

**Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam, WI**  
**May, 2021**  
**Ephesians 1:16-23**

Thursday is (was) a major festival in the church year called *Ascension Day*. It is always celebrated forty days after Easter. Ascension Day celebrates the day our Lord Jesus, after His resurrection, ascended into heaven. Today we will see that this celebration connects the past, the present, and the future work of Jesus.

Ascension Day is of great importance for us, so we consider:  
The Ascension, Past, Present, and Future.

Let's begin with the past work of our Lord Jesus. Paul refers to it when he talks about the working of His mighty strength, which God worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand... There can be no present or future work of Christ without His dying on the cross as its foundation.

The same Jesus who ascended into heaven is the same Jesus who suffered and died, shedding His blood for us. This same Jesus is the one whom God raised from the dead and seated at His right hand. So the past and completed work of Jesus is the basis for His present and future work.

And that completed work of Jesus takes care of our sordid past. All of our shameful sins, everything we have said, thought, and done, have been paid for by the finished work of Jesus, accomplished on the cross.

And Christ's ascension shows that the Father approved of what His Son had accomplished. The Father put His stamp of approval on Jesus' work by raising our Lord from the dead, exalting Him in His glorious ascension, and seating Him with honor at His right hand.

But at the same time, the ascension also points to the future work

of Jesus. Paul refers to this when he speaks of our Lord's authority and dominion, not only in this age but also in the one to come. The "age to come" is when Jesus returns in glory on the last day.

Paul speaks about our future in that age to come. He wants us to know about our rich inheritance. That rich inheritance is our glorious future! It is the life we will live in the new home God will build for us!

An inheritance is something we don't have right now; it is something that will be ours in the future. We have a glorious inheritance waiting for us! No one can take our inheritance from us.

- *Jesus was raised from the dead; we will be raised from the dead.*
- *Jesus ascended into heaven; so all believers in Jesus will be taken to heaven!*

The ascension of Jesus shows us our future, and that future is glorious and awesome!

That brings us to the present, and this is where the ascension of Jesus serves as a bridge between the past and the future. The ascension of Jesus tells us what Jesus is doing for us now, and that in turn gives us hope in our present life.

What is Jesus doing for us during the time between His ascension and His second coming? Paul tells us, God seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. God also placed all things under His feet and made Him head over everything for the church.

Our risen and ascended Lord is now seated at the right hand of God. The right hand is the position of honor and authority. The Father honored His Son because Jesus accomplished His mission to pay for the sins of the world. All authority in heaven and earth has now been given to Jesus. Jesus is ruling all things for the good of His church! The rise and

fall of nations, all the events that take place in our world, all human history, is under the control of our Lord. Jesus rules the world so His Church can carry out the mission of spreading the gospel. Jesus uses His mighty power for His people, and for our good. That is His work in the present time.

It doesn't always look as though Jesus is in control, does it? Sometimes it looks as though the world is spinning out of control or that the world is racing downhill toward eventual disaster. We have health problems, financial problems, family problems, and relationship problems. There is chaos and confusion in our country from one crisis to another. It even looks like the church is on its last legs: attendance is down, people are leaving the church, and Christians are discouraged. Has Jesus lost control?

No, what Paul is telling us is true, Christ is still in charge! He is governing all things for the good of His church. When you are hurting, Jesus knows it. When you need help, Jesus responds. Our brother, Jesus, knows our weaknesses, and He will give us the strength to endure to the end. There are many people who rejoice to hear the good news of their Savior. There are still many souls being gathered into Christ's church and nurtured there. Take heart! Don't worry!

This present work of Jesus will fill us with hope, no matter what is happening in our lives. That is what Paul tells us in his prayer. He prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing Christ fully. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope to which He has called you, just how rich His glorious inheritance among the saints is, and just how surpassingly great His power is for us who believe.

God's will for us is that we might know him in a more intimate way as we grow in knowledge of what He has done for us. And knowing all that, to live in the hope to which He has called us!

What is this hope? Hope is knowing that God holds our future in His hands, that our inheritance is waiting for us in heaven.

We have learned that the ascension of our Lord connects the past, present, and future work of our Lord. It confirms His finished work on the cross. It points to His future return. And it leads us to realize that right now, in the present, Jesus is ruling all things for the good of believers.

The sins of our past have been wiped away by the blood of Jesus. We have a glorious inheritance ready for us in heaven. And we have a sure and certain hope in the present, that no matter what is happening around us, Jesus rules all things for our good and the good of the church. And that, I think, is worth hearing today!

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