

41-16-02-Two Departures

Ascension, evangelism, indwelling Christ, Heaven

Mark 16:19-20

Christ left to go into *heaven* so we could leave to go into *the world*.

INTRODUCTION:

–Jesus spent 40 days appearing and re-appearing to his disciples after the Resurrection. *But He had to depart!* If not, the sheep would continue to gather around the Shepherd. God’s will was for the flock of believers to depart, too, for the work of spreading the Gospel– **Text: Mark 16:19-20**, *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. **HOM.idea.***

So two departures are connected to the Ascension of Christ, but in actuality there were four....

I. There Were Two Departures into Heaven

A. First was the *Lord’s departure to Heaven* (This is amazing!):

1. *Human Flesh* has taken up residence in Heaven.
2. A *Human King* has begun a heavenly reign.
3. A *Human Heart* sits at the center of the celestial headquarters (Jesus “*sat at the right hand of God,*” but He stands up whenever His saints suffer, as Stephen saw Him as they were stoning him to death for preaching the Gospel– Acts 7:56, “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”)

B. But *Christ’s departure* initiated our own departure into Heaven:

1. I’m **not** talking about His ultimate will for us, although that’s part of the complete plan– John 14:2b-3, In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
2. I’m talking about something similar to Christ’s promise in John 12:26, Whoever serves me must follow me; and **where I am, my servant also will be**. My Father will honor the one who serves me. (A mystery: Christ is in Heaven, but says His servants will be where He is....)
3. *Where are we now, as believers?* In a *mystical way*, Paul says, we’re in Heaven– Eph 2:6. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. [Our confession in the

Creed, “I believe in. . .the communion of saints” is based on this fact.]

4. So, where does that put us for the rest of our lives in this world?
 - a. It allows us to look down on difficult situations in our lives, rather than letting life’s circumstances crush us beneath them)
 - b. Being “seated. . .in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,” we participate in the powerful reign of His Kingdom– Eph 1:20-22 (NRSV), God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church.

TRANS: But *living in two places at once* doesn’t give us split personalities. It allows the true integration of our spiritual selves with earthly lives. God’s ultimate goal in our resurrection is a true union of flesh and spirit, but in the meantime, we fellowship with Christ beyond temporary physical limits. We *sit in heavenly places* NOW! We’re to be *heavenly-minded* NOW. . .and we’re little *earthly good*, if we aren’t! So, there were two departures into heaven in the Ascension: Christ’s and ours... this is what it means for us to be “in Christ.”

II. There Were Also Two Departures into All the World

- A. There’s our departure: “*the disciples went out and preached everywhere*”
 1. The Ascension brings a new logic to how we view *earthly life*:
 - a. Christ is our new Home; He has become the center of our lives.
 - b. If our Home is now in heaven, then *this world is not our home*.
 - c. We, therefore, become pilgrims, be happy to sojourn anywhere God places us (this prepares us for our mission).
 2. What is our mission, our sending?– John 20:21-22. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
 - a. This sending forth was and is the heart-burden of Jesus– Luke 4:43. But he said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”
 - b. Christ’s will for us is outreach, whether by *personal witness, foreign missions or planting new churches* (Our *task* is not to meet together, but to find Holy Spirit power in times of church fellowship, for carrying out our mission: this is our departure, [A review: 1st there was His Ascension; 2nd was our relocation with Him in

heaven; 3rd was our being sent into the world: the Great Commission].

- B. The 4th departure is His renewed departure into the world with us:
 1. “*the Lord worked with them*” because He went with them:
 - a. Ever since He began walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden, it’s never been God’s intention to leave this planet.
 - b. At His Ascension Jesus gave a specific promise to go with us– “Go in all the world...” and “Lo, I am with you always”– these are two facets of the same Great Commission.
 2. We may be gifted channels of His power and will, but we can do no miracles on our own: “*the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*” [Leanne Payne’s book, *The Healing Presence: healing and deliverance happens only when Jesus is there.*]
 3. Remember His promise in Mat 18:20, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” – Our gathering for church misses the point, if we meet for any other reason than to be with Jesus. He is the *point* of having church. *He is why we are here!*

CONCLUSION:

–So, just as there are two departures in the Ascension (*Christ’s leaving for heaven*, and, in a mystical sense, our leaving with Him), there are two departures in *the Great Commission* (*our going into the world* and *Christ’s going with us*–this is what it means for Christ to be “in us.”)
 –After Ascension, we look forward to Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit! **Christ left to go into heaven so we could leave to go into the world..** But in the Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus returns to us in a new way.
 –The Ascension is not a time of *ending*, but of *beginning*. We begin to wait for the promise of the Father. We begin to wait for power from on high. Then, and only then, can we complete our mission on earth under the special anointing only the Holy Spirit brings.
 –As we contemplate Christ’s departure at Ascension, let’s ask Him in prayer where He’s sending us today to bring His presence to others.