

Luke 24:49-53

One helpful way of seeing how the beginning and the ending of Luke's gospel fit together is by comparing the coming of Christ with the "going" of Christ. Hence, Luke begins his gospel with the advent of the Son of God, and he ends with Jesus Christ, rising from the dead and returning to heaven.

Summary

In Luke 24:49-53, Luke ends his gospel with the story of the Ascension: the going of Jesus and His return to heaven.

1. Bodily Ascension vv. 50-51

Luke's gospel ends with the ascension of the King; Christ's visible departure from earth and triumphant return to heaven (**Luke 24:50-51**).

What does it mean that Jesus ascended into heaven? When Jesus was "carried up into heaven" (**Luke 24:51**), he was removed from the presence of his disciples.

In leaving the world, he was going to the Father (**John 16:10, 28; 20:17**), and took his exalted place at the Father's right hand (**Acts 2:33; 7:56; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 10:12**).

Thus for Jesus to sit down at the right hand of the Father was to exercise equal and absolute rule over the entire universe (**1 Peter 3:22**).

Jesus exercises this supreme authority as the God-man. We believe in the bodily ascension of the crucified, risen, and glorified Christ. This means that humanity itself has now been elevated to the most exalted place of highest possible authority.

One day Christian, we will see this for ourselves. For now, we see it by faith.

2. Parting Gift vs. 49

The gift Jesus promised to give is the best of all gifts, the Holy Spirit. (**Luke 24:49**).

God had long promised to send his people the Holy Spirit (**Isa. 32:15, 44:3; Ezek. 36:27; Joel 2:28-29**). Jesus promised the same thing when he said that the Father would send the Spirit in the name of the Son (**John 14:16-17, 26**).

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the promise of God—a gift that would come only when Jesus returned to the Father (**John 16:7**).

The gift of the Spirit is absolutely essential and totally necessary for any effective service to God. Jesus has sent us the Spirit He promised to send (**1 Thess 1:5**).

Today, through the Holy Spirit even our own feeble efforts to witness to the gospel can be the means of bringing people salvation.

We should never be discouraged, but believe that whatever we do for Jesus may yet succeed by the Holy Spirit, who is the power of God.

Thank God for this best of all gifts—the one gift that brings us all the blessings of God. Thank God for the gift of his Spirit!

3. Farewell Benediction vs. 50

Jesus also gave his disciples a farewell benediction (**Luke 24:50**). The pronouncing of a benediction is an ancient and honorable tradition (**Lev. 9:22-23**).

When Jesus blessed his apostles, he was serving as the final priest for the people of God. As a priest he had offered himself as the sacrifice for their sins on the cross.

Now as their priest he also pronounced their benediction.

The priestly blessing of Jesus Christ gives the assurance that our sins are forgiven.

The same Son who sent us the Spirit of the Father is blessing us today.

We receive his benediction at the end of our worship.

Whenever a minister pronounces the benediction, God's blessing is repeated.

4. Important Implications vv. 52-53

The gift and the blessing both signify the ongoing presence of Christ with his church.

This is only the beginning of all that could be said about the implications of the ascension, however.

The reality of his ascension is full of holy comfort and joyful strength for daily Christian living.

The ascension of Jesus Christ means the forgiveness of our sins (**Heb. 9:24**).

At the same time, the ascension means the answer to our prayers (**Heb. 7:25**).

The ascension of Jesus Christ also guarantees the effectiveness of our evangelism and the ultimate triumph of the gospel around the world.

The ascension means that Jesus is closer to us than ever (**John 16:7, 14:12**).

Then the ascension is the promise of our own exaltation to the presence of God.

His ascension is our ascension, just as his resurrection is our resurrection.

Whenever the truth of our own ascension into heaven has captured people's minds and hearts, they have always responded with the highest praise.

Anyone who knows the same Jesus the apostles knew will have the same joy, the same longing, and the same gratitude.

Do you know this Jesus-the one Luke wrote about in his Gospel?

Anyone who does not know him needs to know him for sure.

Anyone who does know Jesus ought to worship him.

Worship Jesus most of all for his saving work: his courageous sufferings, his atoning death, his triumphant resurrection, and last of all, his glorious ascension. After we have seen Jesus rising to heaven and returning to the Father, there is nothing more for us to say, except "Glory to God in the highest, and praise to Jesus the exalted Son!"