

# The Ascension

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Preacher: Paul Martin

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, friends, it is great to be with you again. I bring you greetings from Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto. The saints there who remember you send their greetings, and I will be sure to send yours back.

We thank God for what he is doing, not only in America, but also in Canada, as the gospel continues to go forward, and God saves his people and builds his church until the glorious return of our Savior, when we shall see him face to face.

We just sang something that I, if you have your hymnal, maybe turn to 550 again, and this is my goal for this morning, is that you, every single one of you, would leave here today believing verse 3. So this is what verse 3 said. Satan, I defy thee. Death, I now decry thee. Fear, I bid thee cease. World, thou shalt not harm me, nor thy threats alarm me, while I sing of peace. God's great power guards every hour.

[ 1 : 14 ] Earth, in all its depths, adore him. Silent bow before him. Well, may God make it so that we all believe it and live like that is true.

If you have your Bible, please open to Acts chapter 1. We'll be there in just a moment. Acts chapter 1. I'd like to pray again just before we look to his word.

Let's pray. And so, our Father, we thank you for Jesus Christ, the world's great Savior, and we do ask that he would be lifted up in our minds and our eyes, that we would see, again, who Christ is. Every one of us, perhaps for the first time today, would see who Christ is and come to terms with the shortness of life and the certainty of seeing Jesus face to face one day.

And I pray, Lord, that we would all be ready and not just ready, but eager for that day. We ask in his name. Amen.

[ 2 : 25 ] Amen. Jesus Christ is a fascinating person. He is completely man. He is completely God. He lived his life without ever sinning once in thought or in deed.

He died in the place of sinners. He was raised back to life again on the third day. And he will most certainly return to this creation, ushering in a day of judgment where you and I will give an account of our lives to God himself.

And nestled in between that chronology of his life is something called the ascension. After his resurrection on the third day, Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father.

Three days after his death by crucifixion, he was raised from the dead. That was a miracle. That was an amazing thing. God raised his son from the dead.

And this was God's way of telling you and telling me, telling the whole world, what my son did upon the cross was sufficient. It worked.

[ 3 : 41 ] The resurrection was God's seal of approval on the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. And we celebrate that day every year in our churches with Easter.

And I don't know about you, but we have a little bulletin thing from which we typically sing on Sundays and we'll often put on the front of that resurrection day because that's what Easter is. It's resurrection day. And we say to one another, he is alive. We don't say, he was alive. We say, he is alive.

It is a bold proclamation of not just what was true back then, but what is true right now. He is alive. How do we know that? Well, for 40 days after his resurrection, Jesus Christ was busy having little conferences and meetings with people.

And so there were, there was the time he met with his disciples on a beach. He was walking along the road with two on their way to Emmaus. He visited his brother James.

[ 4 : 48 ] There were, there was one occasion in which there were 500 of the disciples gathered together and Jesus appeared to them and spoke with them. Imagine what that was like.

This man, whom you knew prior to his crucifixion, witnessed his crucifixion, and now you're eating lunch on a beach with him some 15, 20 days later.

It's Jesus, the real Jesus, and yet he's very different. In all these meetings and these instructions sort of came to an end with Jesus telling his 12, his 11 disciples, rather, that they were to meet him just outside of Jerusalem.

So if you're there in Acts chapter 1, we'll get there in a moment, but Luke wrote the book of Luke, but he also wrote Acts, kind of a volume 1 and a volume 2. And at the end of volume 1, the gospel of Luke, this is what he wrote.

He, this is Jesus, led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

[ 5 : 55 ] And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God. And I've always wondered if Theophilus, the dude who received the gospel of Luke, kind of wrote back after he got that and said, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a second, like that's like, give me a little bit more on that ascension thing because when Luke starts volume 2, the book of Acts, this is what he writes.

He kind of expands that event. So now we're in Acts chapter 1 and verse 6. So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father is fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes.

These were, it's a marker and identifier that these are angelic beings. These two men stood by them in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

[ 7 : 15 ] This Jesus, this one, who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. So this event is what we call the ascension.

Jesus ascends into heaven. And it leads, leaves us rather with a lot of questions. At least it leaves me with a lot of questions, four of which I'd like to try and answer for you this morning.

The first one is the most obvious one. Where did he go? Where did he go? Well, Christianity has consistently for 2,000 years taught that he went to a place, a real place in the space-time continuum known as heaven.

And of course, nobody should think that anybody thought that heaven was the sky, like there's a bunch of good dead people hiding in the clouds. Watch where you fly your plane, Chuck.

It's not that kind of idea at all. Even long ago in the Old Testament, the authors there understood there was an unseen reality that we call heaven, an unseen spiritual world that is as real as the physical world on which you are standing and walking and having your being.

[ 8 : 36 ] One of the great prophets of old, the prophet Elisha, was, talk about bad morning, he woke up one morning and there's an army outside and they're there to capture him.

The king of Syria had sent a group of soldiers to capture and presumably kill Elisha because Elisha keeps tipping off the king of Israel what the next move is of the king of Syria.

Right? And so the servant gets up. We read it, 2 Kings 6, 15, when the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city and the servant of Elisha said, Alas, my master, what shall we do?

It's a great question. And Elisha answers, do not be afraid for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.

And if I was Elisha's servant, I would have been looking around going, one, two, and looking out the window and that's a lot more people than two. But Elisha prayed, the next verse, verse 17, and said, oh Yahweh, please open his eyes, the servant's eyes that he may see.

[ 9 : 50 ] So Yahweh opened the eyes of the young man and he saw and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

The idea of an unseen reality is present all through your Bible. it's rooted in God's first disclosure of himself to Israel.

What does God do when he brings Israel out of Egypt? He takes them to Mount Sinai and as Moses reflects on that event where God gave them the law, as Moses reflects on that later in the book of

Deuteronomy, he says this, you came near Israel and stood at the foot of the mountain while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of the heavens, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then Yahweh spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of his words but saw no form. There was only a voice.

And he declared to you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules that you might do them in the land that you're going over to possess.

[ 11 : 09 ] Therefore, look at his logic here. You heard God but you never saw him. Therefore, watch yourselves very carefully since you saw no form on the day that Yahweh spoke to you out of the midst of the fire.

Beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves in the form of any figure but likeness of male, female, or anything that has been made. The root of the no idolatry command is that you've never seen God.

You don't even know what to copy. You're making things up. That means that there is most certainly an unseen reality. To deny the existence of that unseen world is to deny the existence of God.

That's another sermon. But let me ask you, do you believe in the unseen? Do you believe in the invisible? Sometimes, not all the time, sometimes people suggest that God and heaven and hell and these things are all just a social construct by the man, the imaginations of the uneducated masses, and yet the very same people that will often say that will also believe in aliens.

Or in Oprah's divine principle of the other, or that law of attraction, if you do good things, good things will happen to you. What's going on there?

[ 12 : 35 ] I think what's happening there is that we sort of like to believe in an unseen energy, an unseen force that we can manipulate and control to our own advantage, but we don't want to hear anything about an unseen reality over which we have no power and no control.

There is an unseen reality over which you have no power and no control. Just ask Mary, who one day was going about her business as one of the young virgins of Israel, only to be met by an angel who said, you're going to be pregnant with the Son of God.

An unseen reality which suddenly invaded her life with God's plan. The uncontrollable, unseen spiritual realm truly exists, just because you cannot see something does not mean it does not exist. Elijah's servant was given eyes to see. There's a man in the New Testament who was given eyes to see. His name is Stephen. We just celebrated St. Stephen's Day. We call it Boxing Day in Canada. If you want to know why, ask me later. It's weird. But here he is, Stephen, and if you look at Acts chapter 7, Stephen, who's a follower of Jesus, and right as the church began, and he's quite a good preacher as well as being quite a great deacon.

[ 13 : 54 ] And so he's one of the officers in the church there in Jerusalem who's taking care, helping take care of the needs of people in the church. But he's also a great preacher and he's preaching the gospel and the religious elite of the day don't like what they are hearing.

But this is what he preaches about Christ and their need to turn to Christ. And then in verse 54 it says, when they heard these things they were enraged. They ground their teeth at him, which kids is a weird way of saying they got really, really angry, but you may have experienced this when you really made your mom angry and her mouth got really closed.

That's kind of grinding the teeth like when these little muscles here go back and forth. And so they're really, really angry. When they heard these things they were enraged, they ground their teeth at him, but he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. They cried out with a loud voice, plugged their ears, rushed together at him, they cast him out of the city and stoned him.

They didn't want to hear it. But this man, Stephen, was given a glimpse. People didn't like it. But Stephen was given a glimpse of the unseen reality.

[ 15 : 20 ] Perhaps you've been out on a cloudy day or a foggy morning and at just the right time the sun comes through the clouds or the fog lifts and now you see what was really there.

Well, it's like that for Stephen. And that's the first part of our answer here. Where did Jesus go when he ascended? He ascended to heaven, a real place, not an ethereal place, not a place of imagination, not a place that we just sort of make up in our own minds, but this is a real place in the unseen reality.

But we need to see that he went to a particular place in the place and that's my second question. Where in heaven did Jesus go? Do you know the most frequently quoted psalm in the New Testament?

If I'm right, I think it's Psalm 110. So in the Old Testament, the book of Psalms is poetry, right? And much of that poetry is pointing forward to Jesus who would come.

And so the disciples, when they're reading their Old Testament, they're finding Jesus all over the place and one of the Psalms that is quoted most often is Psalm 110. That psalm says something stunning.

[16:40] It begins with these words, a psalm of David, the little inscription, that's important. A psalm of David, who's David? David's the king of Israel. This is what the psalmist says.

The Lord says to my Lord. And we want to pause there for a moment, maybe something a little bit lost to us in our English translation. Yahweh, the Lord, says to my Adonai, my Lord.

So the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Now why is that stunning?

Well, it's stunning for a couple of reasons. One is, is that a sitting king talks about having a Lord. That is unusual. He's the Lord, typically, but he's talking about my Lord.

And he says that this Lord, David's Lord, is having a conversation with the Lord, Yahweh, Jehovah. And David overhears the conversation.

[17:52] It's like he's there in the throne room and he's listening in and he hears Yahweh say to David's Lord, Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

Sit at my right hand. Sit at the place of honor. Sit at the place of equality, this with me. And that's precisely where in heaven Jesus went on his ascension.

When he left earth, he ascended to the right hand of the Father. Hebrews 1, verse 3, makes it clear. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Now you know, if you've read your Bible, that there are also angels in heaven.

In fact, if you read in Isaiah chapter 6, you're given a vision of that heavenly throne room, and there are angels described there, these remarkable, really quite frightening creatures made by God.

[19:01] They're six winged seraphim. And with two of their wings, they hover on either side of the throne. With two of their wings, they cover their feet, because they're in the presence of God.

With two of their wings, they cover their faces. As they're hovering and covering, they cry out to one another, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. And so picture those seraphim. They sing, they hover, they cover, but I'll tell you what they don't do.

They don't sit down. They don't just cozy up to God on the throne. These are the highest of the created angelic order, and they cover their faces and they cover their feet because they are in the presence of holy God.

And yet once Jesus Christ has completed his mission and he's established the church, he ascends to heaven in that cloud which is a sign of God's presence and of his glory and he walks right into the throne room and he sits down and he puts his feet up.

[20:15] He's sitting on the throne of his father. This is where he belongs. His work is done. He has completed what he came to do. He's back where he belongs.

He's sitting on the throne. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, he said, God raised Jesus from the dead, seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and power and authority and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the age to come and he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

That is a comprehensive statement. Jesus Christ is sitting where God belongs. We know that Jesus is both God and man, praise the Lord.

And that leads us to a third question. Are we sure? are we really sure that that's where Jesus is? And here I'd like you to turn to Acts chapter 2.

I live in a large city so I meet lots of different people from all over the world. I've said it here many times, most culturally diverse city in the world. It's a really fun place to live but it means you have a lot of different spiritual conversations.

[ 21 : 39 ] People coming from every possible angle. But one of the consistent things that a lot of westerners try to throw into the mix is Da Vinci Code kind of stuff.

The made up Dan Brown world of non-factual nonsense. They try to get you with conspiracy of the church and Illuminati and all that kind of stuff. Actually there's really no evidence for that.

If you want to talk about that again later be glad to. But what you see from the very beginning of the church here in Acts chapter 2 in the very first Christian sermon right? So this is after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Here is Peter preaching. And what's one of the facts he includes in that first sermon? We'll look at it. I'll just drop right into the middle of his sermon in verse 32. This Jesus who is this Jesus?

He's the one you just put to death on that cross just a few days ago. This Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses being therefore exalted at the right hand of God.

[ 22 : 44 ] There it is. So he's not just resurrected but he's been exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing for David did not ascend into the heavens but David himself says the Lord said to my Lord.

What's that? Psalm 110 again. The Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified him has made him both Lord and Christ.

This is the Adonai. This is the Lord. This is the one who is sitting at the right hand of God. Peter is making clear what David was prophesying in Psalm 110.

David never thought that he, David, would be sitting on that throne. David understood that he had an Adonai. He had my Lord, his Lord, and that that's the one who would sit on that throne.

He knew that another was coming, one of David's descendants, Jesus Christ, who would bodily ascend into heaven and sit on that throne. And he says that's the same Jesus who you people crucified.

[ 24 : 10 ] That one has ascended and he sits down at God's right hand. He sits on the throne where those seraphim are who dare not uncover their faces.

Now, if you grew up in America, you don't have a queen, but I do because I grew up in Canada. In Canada, we are part of the Commonwealth, and being part of the Commonwealth means that we have an allegiance to the queen.

In fact, Canada, before it was Canada, was called British North America. We have long roots to the queen. And so when I was a boy in school, we sang O Canada, and we also sang God Save the Queen, of which I will not sing for you now.

You know enough about the monarchy, however, to know that if you were taking a tour of Windsor Castle, and maybe kids, you're on a little tour, and you're seeing amazing things, and then you're staring at something that you find interesting, because we all know that tours are actually quite boring, and so you find something that interests you, and you're just locked onto this thing, and you turn around, the tour group's gone, and you're wondering what to do, so you start trying to find the group, and you just open this door, and there's this giant golden throne.

throne, and you think, there's nobody here, and so you go in, and you look around, and then you climb up on the throne, and you sit in the throne, and pretend you have little servants, but what do you do if the queen walks in?

[ 25 : 47 ] what do you do if anybody walks in? You get off that thing as fast as you can, you go back the way you came, right? Because you understand that you don't belong there. That is for the queen.

I doubt that if the queen had been sitting on her throne, and all her royal regalia, that she would just walk in, and start to say, nudge it over a little bit, queenie. If you try to do that, you can trust the fact that someone would interfere with you, but Jesus Christ, the son of God, when he walks into the throne room, the seraphim part the ways, and he sits down upon the throne that belongs to God. Not some little bench beside the big throne. He sits beside his father on the right hand of God. Blessed thought. That takes me to my fourth and last question, which is this.

Why does all of that matter? Why does it matter to you? Why does it matter to me? Why does it matter to me? Where Jesus went, and where Jesus is, is a statement about his value and his power.

He went and sat down on the throne of God. Again, it's not that he had some little stool by the big throne, a place of honor to be sure.

[ 27 : 10 ] He went and sat on the throne. He shares the bench. He's equal to God in every way, and he is marked as being worthy to sit upon that throne.

Remember, the best angels who have no sin in them, but the best created beings of the angelic world, they don't sit on that throne, throne, but Jesus does.

Jesus Christ, the crucified one, the resurrected one, walks in and sits down on the throne. And the reception that he was given, plus the position that he occupies, were clear markers to you and me of his divinity, and of his power, and of his purity, and of his holiness.

He is unlike everything else and everyone else in that unseen reality of heaven. Now look at Revelation 5 that we read earlier in the service.

Revelation chapter 5. Revelation chapter 5 makes perfectly clear, crystal clear, in its symbolic language, that Jesus is worthy.

[ 28 : 30 ] So John is given this vision. Actually, Jesus is given the vision, which he then gives to John. Revelation chapter 5, verse 1, I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

All right. I don't know who that is. This is God. I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy? worthy, who's worthy to open the scroll and break its seal?

Now the scroll here seems to represent God's redemptive plan, the enactment of God's judgment and redemption. Verse 3, after a long silence, no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And I began to weep and weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Now I'm going to presume the timing of this event and assume that Moses was there in heaven, but he was not worthy.

[ 29 : 49 ] Noah was there, but he was not worthy. The seraphim were there, but they were not worthy. No creature could fulfill God's plan of salvation, not a single one of them.

None of them are worthy. It's not that they are sinful anymore, but they are not worthy to take that position and that place. And John is right to weep.

But the story doesn't end there. Look at verse 5. And one of the elders said to me, weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns, with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. This, beloved, is remarkable. This one marches up to that throne and he takes out of the right hand of God the scroll.

[ 31 : 01 ] And he's fine. He is accepted. He is worthy. He is the answer. And when he does this, all of heaven erupts in glorious praise.

Verse 8. When he had taken the scroll. The four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Then they sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals.

For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you've made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth.

And I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying to him who sits on the throne and to the land. Be blessing and honor and glory and

might forever and ever.

[ 32 : 17 ] And the four living creatures said amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. Whether he sat on the throne or stood by the throne, he was worthy.

He is equal to the father in deity and in all things distinct only in his role as son to his father. He, the worthy one, belonged there. In the words of Hebrews 10 verse 12, when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

And beloved, because of that, there are two massive implications. Let me give you one if you're a Christian and one if you're not. If you're a Christian, so this doesn't apply to you if you're not a Christian.

But if you are a Christian, let me tell you this. Do not be afraid. One of the very last things Jesus told his disciples before he ascended was found in Matthew 28.

We call it the Great Commission. Jesus came and said to them, all authority, yeah, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[ 33 : 41 ] Nobody does nothing outside of the control of Jesus Christ. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Do you get the sandwiching of that statement?

All authority is mine. I am with you always. Who's with you? The man on the throne is with you. All authority in heaven on earth.

Therefore, go and preach. Don't be afraid. No wonder one of the very first, possibly one of the very first hymns the Christian church had. We have recorded in Colossians 1 verses 15 to 20 or so, where Paul writes the words here.

He is speaking about Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, invisible spiritual realms.

[ 34 : 52 ] Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church.

He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. There's more? Yes, there's more. Than in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Because this head of the church is the head of the universe. I don't know if you've been following the events in China with Pastor Wang Yi, who was recently arrested.

He has boldly been meeting as a... They're called the underground church, but they meet very publicly and everybody knows who they are. They're not in hiding. But it means they're just not part of the three self movement church, which tells you what to preach, which is generally not Christianity.

And Pastor Wang Yi has been boldly preaching Jesus Christ in... The church is something like Rain Reformed Church. It makes more sense in Mandarin.

[ 36 : 07 ] He was very sure that he would eventually be arrested for preaching Jesus. This is a week ago. And so he had written a letter to be released if he had been taken and not returned within 48 hours.

We're still waiting to find out where he is. That letter was released by his church and it says this. Those who hold me will be detained by angels.

The person who interrogates me will eventually be interrogated by Christ. With this in mind, the Lord has made me sympathetic and sad for those who are interrogating and who are holding me. Ask the Lord to use me and give me patience and wisdom to bring the gospel to them. Jesus is Christ, the son of the living God. He died for sinners and rose for us yesterday, today, and forever. He is the master, my king, and king of the whole world. I am his servant and I am detained for this. I will gently resist all who resist God and I will gladly disobey any law that does not obey God.

[ 37 : 18 ] Such as gathering to worship on the Lord's day, which is what he was doing when he was arrested and taken away. That, my friends, is no fear.

And that's how true Christians have lived for 2,000 years. When their lives were hanging in the balance and they were being told by the powerful religious elite, the political correctness police of their day to deny Jesus or die, this is what the disciples said to those influencers.

We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Wow, those dudes were courageous. Really? They weren't so courageous when Jesus was being mocked and spat upon and indecently tried and crucified.

They all ran away. What was the change? Well, here's what changed. Christ ascended and sits at the right hand of God.

[ 38 : 49 ] These were not men of natural courage. These were men of supernatural courage. There is much more to his heavenly work right now than this.

But I say to you, Christian, as the new year begins, let this truth stoke the fires of courage in you. Your king reigns. He will never be deposed.

He will never die. He will never grow weak. He will never grow old. He will never become feeble nor frail. And he will never stop being interested in you.

He reigns. This Jesus reigns. Do you know the one thing that God said to Moses and Jacob and Joshua and Ruth and David and Solomon and Elijah and Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah and Zechariah and Mary and Joseph.

Do not be afraid. That's an imperative. That's a command to be obeyed. Do not be afraid.

[ 39 : 54 ] Do not fear. Why would we be afraid? Our Savior, who gave his life for us, rules over all.

And Jesus himself promised in the revelation, the one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

Who conquers? Those who are not cowardly, those who are not controlled by their fears, those who face their fears.

What's the worst thing people can do to us? You might lose your job? Yes. They might mock you? Yes. Might go to prison, Pastor Wang Yi? Yes. But I'll tell you, the very worst that any other human can do to a Christian is speed up their waking up and seeing Jesus Christ face to face on that throne.

[ 41 : 20 ] That's not such a bad thing. Christian, Jesus says to you, do not fear. I am with you. Now, let me speak to you who are not Christians yet because the message is very different.

Christians. In fact, it is the opposite. If you are not a Christian, be afraid. Be afraid. Peter said something similar to this in his second sermon, Acts chapter 3 and verse 19.

He's preaching again and he says, repent therefore and turn back that your sins may be blotted out. It's a way of talking about your sins being erased and forgotten.

So repent therefore, turn back that your sins may be blotted out that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets long ago.

While it is true Jesus ascends to the Father and he sits on the throne, he doesn't stay on the throne. He's going to get up from the throne and return.

[ 42 : 38 ] This is called, you could call it the day of descension but that's a made up word. It's the day of his return just as there is an ascension, there is a descension, there is a coming back of Jesus but it's similar only in the way that he shall appear and then all people shall see him and then the day of judgment comes.

You know, one of the things Christmas teaches us is that there's a real hell. Christmas is loudly proclaiming to you that our problem, our sin problem was so bad it required God to send his own son into the world to solve the problem and Satan was opposing it from the very start.

Do you have a nativity scene in your house? One of those little stable things with baby Jesus and Mary and Joseph of shepherds. If there's wise men in it, kids you can go home, you have my permission, take the wise men out, they weren't there and then if you have a giant, you know, red dragon-ish looking thing, put him in because in the words of Revelation 12 that's what was there. Great sign appeared in heaven a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of 12 stars. She was pregnant, was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth and another sign appeared in heaven and behold a great red dragon with seven heads

and ten horns and on his head seven diadems and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

That's a very vivid and gross kind of picture of Satan and his desire to see Christ destroyed at his birth. She gave birth to a male child one who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron but her child was caught up to God and to his throne.

[ 44 : 43 ] This was symbolic allegorical language that John is using here to describe the birth of Jesus and the ascension of Jesus and a picture is worth a thousand words.

In that same book of Revelation we're told where the dragon ends up Revelation 20 verse 10 and the dragon was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

And that place of torment is also there for all of those who do not repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

I remember a sermon Bob Heaney preached here I listened to it many times and he just made clear that there was a narrow path and a wide path there's an in and there's an out there are sheep and there are goats there is something in the human mind that always wants to find a loophole a middle ground so I don't really have to deal with God all that much right now I'll deal with it then but you need to know that there are no post-death negotiations with God your eternal destiny is determined in this life not the next what you do now counts for eternity and in that day of judgment you will go either with King Jesus or with

Satan I cannot think of a better way to end this year than by you turning with faith to Jesus Christ coming all the way to Jesus not part of the way to Jesus but all the way to Jesus what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul what is so wonderful about Jesus is that because he was both man and God he could be our substitute and in miracle of miracles in the span of those three hours of darkness as he hung on that Roman torture device across he took upon himself an eternity of torment that I deserved and that you deserve if you turn to him and believe on him that's why he came our sins were so bad that only

[ 47 : 34 ] God could save us from them you can't save yourself from your sins and Jesus came to save you from that torment by absorbing that torment for you and only he could do this and he did do this that's good news and he did it for people just like you just like me now you don't have a king and you don't have a queen but I imagine if you did and you were suddenly called to appear before your king your president some form of nobility and you don't even really know why I assume you would come before that person with a little bit of humility and a little bit of asking what would you like from me and if you come before Jesus with that kind of posture he will look to you and he will say this is all

I ask stop trying to fix yourself take my life give me yours and decide in your heart of hearts that the only way you are escaping hell is if you rely completely on me and then come come to me maybe you're waiting for some great event that's coming up in South Bend invitation only concert and you're just checking the mail every day checking your email looking at your text messages you've done something you want to know if you're going to get invited because the only way you're getting in is with an invitation and then the day comes you get an invitation well here is your invitation to something far greater than that an invitation to life with God forever an invitation to endless joy that begins in this life and only escalates in the life to come when you know

God you can look even death in the face and you can say things like pastor Wang you Jesus is the Christ son of the eternal living God he died for sinners and rose to live for us he is my king and the king of the whole earth yesterday today and forever I am his servant and I am imprisoned because of this I will resist in meekness those who resist God and I will joyfully violate all laws that violate God's laws for the hope of mankind and society lies only in the redemption of Christ in the supernatural gracious sovereignty of God want to live with no fear like that man and come to the king who's on the throne let's pray together so our father we pray that our own faith would be emboldened as we think about

Jesus and remember where our king is and remember what power our king has that we would count this life as nothing take every day as grand opportunity to live for you and your glory and to bring honor to your great name and I ask oh God that in your mercy you would draw to yourself all those who have not come all the way to Jesus pray oh God that they might know true saving faith be done with the things of the world look to you alone and find life grant us this mercy we pray in the name of Christ amen