



Belong

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can belong.

- The resurrection is the ultimate show of God's power. What is one thing you need God's power to do in your life right now?
- We spend a lot of time talking about Christ's resurrection but very little talking about the ascension. Why is that?

Believe

Luke 24

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

On the Road to Emmaus

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who

does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther,²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together,³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!"³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.³⁸ And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."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 for the 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."

The Ascension

⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as Bethany, 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,⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 24:1–53.

If the story of Jesus Christ stopped at the cross, it would be a really bad story. Thankfully, that was not the final act. That wasn't even the half-way point. The cross was just act one. At the cross, Jesus was just getting started.

Act Two: "On the third day he rose again!"

They put Jesus in a grave on Friday night. Saturday came and went, the Jewish Sabbath. The grief must have been intense for the disciples on that day. Sunday morning rolled around and the women were able to go and anoint Christ's body in the

proper way. Imagine their surprise when they rolled up to the grave and found it empty. There were no Roman soldiers guarding the place. Instead, they found two angels at the entrance where the soldiers should've been. They ask a question that changes the course of human history, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

Boom. Jesus is alive. The cross in combination with the resurrection comes together to form a world altering course of events. Over the course of the next 40 days Jesus shows up to countless disciples.

Paul would say it this way:

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 15:3–8.

The point could not be any more clear: Jesus Christ is alive. But this wasn't the end!

Act Three: "He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father."

After 40 days of proving his resurrection it was time for Jesus to take his rightful place as King of the Universe. So, Luke tells us that Jesus ascended into heaven. Romans 8:34 tells us he now sits at the right hand of the Father. Ephesians tells us that the Father has put all things under his feet. Thus, we begin to recognize: that Jesus is sitting in the place of a King, on the throne. We do ourselves a disservice by not looking at the present reality of Christ's position and authority. Christ is currently reigning and ruling over the entire universe.

This is a reality that should comfort and guide our lives every second of every day. We realize that we never have to worry about the course of the world, Jesus is in charge. We realize that we don't get to call the shots in our lives, Jesus is in charge. The fact that Jesus is on a throne right now changes everything.

The point could not be any more clear: Jesus Christ is alive and Jesus Christ is in charge. But that's not all.

The Final Act: "He will come again to judge the living and the dead."

Jesus is currently sitting on a throne, but he won't stay there forever. He is coming back again. When he comes again he will come to judgment to make all things right.

Thus John tells us in Revelation 19

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

We cannot fall asleep on the promise of Christ's return and judgment. The promise of Christ's return motivates us to seek his grace now. The promise of Christ's return motivates us to take his grace to the lost world around us now.

The point could not be any more clear: Jesus is coming again.

We must not think we have all the time in the world because the rider on the white horse will one day leave his throne and ready his stallion.

Discuss:

What aspects of Jesus do you tend to ignore?

Why is it important to have a full picture of who Jesus is by seeing that the cross was just the beginning?

How do we balance the judgment of Jesus and the grace of Jesus when we think about his return?

BECOME

Oftentimes we make a mistake when it comes to how to grow in the Christian life. We errantly assume that to grow we must try harder to be better. However, the truth is much more simple.

Christians grow by seeing Jesus in all of his glory and allowing who Jesus is to change who we are. Thus, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

When we see Jesus our hearts are changed to become like Jesus.

The most important thing in the Christian life is putting ourselves in a spot to see Jesus. When we see him, all of him, we are changed one degree at a time into who he has called us to be.

Discuss:

How do we put ourselves into a situation to see Jesus as often as possible?

How does seeing Jesus make us more like him?