

THE END OF ONE MINISTRY AND THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER

Luke 24:50-51

Introduction: Jesus was born in Bethlehem and between five and seven miles away at Bethany Jesus ascended back where He came from. Between the two locations stretches Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection. Though the two places are so different, yet His birth and His ascension are connected. At His birth in Bethlehem, angels announced Jesus' birth through prophets before and angels at the time and saints afterward, so at His ascension all power in heaven and earth was given to Him.

As men worshipped Jesus at the cradle, even though Herod threatened, so there were people worshipping Jesus at the ascension, even though some still doubted. Bethlehem and Bethany join hands in saying, *"...As the Father has sent me, even so send I you..." (John 20:21)*

I. ASCENSION FROM BETHANY WAS THE MOST FITTING END TO JESUS' EARTHLY MINISTRY

1. Jesus returned from where He came.

- *"...He came from God, and went to God..." "...took upon Him the form of a servant, humbled Himself, even to death, the death of the cross, wherefore God exalted Him...."*
(John 13:3; Ephesians 4:9; Philippians 2:7-9)
- All through Jesus' earthly ministry it was said of Him *"...He came....was sent....was manifested..."*
 - Pointing to His personal pre-existence in Heaven.
- The ascension completed His incarnation as the One who *"...came from the Father...into the world..."* and is seen *"...leaving the world and going to the Father..." (John 16:18)*

2. Jesus had God the Father's seal (sign of approval) upon Him.

- *"...on Him has God the Father set His seal..." (John 6:27)*
- *"...We believe Jesus died and rose again...delivered for our offenses, raised ...for justification.. Christ died according to the scriptures...rose according to the scriptures...unto Him who died and was raised...If Christ be not RAISED, ye are yet in your sins..."*
(1 Thessalonians 4:14; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:17)

3. Jesus was enthroned during His earthly ministry.

- Jesus came as the prophesied King of David's line.
 - Born a King, welcomed by the Magi.
 - Promised to *"...sit on the throne of His glory..." "...sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Hebrews 1:3)*

4. Jesus' earthly ministry blessed others.

- Peter wrote about the purpose of Jesus' coming, *"...God...sent Him...to bless you..." (Acts 3:26)*
- Countless sick, sinful and friendless found Jesus' ministry to bless was true.

5. The greatest story ever told ends greatly at the ascension, Jesus' return, sealing, enthronement, blessings yet the story does not end at the ascension but another story begins with Jesus' ascension.

II. A SECOND MINISTRY IS STARTED, THAT OF THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

1. Although Jesus ascended and was not present in flesh and blood, He continued His ministry through those who had become disciples, believers in Him.
 - "...*They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following...*" (Mark 16:20)
 - Luke begins his record of the Church's beginning with the reference that Jesus "...*began to do...*" pointing out that Jesus' work continued through the work of the Church, explaining crucial events such as the release of Peter, the conversion of Cornelius, the conversion of Saul, later called Paul and Paul's being sent to Macedonia, etc.
 - All Christians are workers, servants, tools of the ascended Jesus Christ.

2. Ascended, yet Jesus endows others to carry on His ministry.
 - "...*Being ... exalted at the right hand of God...He has poured out this...*" (Acts 2:33)
 - "...*When He ascended...gave gifts unto men...that some should be apostles...prophets... evangelists...pastors...teachers...*" (Ephesians 4:8, 11)

3. Ascended, yet Jesus continues to intercede for His people/workers.
 - "...*We have and Advocate with the Father...*" (1 John 2:1; "...*Christ Jesus...at the right hand of God...intercedes for us...*" (Romans 8:34)... "...*Christ has entered...heaven itself... now to appear in presence of God on our behalf...We have a great High Priest...always living to make intercession...*" (Hebrews 10:24; 4:14; 7:25)

4. The ascended Jesus receives those who believe in Him.
 - "...*I go to prepare a place for you....I will take you to myself...*" (John 14:2-3)
 - "...*absent from the body is to be present with the Lord...*"(2 Corinthians 5:8)

4. The ascended Jesus Christ will return again in God, the Father's time.
 - "...*I will come again...this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way...WHEN Christ, who is our life, appears....we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus...*" (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Colossians 3:4; Philippians 3:20)

CONCLUSION:

1. No wonder the gates of Hell shall never prevail against the Lord Jesus and His work.
2. Jesus was born to do an earthly ministry in Bethlehem and less than ten miles away some years later, Jesus left the earth (ascended) to go back to Heaven to begin a new ministry (Church) through His disciples, followers, believers, Christians.
3. From Heaven Jesus directs, equips, endows, intercedes for, receives those of His Church who are carrying on the work He started and will one day come back for all those who are continuing His ministry.
4. Are you among those who are continuing the ministry Jesus started?