

**Sermon Study Guide Based on  
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of November 30, 2008  
"On the Right Hand of the Father"**

**[Today we'll focus on the ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father and what that means to us.]**

**[Topics: Incarnation, Ascension, Relationship, Jesus Christ, New Life, Security]**

**Excerpt:** Today as we start Advent and we begin to focus on the coming of Jesus the next four weeks until Christmas, we need to focus on the meaning of Jesus becoming flesh. What does it mean that God became flesh and dwelt among us?

What does the Incarnation of Jesus mean to God's plan of salvation other than Jesus came to die for us? What does the Incarnation of Jesus mean to each of us? And how should it impact us?

And what about Jesus' ascension? How does that fit in with his Incarnation? Now you all know the story of how Jesus died, was resurrected and now he's about to leave 40 days later. In **Acts 1**, he's preparing the disciples that he's going away. Now earlier he prepared them at least 7 times about his dying and it all went straight over their heads.

And then when he died, they were all perplexed and could hardly believe it. So now he's going to go away. They were still thinking he was going to kick the Romans out and restore the glorious kingdom. But Jesus told them that he was going to send the Holy Spirit and he wanted them to wait in Jerusalem. And that he couldn't send them the Holy Spirit until he had gone away.

So in verse 6 we read, **"So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'"** The disciples were still focused on the wrong thing.

**7) "He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'"**

Jesus told the disciples that he was going to do something completely different than what they were thinking. In essence, Jesus was telling them, "Yes, I'm going to restore the kingdom but it's going to be through you. And it's going to be through a church that grows and grows and you will help carry that message throughout the world. But it's going to happen differently than you think."

**9) "After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight."** The disciples were shocked at what they saw.

**10) "They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11) 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you**

**stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."**

So where did Jesus go? He went to heaven. Now people think heaven is way out there somewhere. Pastor Glen humorously says that if you want to find heaven you go to Alpha Centari, hand a left and go until there's no more else to go and that's where heaven is.

No, Jesus just went into the next realm, but he's right here with us all the time. We need to remember that Jesus said that he wouldn't leave us nor forsake us. Heaven is in a different dimension. We are in the physical-time dimension; and heaven is in the spirit realm or spirit dimension.

Probably one of the most neglected doctrines in the Christian faith is the ascension of Jesus Christ; and where he went and what he's doing. Because of the celebration of Easter, the resurrection of Jesus gets a lot of attention, but what happened then? As we'll see, his ascension and what he's doing right now should be important to us.

On Pentecost after Christ's ascension, the apostle Peter gives an explanation of what was happening as the Holy Spirit was poured out into the disciples and apostles in **Acts 2**.

People wanted to know what was going on, so Peter explained and preached out of the book of Joel, which said that in the future God would pour out his Spirit. And Peter is telling them that it's now it's being fulfilled because the Spirit has come.

And then in **verses 22-24**, Peter tells them that the Messiah had come and that they had killed him. But God had raised him from the dead to glory. Then in **verse 25**, Peter quoted what King David had said about the Messiah.

**25) "David said about him: 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26) Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope,**

**27) because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 28) You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence."**

So David is saying that the Messiah was brought into the presence of God and is seated at his right hand. That's why Pastor Glen believes this was the most glorious day in heaven – when Jesus ascended to God as humanity's mediator connecting humanity to God. This completed the plan of God. Mankind has now been rescued.

This was a glorious moment for God. Remember when Jesus got baptized the Father got all excited and said that he was well pleased with his Son. And then at the occurrence of the transfiguration, God said in essence that he was proud of his Son.

**29) "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day."** Peter was telling the crowd that David wasn't the one sitting at the right hand of the Father, because his tomb is still here. But it was Jesus who fulfilled that prophecy.

**30) "But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne."** So David obviously knew the plan of God. **31) "Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32) God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."** Peter talked about what he and the other disciples had experienced.

**33) "Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."** Peter told them that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father because he completed God's plan. And explained that Jesus and the Father sent the Holy Spirit and what they were seeing that day on Pentecost is what God told them would happen.

Now you and I are experiencing salvation today. We have an opportunity to have a relationship with God because Jesus accomplished God's purpose and came and sat at the right hand of the Father.

**34) "For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand 35) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" So Peter is emphasizing that even though David heard the prophecy from God, he is not the one fulfilling it.**

The reason the early church acknowledged the birth of Jesus is because people were saying that Jesus wasn't really flesh. They said he was just sort of flesh, that he was this God who came down from heaven and pretended to be flesh. And the early church said we can't accept that because it takes away the incarnation and it thus takes away salvation. He had to become one of us.

The early church felt that they needed something to remind us that Jesus was really born a human being. And so they began to honor a day commemorating the birth of Jesus. And even though Christmas has developed a lot of additional things, the idea was to remember the fact that Jesus was really flesh and that his Incarnation is crucial to our salvation.

We can easily cram the Incarnation of Jesus into a little box. And say – OK that's the sum total of Jesus' incarnation – his birth, death and resurrection. Some Protestants just make it the death on the cross because that's what they focus on. Jesus' birth, death and resurrection is a certainly an important part of our salvation but the box is way bigger than that. The incarnation goes from him becoming flesh in the womb of Mary, being born a helpless baby, it involves Jesus living for some thirty years, it involves his death on the cross, it involves his resurrection from the dead, but it also involves Jesus going and sitting at the right hand of the Father forever.

Flesh glorified. The Incarnation did not stop at the resurrection. Jesus didn't become something else. He's still human. Now he's a glorified human, but he's exactly what you will be when glorified except he's also God, which we aren't. It's important that we understand that the Incarnation goes way beyond his death and resurrection. It's all who Jesus was and is as a human being. So when we go through hard times, that glorified flesh sitting at the right hand of God understands our aches and pains, our difficulties. The trinity is intimately involved what we are experiencing physically because Jesus is directly connected to us as well as to the Father.

**36) "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."** God has lifted Jesus up according to the plan that was made from the beginning.

Now in **Acts 5**, you all know the story that Peter and John are arrested and put in prison and told don't go out and preach anymore. And Peter replied, **29) "We must obey God rather than men! 30) The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead – whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31) God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel."**

"Right hand" is not an anthropomorphic expression (implying the Father has human body parts), but rather an expression that means "place of honor."

Now in **Acts 7**, we find Stephen arrested for his message. He's in a more precarious situation than Peter and John were. During his hearing Stephen delivered this long story of how God has worked with the people of Israel and how God has this whole plan worked out to include even the Gentiles. And this plan includes Jesus becoming a flesh, living among us, and then you killed him. But God resurrected him. And his Jewish captors tore their clothes and were all upset and pick up rocks.

Now just as they were about to stone Stephen, he looked up and the heavens opened and he said to them: **"Look, he said, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God"** (**Acts 7:56**). Stephen saw this glorious vision of the Godhead. And the Jews immediately stoned Stephen to death because there was no way they could live with that vision.

In Stephen's most difficult time, who was the first martyr of the church, Jesus manifests himself at the right hand of the Father and seems to say – I'm with you, I'm at the throne of God, it's OK. May we all see that vision. May we all begin to see Jesus at the right hand of the Father when we're going through difficult times, so that we know that no one can keep us from succeeding. We need to stand with Jesus no matter what comes including difficulties or even death.

Too often we take Jesus out of the picture and focus on ourselves with our trials and our suffering. We need to see Jesus at the right hand of the Father connecting us into the Godhead as our mediator. Jesus is with us every moment of the day – including when the good and the bad things that happen to us. Stephen is a good example for us to keep our eyes on Jesus when we are going through tough times. We can face anything when we have our eyes fixed on Jesus. Stephen proved that.

In **Colossians 3**, Paul writes about Jesus being at the right hand of the Father. Now Paul went through many difficult times but what kept him going was his vision about Jesus.

**Col. 3:1, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2) Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."** Now the people here were getting caught up in Judaism and going back to the past. Paul tells them to forget all that and set their sight on things that are in heaven. Paul wanted them and us, as well, to focus that Jesus is sitting on the right hand of the Father and what that means for us.

**3) "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."** So as Jesus ascended he took us with him. He brought us into the heavenlies. He brought us into that relationship with God.

**4) "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."** Now **1 John 3:1** says that we will be like Jesus and when he appears in glory, meaning we will be in glory as well.

**John 3:13, "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man."** Jesus is the only one to ascend to heaven. **14) "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15) that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."**

Most people read this verse and apply it to the cross only – and it certainly includes that – but the context is about Jesus ascending to heaven and is lifted up to sit at the right hand of the Father. When Jesus ascends to heaven – that is what brings us eternal life and gives us the life of God when we receive the Holy Spirit.

**Hebrews 8:1** says our great High Priest sits at the right hand of the Father. Jesus, as our High Priest is connecting us to God and is connecting God to us as he sits there at the right hand of the Father.

**Romans 8:34** says Jesus sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. He prays for us. You know those times when we can't pray because we are in a terrible crisis, guess who does? The glorified human being Jesus tells the Father that he is there on our behalf, praying for us, seeking the Father's help. He asks the Holy Spirit to send someone to talk to us to encourage us and for someone else to bring us a casserole. The triune God works together interceding for us as we go through our difficulty.

In **Ephesians 1:18-21**, Paul is praying for the people to recognize that the power that resurrected Jesus from the dead is the same power in them, the power that lifted him up and sat him at the right hand of the Father is the same power that is working inside each one of us. And because Jesus is there with the Father, we have an absolute guarantee that we will make it.

In the Bible study this morning, the verse from **John** was read that quotes Jesus saying that everyone who comes into his hand, he will give them to the Father and they will never slip away and no one will slip out of the Father's hand. (That's the Weber translation.)

Now Peter also writes about Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. This was important to the apostles and it should be important to us. Yes, the cross is vital, and the resurrection is vital, but we need to go beyond that and recognize that Jesus is now sitting with the Father.

Jesus is taking care not only of us but also our loved ones who don't know him yet. Jesus intercedes for all humanity not just Christians because Jesus died for all humanity while all were still sinners. Jesus intercedes for people who think God is their enemy. He is working out opportunities in their life to where they can receive God's mercy.

**1 Peter 3:21, "and this water symbolizes baptism – Peter is talking about Noah's flood – that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ... "**

So the flood pictures salvation where eight people were saved. And it's the same way when we go into the water for baptism – it pictures our salvation. **Romans 6** says that when we die with him we are also resurrected with him. Baptism is symbolic that God saved us through Jesus. It's not about us; it's about him.

**22) "who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." The New Living Translations says, "Jesus is seated at a place of honor in heaven. And all authorities accept his authority "**

All authorities have to acknowledge Jesus. Even the demons have to respond to him, because Jesus accomplished his purpose and has been given all authority. So the Incarnation began at the conception of Jesus. God chose to impregnate the ovum in the womb of Mary.

So Jesus was the Son of God and the Son of man. What an amazing thing that is. One of the beings he created was going to carry him in her womb for 9 months. So this Son of God Son of man was going to entrust his life to Mary as a helpless baby.

And so the Incarnation of Jesus continues to this day. Jesus' body didn't disappear somewhere after he was resurrected. His body was glorified and he now sits at the right hand of the Father. And he is connecting you and me to the Father. He's bringing us into a relationship and helping us have a deep walk with God.

Jesus wants us to experience the Godhead like he does. He wants us to understand the deep things of God's heart that he has for us. He's working to draw us into that relationship as we cooperate with him. What a glorious thing that is.

It must be an amazing place to be where God is in the next realm and to see Jesus working to connect us to the trinity so we can know God. May we focus on that this next month as we think about the Incarnation and hear about Jesus becoming a baby. Don't just focus on his birth or his death on the cross but focus on his whole glorified humanity that exists this day in heaven.

**Key Scripture: Act 2: 31-35, "Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32) God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33) Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34) For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand 35) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" "**

**General Group Question:** What is the importance of Christ's incarnation to God's plan of salvation for humanity?

**Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.**

1. What are the four aspects of Jesus' Incarnation starting with his birth?
2. Where did Christ go after his resurrection and what is the significance of this?

3. What is the importance of Christ's glorified body sitting at the right hand of the Father to us as Christians as well as to all humanity?
4. How does Jesus connect us to the Father and the Father to us in the heavenly realms?
5. Why is it important as believers to set our sight on Christ in heaven rather than the things on this earth?
6. When we go through a trial or crisis why is it important to focus on the Incarnate Jesus sitting in heaven with the Father?
7. How does the Incarnation of Jesus help you discuss Christianity with an unbelieving friend or family member?

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