



# The Caller

A Weekly Newsletter of the Elizabethtown church of Christ  
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## Confidence Comer John F. Board

In this week's *Confidence Corner*, we want to examine some thoughts regarding the Ascension of Christ. Since this Sunday I intend on preaching the morning sermon on the Ascension, I hope to provide some preliminary thoughts both in this article as well as the inside article. I hope our study this week and next Sunday will be beneficial.

As many of you know Luke ends his account of the Gospel with a brief passage regarding the Ascension of Christ. This mention of the Ascension is immediately preceded by a three-panel painting of the Resurrection. It begins with the women coming to the empty tomb. The next "picture" shows Christ walking with two men instructing them about Himself. Next is the "picture" of Jesus' sudden appearance among His disciples. Then Luke 24 ends with Jesus rising in the clouds to heaven.

Though the events all occur in the same chapter, Luke tells us in his companion volume Acts that the Ascension took place 40 days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3). The Lord had appeared to Mary Magdalene, Peter, two on the road to Emmaus, the Apostles without Thomas, the Apostles with Thomas, over 500 brethren at once, James and Paul. At the end of those 40 days and numerous appearances, the Lord called the Eleven together on the Mount of Olives.

Just prior to His rising to be seated at the right hand of God, Jesus gave the Eleven (and thus the Church through implication) the mission they were to accomplish until Jesus would come again at the end of time. In Acts 1:8, the followers of Christ were told to take the Gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Jesus may have left earth but have no doubt He is still watching from the right hand of God! Are we fulfilling His mission?

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This week as we focus on the thoughts and activities that come with Easter where do we first allow our focus to go? As a child we might look forward to the Easter baskets or the Easter egg hunt. We sometimes focus on the Easter bunny. As we get older and our mind shifts away from the childish aspect of the holiday, our focus might not always go in the right direction. As more and more Easter holiday weekends pass by we may become more focused on the pastel colors that are always associated with the holiday. We try to dress a certain way as to match the color palette or the mood for this time of year. Our mind may turn more to the joy of being with family and the thought of getting to spend time with them.

Even then our focus isn't in the direction that it should be. Where our focus should be is on Jesus. This time of year rather than focusing on His birth we celebrate His death and His conquering of death. Where is your focus this week? Where is your focus the rest of the year? We often times see this time of year and the days leading up to Christmas as a time to focus on Jesus. Why do we choose a holiday to celebrate Him, whether it is His birth, life, death, or resurrection? Why not make the decision to focus on Him everyday? Why do we have to have a "reason for the season" in order to reflect on our Lord and Savior? The Gospel of Christ is meant to consume us, dwell in us, and cause us to daily live in accordance with it. What about you? What will you do with Jesus?

## Mitchell's Weekly Manna Mitchell Lockhart

### Sunday's Sermons:

**A.M. — The Ascended King  
Luke 24:50-53**

**P.M. — Joel  
Joel 2:28-32**

# ASCENSION

Luke 24:50, 51 together with Acts 1:9 tell us what the Eleven saw at the Ascension: “When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven” (Luke 24:50, 51). “After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight” (Acts 1:9). Peter Toon notes that “The use of the imperfect tense in both Luke and Acts for “was taken up” (Luke 24:51) and “he was taken up” (Acts 1:9) seems to indicate that he ascended slowly while raining down blessings.”

The cloud that “hid” (Acts 1:9; literally, “received”) Him was the Shekinah. It served as a visible representation of the pleasure and presence of God. This was what Moses had encountered when he encountered the presence of God on Sinai. It was similar to the same cloud that traveled before Israel by day and appeared as a pillar of fire at night. It was similar to the cloud that lay over the tabernacle and filled the temple. It was similar to the cloud that Ezekiel saw depart over the east gate. It was much like the shining presence that surrounded Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when His face shone forth like the sun. The disciples remained transfixed as the Shekinah moved farther away.

In his account of the Gospel Luke was leading up to Jesus’ departure. In Luke 9 we read that during the Transfiguration Jesus had talked to Moses and Elijah about His “departure [Greek, exodon], which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). The text later reveals, “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem” (v. 51). Finally, before the Sanhedrin on the night of his crucifixion, Jesus referred to the exaltation that would follow His Ascension: “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God” (22:69).

The significance of the Ascension can be found in the Old Testament where the prophecies of Jesus’ ascension appear (cf. Psalm 2:7–9; 8:6; 68:18; 110:1, 5; Daniel 7:13, 14). For example, Psalm 68:18 reads: “When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men.” In Ephesians 4:8 Paul quotes this as referring to Christ’s ascension: Note that Paul, knowing this Psalm was about Jesus, freely changed the pronouns “you” to “he” to make it clear that it prophetically referred to Christ.

Psalm 68, in its historical context, celebrated the ascent of a Davidic king to Jerusalem after a victory. It likely refers to King David’s festive procession with the ark to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 6:12) or commemorates David’s earlier capture of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6, 7). As such, it is a Psalm of enormous celebration. The Psalm sees the victorious ascent to Jerusalem as the culmination of the journey begun when Israel left Egypt. But since Jesus is both the son of David and the Lord of David, the Psalm also refers to a prophecy of a far greater “Ascension.” Instead of merely being the record of an Old Testament ascension up Mount Zion to what would be the new temple of Jerusalem, Psalm 68 celebrates a messianic ascension from this world into God’s heaven, where the great King distributes the spoils of victory.

Wherever this awesome sphere may be, we do know that Jesus was exalted at His Ascension to the right hand of the Father: “After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19). It is the place of ultimate power. Peter has described the resurrected, ascended Christ as the One “who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him” (1 Peter 3:22). “Right hand” is a metaphor for all power. To see Jesus ascended in this way is to understand that He has been exalted to the highest position possible.

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