

Questions for reflection, application, and discussion

1. The Bible teaches the importance of Jesus' birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, and the Bible's emphasis on these four events is affirmed in the Apostle's Creed. While most contemporary Christians understand the importance of the first three of these events, few of us give much thought to the significance of Jesus' ascension.
 - a. Why do you think most Christians give so much attention to Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, and so little attention to Jesus' ascension?
 - b. Pastor Mike opened his message by asking why Jesus' ascension into heaven is important; practically what does it mean to the way we understand and live our lives as followers of Christ. What is your answer to that question? How did your answer change as you've thought about the question through the message?

2. The Bible not only teaches that Jesus into heaven, but also repeated emphasizes that he is sitting at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-34 and 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; 1st Peter 3:22). Why is this important? What is the significance of the fact that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God?

3. After Jesus' resurrection and right before his ascension, in Acts 1:6 Jesus' followers asked him, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel.*" They were looking for Jesus to establish a spiritual and political kingdom centered in the city of Jerusalem.
 - a. In Jesus' answer, how does he confront and redefine the idea of the kingdom which he came to establish?
 - b. In verse 6 they asked him, "*will you at this time...*", and Jesus responded in verse 8, "*you will receive power...*" and "*you will be my witnesses.*" In his message Pastor Mike argued that Jesus answers by saying he will establish his kingdom through us – his followers. What is your response to that idea? What does it mean God is calling you to?
 - c. Acts 1:6-9 tells us that Jesus ascended into heaven while he was answering their question, suggesting that his ascension was part of his answer. What does Jesus' ascension teach us about the nature of his kingdom?

4. Most of us think that the ultimate blessing would be to actually have been with Jesus during his earthly life – to see his miracles and sit under his teaching. However, in John 16:7 Jesus tells us, "*it is to your advantage that I go away.*" In other words, we have more spiritual advantages after the ascension than we would if Jesus were still here. What are the greater advantages of Jesus' 'continuing' ministry after the ascension as opposed to his earthly ministry? Can you think of some practical daily benefits that are available to you because of the ascension?

5. Acts 1 tells us that after Jesus ascended into heaven, two angels stood beside his followers and asked them, "*why do you stand looking into heaven.*" In his message Pastor Mike said that this was a gentle rebuke.
 - a. How was this a rebuke? How were the angels challenging them about what they were thinking and what they were doing?
 - b. How can we be guilty of "standing and looking into heaven?" What should our response to the truth of the ascension be?