

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Weber's Message of May 24, 2009
"Is Jesus Still Flesh?"**

[Today a very large part of the church is celebrating the ascension of Jesus. So we're going to focus on that ascension and explore what that means to all humanity.]

[Topics: Ascension; Glorified Flesh; Son of Man; Mediator]

Excerpt: Every day in pastor Glen's quiet time, he uses several devotionals with his Bible reading. He has one devotional that comes every month from Moody Bible. He recently concluded one by Chuck Swindoll titled, "Walk with Jesus: A Forty Day Journey to the Cross and Beyond."

It's very good. For example, he takes us through seven different trials of Jesus. And each day you go through the last events of Jesus. But then it stops at the resurrection. He didn't give his readers anything beyond the cross except the resurrection. And that's where most evangelicals stop. They stop at the resurrection.

Well today around the world is a major holiday for many Christian churches – called Ascension Sunday. These churches spend time on the fact that Jesus Christ wasn't just resurrected, but that he also ascended to the Father. And that now Jesus dwells there with the Father. And that's crucial even though we haven't focused much on this. We need to spend more time thinking about it and ask, "What does this mean for us."

Now Jesus was killed at the Passover time. And forty days after his resurrection he ascended up into heaven. Ten days after that Pentecost happened and the Holy Spirit was poured out. Scholars have figured out that Jesus ascended to heaven on a Thursday. So this is Ascension Sunday. Today is not a Biblical day; it's celebrating a Biblical event honored on this day.

Now **Acts 1** talks about in three verses the ascension of Jesus. The last statement that Jesus told his disciples when they were on the Mount of Olives was, "**and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth**"(1:8) while they were still trying to find out when the Kingdom was going to come.

"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight" (1:9). This is when Jesus ascended to the Father in heaven.

Now ten days later, Pentecost occurs where tongues of fire come down, the Holy Spirit appears, and people are speaking in all kinds of different languages. And the crowd asked the disciples, "What does this mean?" And so Peter begins to give them a sermon.

He tells them that the Holy Spirit has been poured out today just as it was prophesied in the book of Joel. Let's pickup the end of the sermon in **Acts 2:29, "Brothers, I can tell**

you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day." Peter will be contrasting the burial of David with that of Jesus.

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." David understood that one of his descendants would sit at the right hand of the Father.

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." Peter is quoting David up to this point.

32) "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact." So now Peter said, "we saw him. We touched him. We ate with him. We are witnesses to the fact that Jesus was raised."

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." Jesus had to ascend to the Father make the Holy Spirit available to mankind.

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.'"

36) "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." This whole process including the resurrection and ascension made Jesus both Lord and Savior. It did something for mankind when Jesus went to the Father. So let's explore what it means for us.

Pastor Glen began quoting several excerpts from Dr. Garret Scott Dawson's book – *Jesus Ascended*. Dr. Dawson is pastor the First Presbyterian Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In fact some new video of him has just been posted on our denominational website (www.graceci.org). In this book, he quotes many of the church fathers and one of them is Athanasius, who lived from 294-373 AD. Athanasius was a deacon who had a deep impact upon the church. This is a quote from Athanasius on page 94 from Dawson's book, *Jesus Ascended*.

"For the fact that the Lord, even when come in human body and called Jesus, was worshipped and believed to be God's Son, and that through Him the Father was known, shows, as has been said, that not the Word, consider as the Word, received this so great grace, but we.

(Many have received that grace of Jesus.)

For because of our relationship to His Body we too have become God's temple, and in consequence are made God's sons, so that even in us the Lord is now worshipped, and beholders report, as the Apostle says, that God is in them of a truth...

(When God works in us, people will ask, "What is it about you? I see something in you." Paul wrote that when we have our church services people should come and say, "God is with them!")

...we were exalted because the Highest Lord is in us, and on our account grace was given to Him, because the Lord who supplies the grace has become a man like us.

(God supplied his grace to the living Jesus and Jesus passed it on to us. Before he died, Jesus said, "Father, the grace and the glory you have given me, I have given to them." Jesus is passing it on.)

He on the other hand, the Savior, humbled Himself in taking 'our body in humiliation,' and took a servant's form, putting on that flesh which was enslaved to sin.

(Jesus literally took on our sinful human nature. We just talked about that in Bible study this morning.)

And He indeed has gained nothing from us for our own promotion: (Jesus didn't have to come get something from us. We have nothing to offer. He came to us, so that we would have something.)

for the Word of God is without want and full; but rather we were promoted from Him; for He is the 'Light, which lighteneth every man coming into the world.'"

Now here's Dr. Dawson's comment concerning the quote from Athanasius. *"The glorification of the Word in a human body, and the revelation of the Father through that enfleshed one, did not occur so that the Triune God could enjoy something he had not known before by experience. It was all for us! Yet, from the moment of His incarnation, Jesus was redeeming and cleansing our humanity. For even within our flesh, the Son of God has not become diminished, or stained by our pollution. He wears our sinful skin sinlessly. And so it is we who are changed, 'exalted because the Highest Lord is in us.' Christ's union with us, seen to be eternally perpetuated in the ascension, becomes our hope of glory."*

So what Dr. Dawson is emphasizing is this. So Christ comes down to the earth and enters into human form. Then he ascends to heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father as glorified flesh. And this makes it possible for us to know that we can make it. And so this gives us great hope. Because Jesus became one of us and has ascended to heaven takes us to the next level. Jesus has opened the door for us to have this great opportunity.

In **Hebrews 8:1** we read, "**The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,**" Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father as fully God and fully man, acting as our High Priest.

2) "and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man." Jesus became one of us so he understands. And he took us with him. And he intercedes to God on our behalf. And he connects with us on God's behalf. And so he's our mediator.

In **Revelation 5**, the first 5 verses show the vision of God's throne room and how the Father has this scroll in his right hand. And the angels were weeping and one angel asks who is able to open the scroll? No one was found worthy to open the scroll.

Then in verse 6 we read, **6) "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7) He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne."** So Jesus enters the throne room, sits at the right hand of the Father and takes the scroll out of the Father's right hand. He now has the authority to open up what's needed for mankind. Jesus has opened the way for all God has in mind for mankind.

8) "And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

9) And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God"

Jesus bought us by coming down and becoming one of us, by shedding his blood, by entering into our flesh, and then by being resurrected flesh, and by being ascended as flesh, he took us to the right hand of the Father, so that we could enter into that relationship with God.

"from every tribe and language and people and nation." Jesus wasn't just a Jew. He had gentile blood in his body through his great grandmother and others. And Jesus also redeemed all flesh, everyone – past, present and future.

10) "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." By accomplishing what Jesus did, it brought us into our inheritance. Not because we are something great, but because Jesus took us to God's throne room. It's difficult to grasp all that Jesus did for us. It means that we are now adopted family members and we have entered into that relationship with God.

Next, pastor Glen read a second quote from Dr. Garret Dawson's book – *Jesus Ascended*, from page 111. Dr. Dawson begins this section by quoting Chrysostom, a famous Christian pastor and writer who lived from 347 to 407 AD.

"And these things refer to our flesh which He offered. So He offered the firstfruits of our nature to the Father...(So Chrysostom uses the analogy of firstfruits. Jesus ascended to heaven on the day that the firstfruits were offered by the priesthood to God. And once the firstfruits were offered, the whole crop became holy. And so when Jesus was accepted by the Father, all of us are now dedicated to God.)"

and so the Father admired the gift, and on account of the worth of the offerer (Jesus) and the blamelessness of that which was offered (his perfect sacrifice), He received it with his own hands and placed the gift next to Him, and said, 'Sit thou on my right hand.' To which nature did God say: 'Sit thou on my right hand'? To that which heard: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

(Jesus is of the same dust we are. When the Father asked Jesus to sit at his right hand, he now received that dust into heaven.)

Now here's Dr. Dawson's comment concerning the quote from Chrysostom. *"Now dust sits at the right hand of the Father!* (This statement blows your mind. How come we don't teach about that? Yes, we talk about Jesus being resurrected but we kind of leave him floating around out there in heaven. But Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father.)

As Leo Imperator (d. 911) said on Ascension Day, 'For today our dust is taken up on the shoulders of the cherubim and being received within the inner palace is set upon the royal throne.' In his ascending, the Son offered the firstfruits of our nature and 'on account of the worth of the offerer', we have been received in heaven. What never was in heaven before, human flesh, is now there in Christ, who by virtue of his union with us is the way and the pledge for us."

Jesus said he is the way to the Father. But he's also the pledge – the guarantee through the Holy Spirit that we get to enter in because he entered in first on our behalf after becoming one of us. That's why Paul in Ephesians wrote, **"You are sitting in the heavenly realms with Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).**

And then on page 131 of Dr. Garret Dawson's book – *Jesus Ascended*, he writes:

"Jesus in his manhood is what humanity has always been intended to be. He is what we were meant to be before sin and consequent death diminished us. (We have been diminished in what our potential could be. Jesus was the perfect human being. He absolutely loved life. He loved being a human. Jesus loved doing all the physical things we enjoy doing. Jesus was the greatest flesh that ever existed.)

Jesus now is the most fully human person ever to live. (Too many people are just human. Jesus wants us to be human like him and love life. Jesus enjoys what you do that's physical in the flesh. He loves your hobbies, or all those people who are out there camping now. If you do something that's awesome and fun as a teenager, Jesus loves that – if it's good things, not sinful things, obviously.)

Humanity in its highest capacity, deepest joy, and uttermost fulfillment has been reached in the ascended Christ. This is the man who is our forerunner (Heb. 6:20), who has passed through the heavens and gone within the veil. Now by the Spirit in prayer and worship (but one day, by the same Spirit, in our glorified flesh), we, too, in his life, have access to the Holy of Holies."

Yes, Jesus' ascension is crucial to our life. It opens up life for us. It begins to deal with our sinful nature. In Bible study this morning, we saw in **Romans 7** how Paul talks about that he recognizes that his heart has been changed, but he has this flesh that wants to take him the other direction. And he laments that what he wants to do, he doesn't do. And what he doesn't want to do, he winds up doing.

Our flesh is still in its old habits. So we need to spend time with God so that our mind gets changed so that the flesh begins to follow the heart. Too often, we let our flesh dictate our heart. With God's help, we will begin to have our heart dictate to our flesh.

The next quote that pastor Glen gave was from Dr. C. Baxter Kruger's in his book, *God is For Us*, (page 45). *"He (Jesus) is no mere human instrument which is used for a*

higher goal. No! He is the goal. His human existence with the Father is the prize. He is Himself the reality of the change.

Now, as a human being, as man, He is face to face with His Father. Now, as a man, He dwells in the Father in utter at-oneness. That is the gospel; it is the good news of Jesus Christ, of His existence as a human being with the Father in the Spirit right now.

This is the point for us to recover. The Son of God became son of man and now lives as man with His Father in the Spirit. He became a human being and has taken His humanity to the Father. This is the change of changes. It is all about what has become of the Son of God.”

The Son of God became flesh and the Son of Man, as he ascended, took the Son of Man with him because they are one – fully God and fully man. And he sits at the right hand of the Father and he connects us to God. He’s our High Priest. He’s our mediator. He’s the one who works in our life. He intercedes and prays on our behalf to the Father.

Now these are the final quotes from Dr. Garret Dawson’s book, *Jesus Ascended* (page 133).

“Yet it was in the ascension that he completed that atonement by his triumphant entrance to the Holy of Holies. The ascension also marks the commencement of his ministry of heavenly intercession for us. There is a dimension to his priesthood that has only come after his ascension in the flesh.

So Jesus had to ascend in order to be able to sit there as our High Priest and to be able to do intercession for you and me. Jesus prays for us. Even when we’re so frustrated they we can’t pray, Jesus prays for us to the Father. Paul wrote in **Romans 8** that the Holy Spirit transfers our moaning and groaning into an intercession that glorious before the Father.

Jesus is the perfect human being that understands us because he, too, moaned and groaned. And through the Holy Spirit, Jesus transitions our moaning and groaning. And then Jesus brings the Father’s heart through the Holy Spirit down to us so we can understand God’s heart and he, in turn, can understand our heart. All this connection goes back and forth through Jesus Christ.

Dr. Dawson then quotes Dr. Thomas Torrance, distinguished professor at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

It is as our Brother, wearing our humanity, that He has ascended, presenting Himself eternally before the face of the Father, and presenting us in Himself. As such He is not only our word to God but God’s Word to us. Toward God He is our Advocate and High Priest, but toward man He is the acceptance of us in Himself. The very Spirit through whom He offered Himself eternally to the Father He has sent down upon us in His high-priestly blessing, fulfilling in the life of His Church on earth that which He has fulfilled on our behalf in the heavenlies...

Jesus is accomplishing his work and ministry through the church – through you and me. That’s why we took a few minutes earlier to pray for our unchurched family. They are called

unchurched family intentionally, because you see everybody is included in Jesus. Now, we realize that not everyone has received that and believes that.

So subjectively they must come to accept that. But objectively Jesus did this for everyone 2000 years ago and it's finished. They are just family who don't know yet. That's why Jesus said to go and be witnesses and help them become disciples and learn what it's like to respond to Jesus.

Christ was once for all sacrificed in our stead on the Cross but He has ascended into the Holy Place and ever lives to present Himself (and us in Him because of Himself for us) before the face of the Father. That sacrificial act of Christ once and for all performed and enduring in His endless life in the presence of God, is realized in the life of His people, not by retention of His substitutionary sacrifice, but by their dying and rising with Christ in faith and life, and by the worship of self-presentation to God.

It happens as we come and say, "I'm prepared to die," when we come to baptism. "I'm prepared to die to the old self because Jesus died for me." At baptism we enter into his death and then we come out of that water resurrected with Jesus with our new life in him. Dying to the old self means that we are willing to give up our life for Jesus and to respond to him. Now we present ourselves to God in worship showing our love and our respect and our honor to him. This is our self-presentation to God.

Dr. Dawson then makes this comment. *"The priesthood of Christ continues because he is the living mediator. We offer ourselves to God only based on what Jesus did in the past, but also in him now because in our name Jesus as man offers worship, prayer and even his life in obedience for us. The atoning work continues in his vicarious humanity."*

Notice that. In our name Jesus offers worship, prayer and obedience. You see Jesus is doing that through you and me, if we are co-operative. And we pray in his name so we're drawing on that and being available so he can do it through us. So it's not about our obedience; it's about his obedience in us.

It's not about our faith. It's about his faith. It's not about our repentance. We can't repent well enough. But Jesus repented perfectly and he repents in us. Jesus continues his atoning work for us every moment of every day, not only sustaining us by the word of his will but also sending us the Holy Spirit to work through us.

John 14:12, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13) And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father." When we ask God, "Would you work through me," that brings glory to the Father, because we know through Jesus what the Father wants done.

14) "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." Jesus is saying that when you ask to do things that are from the heart of the Father, he will do it.

John 3:13 (KJV), "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." So Jesus came down from heaven as the Son of God, born from the womb of Mary, became the Son of

man and ascended back to the Father's throne. Jesus did all this to bring us salvation, to bring us to the Father.

This is Paul's prayer for the church at that time recorded in **Ephesians 1** beginning in verse 18. **"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,"**

It's pastor Glen's desire that our hearts may be enlightened today a little bit about the ascension of Christ, that we will catch a greater glimpse of the fact that there is a human being living up in heaven now empowered by the Spirit not by blood – glorified flesh – sitting at the right hand of the Father as one of us.

What a glorious inheritance we have. Some of the quotes that we read this morning show how Jesus opened all of our inheritance up by what he accomplished.

19) "and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength," In Bible study this morning we talked about how people will say that they are weak. And God's answer is that he knows we are weak. That's why he sent his power to us, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, power that will help us do those things that are hard to do, that will help us in those times of crisis.

God says he is sending us the power of the universe. It's the power of God, not for us to use as a tool but for us to be used as a tool for God to work in us. When we feel weak in the flesh is the time we should ask God to help us.

20) "which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms," This is a wonderful reality. The Son of God, the Son of man is in the heavenly realms drawing us into that deeper relationship with him. And when we feel weak, Jesus says to us, "Just take my hand and walk with me."

21) "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come." There are a lot of people who focus on demons and tell you that Satan is giving us a hard time about many things. This Scripture says Jesus has power over all the demons and Satan. So let's focus on Jesus because he has authority over them and they can't do anything to us.

22) "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church," We, as the church, have authority to reach out to people with the Gospel message.

23) "which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way " Jesus, sitting at the right hand of the Father, is working through the church, which means he's working through each one of us.

Every moment of everyday day, Jesus is praying for you and working through you. The key is we need to tap into that. We need to be tuned into that. And Jesus wants to bring all who are not yet under his authority to draw them to himself through the church.

And we need to reach out to people and ask them if they realize what Jesus has done for them already. That Jesus came as one of us, that he died and was resurrected and is now seated with the Father and that he's praying for you every single day. And that he wants to draw you into himself. You can ask people if they would repent of going their own way and respond to what Jesus has already done for them. What a great message!

Pastor Glenn would like to see Ascension Sunday a bigger day of worship than either Christmas or Easter because to his way of thinking, it's just as important. Yes, Jesus' birth is important. Yes, his resurrection is important. But his ascension draws us into the throne room of God. It completes the atonement of humanity.

Let's think about Jesus sitting in heaven on our behalf. He's working through your name as you are working through his name. That's amazing!

Key Scripture: Acts 2:29-33, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 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. 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. 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."

General Group Question: How would you describe the feelings you have knowing that Jesus, as glorified flesh, is in the presence of the Father representing you before him?

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 is the significance that the Logos, who became God in the flesh, ascended into the heavenly realm as glorified flesh?
2. As our mediator before the Father, what does Jesus do in our behalf?
3. What status in heaven do we as Christians in Christ have according to Eph. 2:6?
4. Why is it important for us to know that Christ is the head of the church in regards for us as we fulfill the great commission?
5. What aspect of today's message about the ascension of Jesus into the very throne room of God encouraged you the most?