

Just As He Said

Luke 24:44-52

Pastor Ken reminded last Sunday that the Lord Jesus spoke very clearly to His disciples about His coming death and resurrection at Jerusalem. And He began doing this while He and His disciples were still in Galilee. But the disciples never really heard Jesus say He would rise from the dead, because the Messiah of their understanding could never suffer death until he had enabled Israel to break away from the yoke of Rome and then rise to become the head of the nations, with Messiah Jesus being on the throne. And so just before they arrived at Jerusalem, Jesus once again told His disciples in **Matthew 20:18-19**,

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

And when they arrived at Jerusalem, Jesus was delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, who used false witnesses to have Him condemned to death, after which they turned Him over to Roman soldiers, who mocked and flogged and crucified Him – exactly as Jesus said. And the disciples were shocked, traumatized and lost all hope that Jesus was the Messiah. Why does God put up with us?

Our text for this morning comes from Luke 24, which is a record of events which took place on the Sunday after Christ’s death. It begins with a group of women going to the tomb, intending to put spices on the dead corpse of Jesus. But they were dumbfounded to find the tomb was empty.

Two angels appeared in dazzling apparel and one of them told the women in Luke 24:6, “He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee?” Now that the angel mentioned it, the women did recall Jesus saying something about dying and rising from the dead.

When we put all the Gospel accounts together, we discover that the resurrected Lord Jesus showed Himself to at least five people before late Sunday afternoon. And so it would seem that in Luke 24:36, all the disciples [except Thomas] gathered together on Sunday evening to vote on whether Jesus had risen from the dead or not. Mercifully Jesus removed the need for a vote by appearing to all of them at once.

This brings us to our text for this morning, Luke 24:44-52, which continues the story of a room full of shocked but giddy disciples, listening to the risen Lord Jesus. Let’s begin by reading verses 44-49,

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you [before His death], that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled’ [up to that time, the disciples had not understood many Old Testament passages which speak about Christ and His Kingdom. That was about to change].⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

If Christ had not risen from the dead, there would be no Christianity today. It was Christ’s death and resurrection which finally helped the

disciples to understand that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Up to that time, their hope for right standing with God was based on the fact that they were Jewish, and had found the Messiah. James and John had dreams of sitting on the right and left of Christ's royal throne. The disciples did not yet understand how Christ's Kingdom was to function and grow. Their version of the Messiah, did not include the need for Him to become the once-for-all time, perfect sacrifice for sin. Judaism still doesn't understand this, even though they have no temple; no place to offer sacrifices for sin. This is why Jesus told His disciples they were to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name to all the nations – which means all peoples of the world must repent of their sins and seek God's forgiveness by trusting in Christ's sacrifice for sin, which was accomplished on the cross, and verified by His resurrection from the dead. But how can one man pay the penalty for the sins of so many? Because Christ is the unique God/man; fully God and fully man – which is why Peter declares in **Acts 4:12**, “. . . there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

But friends, there is something else that was absolutely **mandatory** for Christ to do in order to fulfill Old Testament Scriptures. And I don't think we talk about it nearly enough. I want to help change that as we continue reading Luke 24:50-52,

“Then he led them out as far as Bethany [a village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives], and lifting up his hands he blessed them.⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

Let's think together about the importance of **Christ's ascension** in regards to God's plans for our world during this New Covenant Age in which we live. Understanding what the Bible tells us about Christ's ascension, will help us to understand the future. Listen to what Jesus Himself told His disciples about the importance of His ascension in **John 16:7-8**,

“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. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” [the judgement Christ is speaking about is designed to help the nations learn righteousness – Isaiah 26:9].

Ten days after Jesus ascended to the Father's right hand, He commissioned the Holy Spirit to begin an unparalleled work upon the earth, which would result in unparalleled conversions to Christ. This reality is implied by what Jesus promised in **John 14:12**,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”

I don't know about you, but I have not healed physically blind and lame people, or calmed storms, or walked on water. But God has worked through me to help spiritually dead people come to life in Christ – and they will enjoy that life for all eternity. This was made possible because Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in a powerful, dramatic way, after His ascension.

What happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, has been likened to water being poured out from heaven upon the Jews in Jerusalem, who had

come from every nation under heaven to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. I want you to use your imagination and picture all these people as glass jars. The vast majority of these jars have lids on them, but there are some jars that do not. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Jerusalem, the open jars were filled with the Holy Spirit. That would be the Apostles and the other believers with them. The jars with lids represent everyone else. These jars were surrounded by the Holy Spirit, who began His supernatural work of convicting people of sin and of Christ's righteousness.

After Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached to a large crowd about their need for repentance and faith in Christ. And lo and behold, the lids of three thousand jars were removed as people trusted in Christ and welcomed the Holy Spirit to dwell within them. On that one day, there may have been more people saved – than what Jesus saw during His entire earthly ministry. And the Holy Spirit has continued to convict and convert countless people to Christ during these last 2,000 years.

Three weeks ago I alluded to Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, as being the two most quoted Psalms in the New Testament. Both of these Psalms give us details about what happened in heaven at the time of Christ's ascension AND what will happen on earth because of Christ's ascension. Both Psalms speak about great blessings – but they also speak about the continued reality of God's judgments upon wickedness. Let's look first at **Psalm 2:6-7,**

“As for me [God the Father is speaking], I have set my King [the Lord

Jesus] on Zion, my holy hill. ⁷ [the Son responds] I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’”

Verse 6 speaks of Christ being declared King. This was not a new title. The word Christ, is a title which means “anointed one.” In Matthew 2:2, the wise men referred to baby Jesus as “. . . he who has been born king of the Jews.” On Palm Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem proclaiming Himself to be the rightful King of the Jews. But when Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father, and sat on the true throne of power, He was officially crowned the ruler of the kings of the earth [Revelation 1:5]. It was at Jerusalem [Zion] where Christ’s kingship was first embraced by a remnant of Jewish believers. But Christ’s kingship was never intended to be confined to Jerusalem or limited to the Jewish people.

In Psalm 2:7, God the Father says to Christ, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” What does that mean? Hebrews 1:5 quotes this verse, but **Hebrews 1:1-3** gives us the context of these words,

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son [Jesus came to earth in the last days of the Old Covenant Age – and through His death, resurrection and ascension – inaugurated the glorious New Covenant Age, which is why verse 2 goes on to say about the Christ], whom God the Father appointed heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He [Christ] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power [this was true of God the Son from all eternity past. But what we read next was new]. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

It is in the setting of Christ’s ascension that the Father said to Christ – “Today I have begotten you” – meaning that because God the Son had

completed everything the Father had sent Him to earth to accomplish – at Christ’s ascension, God the Father bestowed the full honors and benefits of His Sonship. And what will be the results of those honors and benefits? Verse 8 of Psalm 2 gives us the answer, as God the Father says to the Son, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”

How many of you think that when God the Father told the ascended Lord Jesus to ask Him for the nations – that the Son said, “I don’t want to be greedy, just give Me a small remnant of people who will love and serve Me, and I will be content.” No, the Lord Jesus had already asked for the nations, when He gave the Great Commission to His disciples just before His ascension, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”

There are two questions every Christian should be able to answer: (1) Will the Great Commission be successful? The answer is yes, because Jesus promised to be with us as we make disciples for Christ of all the nations. And (2) What will a successful Great Commission look like? To help answer that second question let’s look at **Psalm 110**, which is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. Lets read **verse 1**,

“The LORD [God the Father] says to my Lord [God the Son]: ‘Sit at my right hand [and remain there], until I make your enemies your footstool.’”

The key question is what does God the Father mean by Christ’s enemies becoming his footstool? If your answer is that it means the Son will gain dominion over His enemies – then you are right. But there is an

unexpected twist involved in that answer. To see it we must look at how the Old Testament uses the word “footstool.” **Psalm 99:5** declares, “Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool!” In that verse, God’s footstool is the stone temple at Jerusalem, which was the place of God’s special presence on earth. God’s footstool has the same meaning in Psalm 132:7; I Chronicles 28:2 and Lamentations 2:1. Is God the Father promising to make Christ enemies into stone temples?

Let’s connect some dots. The Bible is clear that in our natural condition, we are spiritually dead and at enmity with God [Ephesians 2:1-3]. But after Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension, all who repent of their sin and trust in Christ become temples of God [I Corinthians 3:16-17]. The Church is God’s new temple upon the earth during this New Covenant Age. We who were enemies, are now Christ’s footstools.

In contrast, people who do not repent and trust in Christ, remain at enmity with God, and will ultimately be placed under Christ’s feet as defeated foes, enemies. The Apostle Paul refers to this in **Philippians 2:9-11**,

“Therefore God has highly exalted him [Christ] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth [that is everybody],¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

If unbelievers refuse to repent and trust in Christ during their earthly lives, then after they die their spirit continues to be separated from God – until the bodily resurrection and the Great Day of Judgment. On that day,

unbelievers will stand before Christ and confess that Jesus is Lord, but it will do them no good. They will still be thrown into the lake of fire, along with all the fallen angels. How much better to become a temple of God, by humbly embracing Christ as Lord.

Let's go back to **Psalm 110:2**, because it tells us where Christ's rule on earth would begin, "The LORD will extend your mighty scepter [a symbol of rulership] from Zion [Jerusalem]; you will rule in the midst of your enemies." This is why in Luke 24:47-49, Jesus commanded His disciples to stay at Jerusalem until the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And then from Jerusalem – Christ's followers were to make disciples in all the nations.

All through the Bible we are told that Christ's Kingdom would start small, but grow mightily. I will finish with three Old Testament examples of that truth, which Christ Himself taught in Matthew 13:31-33.

In Daniel 2, we see the vision of a mighty statue composed of four metals, each metal representing a different world empire. The head of gold was Babylon; the chest and arms of silver was Persia, which conquered Babylon; the thighs of bronze was the Greek Empire, which conquered Persia; the legs and feet of iron represented the Roman Empire, which conquered the Greek Empire. And it was during the days of the Roman Empire that a stone cut without hands came to earth. That stone represents the humble incarnation of Christ. And what happens to the stone? The stone becomes a mountain [kingdom] and the mountain fills the earth.

The same truth is taught in Ezekiel 47, which describes a new temple

on earth, which has water flowing out of it. The new temple is the Church of Jesus Christ and the water is the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit. At first the water is shallow, but as the New Covenant Age advances, the water becomes deeper – as more and more people repent, come to Christ and then share the water of life with others. And this new temple began – **at Jerusalem.**

My last example of Christ’s Kingdom starting small but growing mightily, comes from **Micah 4:1-4**, which was written about 700 years before Christ’s incarnation. In my opinion, this passage gives us a clear answer as to what a successful Great Commission will look like,

“It shall come to pass in the last days [of the Old Covenant Age in which Micah lived] that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established [in Daniel 2 the stone that became a mountain referred to Christ’s Kingdom, which began in the days of the Roman Empire. The Old Testament house of the Lord, the stone temple, has been replaced by the Church, God’s new temple on earth. The function of God’s new temple is to see Christ’s Kingdom extend upon the earth as we make disciples of all the nations. Concerning Christ’s Kingdom, it shall become] the highest of the mountains [earthly kingdoms], and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, ² and many nations shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law [written on the hearts of all New Covenant believers], and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem [which is where Christ’s Kingdom on earth began]. ³ He [the ascended Lord Jesus] shall judge between many peoples, and settle disputes for strong nations far away [there are two important truths here: (1) the presence of disputes means this is not speaking about heaven. And (2) according to I Corinthians 15:50-54, when Christ returns for His Bride, all believers receive glorified bodies, in which we will no longer sin or die. Therefore, Micah 4:1-4, is not speaking about events on earth after

Christ's Second Coming. These promises will be fulfilled sometime during this New Covenant Age]; and they [people in flesh and blood bodies] shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore [nations will not behave like this if only a small remnant of people become followers of Christ];⁴ but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid [when God's Law, written on the hearts of believers, is honored, there is deep respect for life and for private property], for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken."

I don't believe any power on earth can prevent these promises from being fulfilled. Let's Pray

Heavenly Father, some of the issues we have spoken about this morning are salvation issues. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to Father except through Him. Other issues we have spoken of are not salvation issues. But Father, the way we view Your promises and when we believe these promises will be fulfilled, enormously affect our worldview. Lord, You know very well that the perspective I have shared this morning is not new. It was the viewpoint of the majority of evangelical Christianity for hundreds of years. And it grieves me that it was not better scholarship which changed that. It was WWI and particularly WWII which caused deep pessimism to enter into the way so many now view end times. Help us to do our very best in rightly dividing the Word of Truth. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Jude 24-25, "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen