

Bible Reading Devotional

WEEK OF APRIL 5, 2020

WEEKLY READING: MARK 16 – ACTS 4
PASSAGES MENTIONED IN THIS DEVOTION:
PSALM 110; MARK 16; ACTS 2; HEBREWS 7:25

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 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.'" (Acts 2:32-35)

In this week's reading, we learn about Jesus ascending into heaven. This often-overlooked event is foundational to the Christian faith. In fact, the New Testament quotes Psalm 110 more than any other Old Testament passage, all to highlight Jesus as ascended and seated at the right hand of the Father. Let's explore why this was so important to the early church.

The early church knew Jesus to be the promised King who would rule and reign. They saw that the Old Testament promises were fulfilled in Him. Peter and the disciples wanted desperately for others to see this truth and embrace it. By revealing that Jesus was the anticipated King, they hoped people would see that all power and authority belonged to Him. "Jesus is Lord" was the earliest Christian motto. It pointed to the truth that He is in control even when things seem out of control. Jesus seated on the throne is a call to kneel before Him. If He is on the throne, other people are not. Other things are not. Jesus being ascended to the Father's right-hand calls for our response too. Around three thousand acknowledged Jesus as Lord the day Peter shared the message we see in Acts 2. In this season of panic and uncertainty, what is our response? Can we see that He is still seated on the throne?

As we come to trust in Christ, we are lifted up. Andrew Murray (a famous 19th-century pastor) says, "*The knowledge of Jesus as having entered heaven for us, and taken us into union with Himself into a heavenly life is what will deliver the Christian from all that is low and feeble, and lift [us] into a life of joy and strength.*" In Christ, we can have joy and strength even amid trials. No matter what comes, Christ is on the throne, and we are in Him.

Christ is also with us and for us. At the end of Mark 16, it says, "*After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven, and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*" Right next to a sentence about Jesus ascending to heaven, we see that the Lord worked with the disciples. True, Jesus came in the flesh, endured every temptation we face, and worked right alongside His disciples during His earthly life. But now that He has ascended, we might imagine Him working from a distance. Yet this is not the way things are. He is with us, *and* He is seated with the Father interceding on our behalf (see Hebrews 7:25). He empathizes closely with us in our trials, *and* He is working on our behalf from the throne.

The example of Jesus is a model for us to follow. We have been raised to new life in Christ. Now we have the opportunity to walk with others through trials (especially in this season). We can also pray for others and their needs. Part of our witness in this time is how well we reflect the truth we believe—that Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the Father and is seated on the throne. – *Nate Metler*