

# Acts 1:9-11

- Christ is given all authority over the nations -

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## Introduction

- ❖ There is the Kingdom of Christ and there are the nations of the peoples.
  - The Kingdom of Christ is present everywhere, where Christians worship Jesus as Christ and as Lord.
  - At ascension Day the church celebrates his inthronisation and ascension to his throne, sitting at the right hand of God, the Father.
  - His Kingdom is everlasting and cannot be destroyed (persecution, oppression) by the nations, in this world and in the world to come.
  - Because he ascended into heaven, his rule is not localized on earth, but decentralized as he said to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:21-24):
    - “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”
- ❖ The church is rooted in the past and oriented to the future:
  - “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).
  - When Jesus will come again, he will judge the living and the dead. He is the ultimate judge (Rev 20:11-15).
  - This is and was a very strong incentive for the church to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

- ❖ “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philip 2:9-11).
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Acts of the Apostles. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

## Context

- ❖ The description of the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven belongs to the introduction to the book of Acts and is preceded by.
  - Acts 1:1-5: Luke introduced his second volume to Theophilus and started telling of the story of Acts.
  - Acts 1:6-8: The disciples asked Jesus an important question. The answer of the Lord is also a short overview of the book of Acts:

| <b>“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <i>The question of the disciples</i>  | <i>The answer of the Lord</i>  | <i>Acts</i>                                    |
| “at this time?”   | “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”                  |  |
| “are you going to restore”?   | “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;”  | Acts 2:1-13                                    |
| “the kingdom to Israel?”  | “and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” | Acts 2:14-8:3<br>Acts 8:4-40<br>Acts 9:1-28:31 |

## Form and structure

### ❖ Acts 1:9-11:

| <i>Person:</i>                                    | <i>Action:</i>  |
|---|---|
| <i>Jesus<br/>(verse 9)</i>                        | After he said this (verse 6-8), he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.   |
| <i>The disciples<br/>(verse 10)</i>               | They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going,   |
| <i>The heavenly messengers<br/>(verse 10- 11)</i> | when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." |

## Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

### Forty days and ten days

- ❖ Ascension Day is forty days after Easter and ten days before Pentecost. Both numbers, forty and ten, indicate a fullness of time. With regard to the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven the number forty is interesting. It indicates a full period of preparation. During these forty days Jesus prepared his disciples for their task to be witnesses of Christ and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
  - Other examples of the number forty are:
    - Moses was raised for forty years in Egypt. He stayed forty years in the desert before he returned to Egypt again. Together with the people of Israel he wandered for forty years in the desert (Acts 7:23, 30, 36). He went up the mount Sinai and stayed there for forty days (Ex 24:18).
    - Elijah travelled forty days and night to the mount Horeb (2 Kings 19:8) before he met God.
    - Jesus stayed for forty days in the desert before he was tempted (Mt 4:1-11).

- ❖ And again, after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, there is a period of ten days needed to prepare the disciples for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

#### Psalm 110 and the New Testament

- ❖ Psalm 110 is important for the theological understanding of the ascension of Jesus Christ. “This Psalm was probably composed by David after Nathan’s prophetic address; and, from the grandeur of the subject and the sublimity of the expressions, it is evident that it can only refer, as the ancient Jews fully acknowledged, to the royal dignity, priesthood, victories, and triumphs of the MESSIAH.”<sup>1</sup> Psalm 110 is quoted:
  - The Gospels by Jesus (Mt 22:42–46; Mk 12:35–37);
  - Acts by Peter: (Acts 2:34, 35);
  - In the letter to the Hebrews: (HB 1:13; 10:12, 13).

#### Daniel 7:13-14 and the son of man

- ❖ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.
  - Coming with the clouds.
  - Given authority; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.
  - His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

## Exposition

#### Verse 9

- ❖ **“After he said this”**
  - This refers to verse 6-8, where he answered the question of disciples about the establishment of the Kingdom. This Kingdom is not confined to a single state, Israel. This Kingdom will encompass the whole world. There is not a single capital, but this Kingdom is found everywhere, where people believe in the glorified Lord Jesus Christ and establish new communities of brothers and sisters.
- ❖ **“he was taken up before their very eyes,”**
  - Jesus, as they knew him, was taken up, by God. His glorification is now complete.
  - They became eye-witnesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Blayney, B., Scott, T., & Torrey, R. A. with Canne, J., Browne. (n.d., Vol 1, p 396).

❖ **“and a cloud hid him from their sight.”**

- He was not “standing” on a cloud as a carriage. But compare Psalm 104:3, although different images found on the Internet tend to believe it differently.
- Clouds can indicate the presence of God and at the glory of God.
  - “By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way” (Ex 13:21).
  - “The LORD said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud,’” (Ex 19:9).
  - “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Ex 40:34). And: “Solomon said, “The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud” ( 1 Kings 8:12).
  - “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’”(Mt 17:5).

❖ The apostle Peter commented:

“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.

- For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’  
‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: **God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ**” (Psalm 110).

Verse 10-11

❖ **“They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going,”**

- The disciples were probably impressed by what they saw and experienced.

❖ **“when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.”**

- These two men are angels, messengers sent by God, recognizable because they are dressed in white. Angels were present at every important moment:
  - The announcement of the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:11).
  - The announcement of the birth of Christ to Mary (Lk 1:26).
  - The announcement of the birth of Christ to the shepherds (Lk 2:9).
  - The announcement of the resurrection of Christ (Lk 24:4).

❖ **“‘Men of Galilee,’ they said,”**

- There is a connection with Acts 2:7, where the people recognized the disciples as Galileans.

❖ **“Why do you stand here looking into the sky?”**

- The messengers didn’t expect an answer, which they already knew, as is clear from their message.

- Compare the ESV and the NIV

| NIV (Lk 1:10-11)   | ESV (Lk 1:10-11)  |
|--|---|
| <p>They were looking intently up into <b>the sky</b> as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into <b>the sky</b>? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into <b>heaven</b>, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into <b>heaven</b>.”</p> | <p>And while they were gazing into <b>heaven</b> as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into <b>heaven</b>? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into <b>heaven</b>, will come in the same way as you saw him go into <b>heaven</b>.”</p> |

- *“On the sky (v. 10), at the sky (v. 11), and into heaven (v. 11) all translate the same expression, literally “into the heaven.” But the Greek word “heaven” may be used either as the abode of God, that is, heaven, or merely as the sky. Jesus is taken into heaven, whereas the disciples gaze up at the sky.”<sup>2</sup>*

❖ **“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven,”**

- With the same body, the crucified, resurrected and glorified body.
- The stress is laid upon **“This.”** Peter does the same in his sermon: “God has raised **this Jesus** to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God” (Acts 2:32-33). And: “God has made **this Jesus**, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).
  - “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14).

❖ **“Will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”**

- “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Lk 21:7; Rev 1:7).
- The messengers (angels) direct the thoughts of the disciples from present to the future. That includes the urgency to preach the gospel, because when Jesus will come back, he returns as the ultimate judge.
- The disciples have to wait for ten more days and then they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 20-21).

## Application

- ❖ The worship of Jesus exalted Christ:
  - “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philip 2:9-10; Mt 28:18).
  - “Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 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. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church” (Eph 1:20-22).
  - He is Lord of:
    - “and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” (Rev 1:5).
    - the church of the commission Jesus gave his disciples to be his witnesses, till the day he returns.
- ❖ The importance of the exalted Christ:
  - “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-7).
- ❖ The promise of the exalted Christ:
  - “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:20).
- ❖ The revelation of the exalted Christ:
  - “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55-56).
- ❖ The activity of the exalted Christ:
  - “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).
  - “But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out” (Acts 5:19).
- ❖ The witness of the exalted Christ:

- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).
  - “It was the earth not the sky which was to be their preoccupation. Their calling was to be witnesses not stargazers. The vision they were to cultivate was not upwards in nostalgia to the heaven which had received Jesus, but outwards in compassion to a lost world which needed him. It is the same for us. Curiosity about heaven and its occupants, speculation about prophecy and its fulfilment, an obsession with ‘times and seasons’—these are aberrations which distract us from our God-given mission. Christ will come personally, visibly, gloriously. Of that we have been assured. Other details can wait. Meanwhile, **we have work to do in the power of the Spirit**”<sup>3</sup>

## Confessions

### ❖ Heidelberg Catechism (Lord’s Day 18)

Question (46): What do you confess when you say, he ascended into heaven?

Answer: That Christ, before the eyes of his disciples, was taken up from the earth into heaven, (Mk 16:19; Lk 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9-11) and that he is there for our benefit (Rm 8:34; Heb 4:14; 7:23-25; 9:24) until he comes again to judge the living and the dead. (Mt 24:30; Acts 1:11).

Question (47): Is Christ, then, not with us until the end of the world, as he has promised us? (Mt 28:20)

Answer: Christ is true man and true God.

With respect to his human nature he is no longer on earth, (Mt 26:11; Jn 16:28; 17:11; Acts 3:19-21; Heb 8:4)

but with respect to his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit he is never absent from us (Mt 28:18-20; Jn 14:16-19; 16:13).

Question (48): But are the two natures in Christ not separated from each other if his human nature is not present wherever his divinity is?

Answer: Not at all, for his divinity has no limits and is present everywhere (Jer 23:23, 24; Acts 7:48, 49). So it must follow that his divinity is indeed beyond the human nature which he has taken on and nevertheless is within this human nature and remains personally united with it (Jn 1:14; 3:13; Col 2:9).

Question (49): How does Christ's ascension into heaven benefit us?

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<sup>3</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (1994, p.51).

Answer: First, he is our Advocate in heaven before his Father (Rm 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1).  
Second, we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, our Head, will also take us, his members, up to himself (Jn 14:2; 17:24; Eph 2:4-6).  
Third, he sends us his Spirit as a counter-pledge, (Jn 14:16; Acts 2:33; 2 Cor 1:21, 22; 5:5) by whose power we seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, and not the things that are on earth (Col 3:1-4).<sup>4</sup>

## Quotes

- ❖ “Augustine: How did they see him go? In the flesh which they touched, which they felt, the scars of which they even probed by touching; in that body in which he went in and out with them for forty days, manifesting himself to them in truth, not in any falsity; not as an apparition, not as a shadow, not as a spirit, but as he himself said, not deceiving, “Handle and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see me to have.” Now, indeed, that body is worthy of a heavenly dwelling place, not subject to death, not changeable through ages. For as he had grown to that age from infancy, so he does not decline to old age from the age which was young adulthood. He remains as he ascended. He is going to come to those to whom, before he comes, he wanted his word to be preached.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lord's Day 18. (n.d.). Retrieved May 9, 2017, from <http://www.heidelberg-catechism.com/en/lords-days/18.html>

<sup>5</sup> Martin, F., & Smith, E. (Red.). (2006, p. 11-12).