satan, as the One who could and would give gifts to His people (Eph. 4:7-11; 1 Pet. 3:22b)¹⁰

4. The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven was the onset of His ministry as the High Priest of His people.

Our Lord entered heaven in order to become the promised King. But He also entered heaven in order to become the promised High Priest. Hebrews 1 speaks to this. We read,

⁵So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him:

⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁹ I am grateful for Peter Toon who identified this list of meanings of our Lord's ascension. See Ibid., 17ff.

¹⁰ Ibid., 18.

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.”

⁶As He also says in another place:

“You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek”;

⁷who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” ¹¹of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (Heb. 5:5-10)

The statement in verse 5, which reads, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”, speaks to His resurrection from the dead. It was upon His ascension that our Lord commenced His ministry as the High Priest of His people. Jesus Christ was prefigured by Melchizedek in Genesis 14, in that Jesus Christ is both a king and a high priest; He is a King/Priest.

5. The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven enabled Him to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people.

As the enthroned King He gives gifts to His people. This was the common practice of kings when they assumed the throne in ancient Israel. As the king of Israel, as the Head of the church, Jesus Christ equips and empowers His church with the blessed Holy Spirit. The event and experience of Pentecost flowed forth from heaven due to the ascension, the enthronement of the Lord Jesus. The Lord had to be glorified before He could pour forth the Holy Spirit upon His people. John 7:39 reads, “But this He (Jesus) spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

6. The ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven inaugurates the promised new creation.

This is a major aspect of the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead signaled and inaugurated the onset of the new creation, an age and event that is the realization of God’s purpose in history, one that had been foretold and anticipated by the Old Testament people of faith. The onset of the promised new creation is a major theme of the Scriptures. That age commenced with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. We are living in the days of fulfilment, of inaugurated eschatology, that is, we are living in the “last days”, which encompass this entire church age.

There are several ways in which we can demonstrate this to be biblical teaching. There is suggestion for the new creation in the immediate context of Matthew 28. *First*, the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead on *the first day of the week*. In Matthew 28:1 we read, “Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.” It was the first day of the week that our God began to create the heavens and the earth.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, *the first day*. (Gen. 1:1-4)

God began the first creation on the first Sunday, the first day of the creation week. Jesus Christ was raised on the first day of the week, signifying the onset of a new creation.

Second, the fact that our Lord was raised on the first day of the week, yet described in each of the Gospels as “*after the Sabbath*, toward the dawn of the first day of the week”, signifies that it was a ***new creation***. The Old Testament Sabbath Day was observed as a day of rest, commemorating the seventh day in which God rested after He initially created the heavens and the earth. The fourth commandment as rehearsed in **Exodus 20:8-11** states this clearly:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

The Sabbath day was a weekly commemoration and celebration of God’s work in the first creation. The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead after the Sabbath on the first day of the week ***after*** the Sabbath, which signaled a ***new creation***.

Third, in addition to the subtle hints in Matthew and the other Gospels that Jesus rose from the dead signaling the onset of a new creation, ***the apostles expressed the matter forthrightly***. The apostle Paul wrote of how the new creation that Jesus Christ has brought about influenced how he viewed Christians. They were no longer as they were formerly, but they are new creatures in Christ’s new creation.

¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. **¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.** ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:14-19)

Paul wrote in his epistle to the Galatians how the new creation in Jesus Christ is to be the basis of our accepting others who are sharing in that new creation.

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but ***a new creation***. ¹⁶And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (Gal. 6:14-16)

Here Paul states that the new creation brought about by Jesus Christ was the new reality for him and for his understanding of the world, indeed, it should be for all who are in Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus Christ had changed everything. Paul saw himself dead to the world and the world dead to him through the death of Jesus Christ. This suggests that there is nothing any longer of this world that governs his thinking or shapes his values or goals. Formerly, his world view had this conception: the world is comprised of (1) the people of God, being those who were circumcised, those who were citizens of Israel, and (2) all others, those who were uncircumcised. But now circumcision or uncircumcision is no longer a factor. Now, with the new creation brought into realization through Jesus Christ, the people of God, here he calls “the Israel of God”, is comprised of those who are participants and beneficiaries of the new creation. Here, therefore, we see that the former ways of distinguishing the people of God are no longer valid. The new creation brought about by the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord resulted in a new world and new order of things. The new creation is to shape our world view of God and His work in history.

There are other places in the New Testament that speak to this idea. When we came to salvation in Jesus Christ, it was as though God were performing in us an act of creation. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4 these words:

³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:3-6)

Just as God commanded light to shine in the presence of darkness in the first creation, so God brought forth light to those who were in spiritual darkness. Here light is a metaphor for knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings forth new life in us. We are a part of the new creation.

All of what we have said regarding our Lord's resurrection and ascension is to govern how we think and behave as Christians. Appeals are made in the New Testament for us to be responsive to these truths. Paul wrote,

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

⁵Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

⁸But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (Col. 3:1-11)

III. Angels assure the disciples of the second coming of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:10f)

We read in verses 10 and 11 of Acts 1 these words:

¹⁰And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Two angels assured Jesus' disciples of the second coming of Jesus Christ. He "will so come in like manner." This means that He will return literally and physically. This will occur at the end of history. He will then cause a great separation of people to take place. On His return to earth He will catch up all the redeemed souls through all of human history to meet Him in the air. This is the rapture aspect of the second coming. The rapture and the second coming are not two future events that are separated by a period of seven years. It is one single event. The Word of God teaches one second coming, not two. If there were two comings as the dispensationalists have taught for the past 150 years, one would think that these two angels would have referred to such events. But there is only one second coming of Jesus Christ.

At the second coming Jesus Christ, after snatching His people out of danger (like God pulling Lot out of Sodom before its destruction), He will then pour out His wrath upon the world. Peter wrote,

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pet. 3:10-13)

Jesus Christ then will summon all people who have ever lived to come before Him in judgment. He will judge all people according to how they lived in this world; in other words, He will render judgment on all people according to their works. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). The sinful words, attitudes, thoughts, and actions of all unregenerate persons will damn their souls in hell for eternity. The works of the people of God, however, will prove that they had been true believers in Jesus Christ in this life. Their works will not be the ground or basis of their salvation, rather, it is through their faith alone in Christ alone that they are saved, but their saving faith will be confirmed openly by their works, which will result in them passing through their judgment without condemnation, but rather having been vindicated that their faith was real and genuine, for they will stand in judgment clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. They will be granted free entrance into eternal life.

The Lord will then renovate this old world, in that He will destroy this sin-cursed creation, and in its place create a new heavens and earth in which He will dwell with His people forever. This glorious destiny is set forth clearly in the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22. May God be praised for all of His works in history to glorify Himself and to glorify His people who are in Christ.
