

Ascension in 1John

1. Unauthorized Access

The visiting Aussie preacher was ushered into the House of Lords with the utmost care.
A personal tour had been arranged, and here he stood in the centre of British political power.

But typical for an Aussie, he was not overwhelmed, nor over-awed by the situation.
Quite the opposite, he was looking for the chair with the best vantage point to look over the room.

He found what he was looking for, proceeded straight up the stairs to sit on the gold covered seat.
Well, the British clergyman who was the tour guide, or really escort,
 Changed from mild discomfort to moderate concern to severe shock,
 As the Aussie preacher walked up the steps to sit on the special seat.

And just as the Aussie preacher was about to sit down,
 The English clergyman yelled out – “Stop! You can’t sit there!”
 “That throne is reserved for the Queen!”

And as tempting as it was for the Aussie preacher to sit down, for a seat is a seat is a seat,
 For the sake of his English counterpart, he stopped, turned around and walked back down.
 And so the English clergyman’s colour changed back from ghostly white to slightly flushed.

The moral to the story – there is only one person that can ascend to the throne,
 in the house of Lords – the Queen.

So today we celebrate the Ascension.

We celebrate the ascension of the only person that can ascend to the throne room of God
We declare in the creed,

 “he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”

Jesus was authorized to sit at the right hand of God.

But so what?

What does it mean?

Jesus ascended into heaven – so what?

➔ Jesus ascended into heaven – so what?

2. Jesus' resurrection has come to completion (1John 1:1-4)

Well, today, we'll be looking at what the apostle John says about the ascension, Particularly by jumping in the proverbial plane and taking a bird's eye view of John's first letter.

So, first, John locates the ascension, by reflecting upon the resurrection. << 1John 1:1-4>>

As Thomas declares before his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus (John 20:35)

“Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands,
and put my finger in the mark of the nails I his side, I will not believe”

Yet he sees the risen Lord Jesus and declares – “My Lord and My God”.

And so, the disciples of Jesus become the apostles of Jesus.

The 12 followers of Jesus become the witnesses to the resurrected Lord.

And they witness in order that we might have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

➔ Jesus has been revealed *in heaven* to take away sins (1John 3:5-8 c.f 1:8-2:2)

So, on this basis, John then connects the resurrected Lord Jesus to the ascended Lord. <1Jn 3:5-8>

Our automatic response when we read the words – “he was revealed” v. 5, and v. 8 is to think

“Yes, that must be here on earth that must be about us, about humanity.”

Two problems – first – our human-centric attitude misguides us in understanding this passage.

This passage is not about Jesus coming to us, because we are the centre of the universe.

Second – Jesus has already revealed himself to us, not only in his incarnation, but in his resurrection

Therefore, if we liberate our minds from this wrong thinking,

First, Jesus reveals himself to take away sin – in heaven, as the one who advocates for us.

As 1John 2:1 states – we have an advocate with the Father!

Advocate – simply means a voice that speaks for us.

And so Jesus voice speaks for us, in the throne room of God.

Second, John uses the phrases ‘Son of God’ in v. 8 on purpose.

Son of God is short-hand for the victorious resurrected Lord,

And so, Jesus reveals himself as God's chosen messiah as he sits down in heaven!

Jesus reveals himself to have destroyed the works of the devil as he sits as Lord over all.

3. The Spirit could not come unless Jesus went (John 16:7-14)

So the question is – so what's next? What happens when the king has been installed? <Jn 16:7-14>

The outpouring of God's spirit only occurs because Jesus has gone to the Father.

It sounds so Hollywood spookey movie – the 'spirit' comes... like some kind of ghost?

What does it mean for the Spirit to 'come'?

- 1) God's spirit coming proves the world wrong about sin, righteousness and judgment.
Wrong about sin – because by rejecting Jesus, by not trusting in Jesus,
The world, in its rebellion against God has rejected the testimony of God's own son.
More, the world has been proven wrong because Jesus has gone to the father.
More, the world has been proven wrong because Jesus has condemned the devil.
- 2) The Spirit does not act on his own, but hears from the Son and delivers to the us.
- 3) The Spirit gives glory to Jesus.

➔ We have God's spirit (1John 4:13)

So what does it mean for us?

Well, according to John's letter – first and foremost – we have God's spirit. << 1John 4:13 >>

And therefore we have complete assurance that we dwell, abide, remain with God.

➔ We have boldness before God (1John 5:14-15)

Upon this basis, then, we have boldness before God. << 1John 5:14-15 >>

Now, this is not that we pray for a bright red Ferrari, and hey presto!

No. As we pray in line with God's will, for what God wants for our lives - << Lord's prayer >>

➔ We have conquered the world (1John 4:4)

Third implication – because we have God's spirit, we have conquered the world. << 1John 4:4 >>

We no longer remain in the sphere, dominion, realm of this rebellious world.

We no longer need to be slaves to the possessions that we own, and the pride within.

We have God's spirit, we have boldness before God, and we have defeated the world in Christ.

4. Jesus will return (1John 2:28, 3:2)

Returning to the big picture, the third so-what of Jesus ascension – Jesus will return.
Again, as we say in our creed – Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

→ What we will be has not yet been revealed (1John 3:2)

And John picks up a particularly significant ramification of Jesus' return for us <<1John 3:2>>.

We will be like him because we will see him as he is.

But how great will it be to see Jesus as he is – as the ascended Lord of all, as the conqueror of death

The risen Lord who ushers in the new age of the resurrection!

→ We purify ourselves now (1John 3:3, 2:15)

And therefore, because of who we will be on the day of Jesus return,

We are driven to action today. << 1John 3:3>>

We purify ourselves.

We purify ourselves, by not loving the world, nor the things of this world (1John 2:15)

We purify ourselves, by loving our brothers and sisters,

by using our world's possession for their needs (1John 3:17)

and by laying down our lives for each other (1John 3:16).

5. The resurrected-incarnate life (Jesus is the Son of God)

So, to finish, let's again, come back to the bigger picture.

Today, we celebrate the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to the throne room of Heaven.

Jesus ascension, which started from the point of his death,

Which continued through death itself, to the glorious resurrection, to his ascension,

Contains the following implications for us.

➔ Your sins are forgiven (as Jesus has been revealed in heaven)

First, as Jesus has been revealed in heaven, as our advocate,

We know that our sins have been forgiven.

➔ You know him & have eternal life (from the beginning – but now resurrected & ascended)

Two, we now know this risen Lord because of the witness given to us,

And because God poured out his spirit upon us.

➔ You have conquered the evil one (through his victory)

Three, we have conquered the evil one – because Jesus conquered him, and we abide in Jesus.

And therefore we no longer live as slaves to this world, but we live as free in Christ.

➔ You are strong (God's word abides in us)

Four, we have strength, not because we work out, because we're impressive, nor ...

We are strong because God's word abides in us, and we abide in him.

So I'll finish with our call and response – Christ is risen and ascended. Alleluia.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.