

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

## JESUS SAVES

### JESUS THE RISEN KING

#### *The Risen King Ascends*

Our Lord's ascension into heaven was an important part of His ministry, for if He had not returned to the Father, He could not have sent the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples **before** His crucifixion and resurrection in **John 16:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.* The Helper or Comforter is the Holy Spirit of God. The major work of the Holy Spirit is to empower the church for life and witness.

Wiersbe points out that it is important to note that the Spirit comes *to the church* and not to the world. This means that He works in and through the church. The Holy Spirit does not minister in a vacuum. Just as the Son of God had to have a body in order to do His work on earth, so the Spirit of God needs a body to accomplish His ministries; and that body is the church. We are the church; therefore, our bodies are His tools and temples, and He wants to use us to glorify Christ and to witness to a lost world.

Wiersbe goes on to say, "Sometimes we hear people pray, "Lord, send Your Spirit to speak to the lost! May the Spirit go from heart to heart." Such praying is no doubt sincere, but is it biblical? The Spirit does not "float" in some ghostly way up and down the rows of a church building, seeking to win the lost. The Holy Spirit works through the people in whom He lives. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of one particular sin, the sin of *unbelief*."

For the purpose of fulfilling God the Father's plan for our salvation, God the Son chose to limit Himself to an earthly body for the purpose of becoming the once for all sacrifice for our sins. After His resurrection from the dead, His work on earth was ended. It was time for Him to go 'home' to the Father. Don't get the idea that Jesus was going home to heaven to 'take a break'. After His resurrection, Jesus would have new work to do. **Romans 8:34 (ESV)** <sup>34</sup> *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* In His goodness, He did not leave His disciples then and now – 'stranded' here on earth. The same Savior who died for us is now interceding for us in heaven. Hallelujah what a Savior! How does that happen? Of course, I cannot explain it fully but our connection to the Son of God interceding for us in heaven comes through the power of the Holy Spirit here within us who also intercedes on our behalf. **Romans 8:26 (ESV)** <sup>26</sup> *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

**Read Acts 1:4-5 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> *And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

The Lord’s first command was for them to wait. Waiting – it is not an easy command to accept – especially for those of us who want results now! When we read about all the things the early disciples accomplished, it is amazing. They accomplished their mission by waiting for the Power of the Holy Spirit. **Isaiah 40:31 (ESV)** <sup>31</sup> *but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

We live in an exciting era that is the Day of the Spirit which began 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven. All four gospel writers recorded what John the Baptist had said regarding the coming of the Day of the Spirit. **Luke 3:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* The time was near for John’s prophecy of Spirit baptism to be fulfilled. Notice that Jesus did not mention the baptism by fire about which John spoke. It is my understanding that the baptism of fire has to do with future judgment and is yet to be fulfilled. Although we already know that when the coming of the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers it did appear as tongues of fire. However, we are wise to remember that our world still awaits a judgment by fire.

**Read Acts 1:6-8 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Today, we see the whole picture that the Messiah came the first time to bring eternal salvation by way of the cross and conquering the grave. He did not plan to set up an earthly kingdom at that time. For centuries many Jews had believed that when the Messiah came, Israel would be restored as an earthly kingdom. The disciples now understood that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah but they still did not understand totally about God’s kingdom. That’s why they asked, *Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*” Jesus gently said that the answer to that question was not for them to know. But, there was something that was very important for them to know – Power was coming for their assigned mission.

God had explained to Zerubbabel how he would be able to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem after the 70-year Babylonian exile. **Zechariah 4:6 (ESV)**<sup>6</sup> *Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. This is how Jesus’ disciples then and now are to build His church – that is, by the Power of the Holy Spirit and when I say church we are most definitely not talking about buildings – we are talking about adding souls to the family of God!*

Jesus in His answer literally described the geographical spread of the gospel. The spread would begin in their hometown – Jerusalem – then all Judea and then to Samaria and the ends of the earth. No matter where we live as Christians we should begin our witness at home and then extend it “into all the world.”

Jesus ascends to heaven where He exercises divine authority.

**Read Acts 1:9-12 (ESV)**<sup>9</sup> *And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.<sup>10</sup> And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,<sup>11</sup> and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”<sup>12</sup> Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.*

On Friday John and I took a trip with friends up Mount Nebo and it so happened that the top of the mountain was enshrouded in a cloud. While being in that cloud atop the mountain, I could not help but think of the ascension of Jesus. In our ‘cloud experience’ we could not see much of anything of the heavens except the cloud itself. The ascension of Jesus was different from a misty cloudy shrouding a mountaintop. It was a magnificent display of the Presence of God. *Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* It was a glorious event!

To help us visualize the ascension, let’s connect the cloud that received Jesus to the Shekinah Glory. Shekinah is a word that is not in the Bible, but it is a word that refers to instances where God showed Himself visibly to His people. Shekinah is a reference to the very Presence of God Himself. What a sight it must have been when God the Son arose from earth to God His Father! Three of the people present that day (Peter, James and John) had seen Jesus transfigured’ when the Father’s voice spoke to them from a bright cloud. **Matthew 17:5 (ESV)**<sup>5</sup> *He [meaning Peter] was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*

In the Old Testament, the Great I Am displayed His Presence with the children of Israel in the wilderness through the Presence of a cloud. **Exodus 13:21 (ESV)**<sup>21</sup> *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way... After Solomon built the first*

temple, on the day that the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Holy of Holies, we read in ***1 Kings 8:10 (ESV)***<sup>10</sup> *And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD.*

There are other passages where the Presence of the Lord is connected to a cloud appearing but, the one that interests me the most is this: ***1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)***<sup>17</sup> *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.* On the day of Jesus' promised return for His children, we will experience the joy of being caught up into the heavens in the Shekinah Glory of the Lord!

I would like to know how many human miles away Jesus went as He ascended into the Shekinah Glory Cloud. I would like to know exactly where heaven is. However, I have come to believe that heaven may not be as far away as I once thought. Consider what John said in ***Revelation 4:1 (ESV)***<sup>1</sup> *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."* As John stood on the Island of Patmos, he looked to the heavens and a door opened! Although the details of heaven are not for us to know yet, we do know the best is yet to be for those who hope in Jesus!

Never forgot that the miracle of it all is that God dwells with us in the here and now. When we accept Christ as Savior, His Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us. ***1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)***<sup>19</sup> *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,*<sup>20</sup> *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* Just as the Shekinah Glory filled the earthly temple of Solomon, the Shekinah Glory of God that is the Holy Spirit should fill our hearts and be visible in our lives.

Even though God dwells in believers by His Spirit, we know that we do not always reflect His glory as we should. After we are filled with His Spirit we should not just be standing around gazing into heaven, we should be about our Father's business – that is sharing the good of Jesus.