

Sun., Aug. 30:

Message Series: FAQs: Your Questions Answered with Biblical Facts

Message Series Theme Verse: Psalm 119:130

Message: "FAQs #9: Where Is Jesus Now?"

Memory Verse: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief." -2 Peter 3:10a

Scripture: Acts 1:1-11; 2 Peter 3:8-18

Text: John 14:15-18

Blurb: The question, "Where is Jesus now?" may have a simple answer, but it also has very significant ramifications on our lives. Living with Jesus in our hearts means we live in a way that hurries His return to earth. This Sunday we worship outdoors, the perfect opportunity to watch the skies for Jesus' return. Now, that's true worship!

Out door worship.

Offering boxes available as people leave.

Parking spaces designated for drive in worshipers.

OPENING MUSIC: *Magnify* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief." -2 Peter 3:10a

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Only King Forever

Raise a Hallelujah

Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

SERVE MOMENT: Hope Moves -Teresa Gruber

PRAYERS -Pastor Andrew

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: FAQs #9: "Where Is Jesus Now?"

Frequently Asked Questions: Your Questions Answered with Biblical Facts. Where is Jesus now? John 14:15-18 Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

So, today's question is in one way an easy one to answer. In other ways, not so much. This question always makes me think of a seminary friend of mine. When we finished seminary, my classmates and I all interviewed at the churches we were appointed to serve. One of my friends told me how she bombed one of her interview questions.

The Staff-Parish Relations Team was interviewing her—this was for a church down in Georgia—and one of the older men on the team asked her, “Where is Jesus?”

My friend was a little bit taken off guard, and stammered, “Well, He is with us at all times, everywhere at the same time.”

He scowled, and shot back, “No. Where is Jesus now?”

Getting a bit nervous, she said, “He is in the hearts of those who love Him.”

“No. Where is Jesus right now, *physically*?”

In one last attempt she tried, “He is present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and wherever Christians gather in His name to worship and praise Him.”

He gave up. “I don’t know what they are teaching you in seminary these days, but my Bible says that Jesus is in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. And, by the way, that’s what it says in the Apostle’s Creed.”

Well, fortunately for her the rest of the team was a bit more understanding—knowing how hard it is to come up with the exact answer someone is looking for. I mean, I told her that all of her answers were actually correct. But he was looking for a literal answer, and she was giving a spiritual one. Even though she bombed that question, the church still gladly accepted her as their pastor.

So, the simple answer to our question today is: Jesus is back in glory, for He “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.”

Now, claiming that Jesus went *back* to heaven means He was there to start with.

We don’t understand this, but Jesus is God, and God the Father and God the Son (and God the Holy Spirit) are one in the same. One God, three persons. But don’t worry, no one asked me to explain the Trinity, so you’re safe today! What the Bible does claim is that God always was, and Jesus always was. There was never a time when Jesus wasn’t. Jesus, along with the Father and the Spirit, always existed. The Bible claims that Jesus was there when all creation was created.

But, in sometime around 4 B.C., God the Son indwelt a human virgin named Mary who was living in a town called Nazareth in the Roman province of Galilee, and she became pregnant. God the Son somehow took on and was joined into a physical human body. This fully human and fully divine person was born as a baby in Bethlehem. His mother and human step-dad skirt-skirted Him off to Egypt for some months before returning to Nazareth, where He grew up as a Jewish boy.

At the human age of about 30 His special calling compelled Him to begin His earthly ministry. He left His mother and siblings in Nazareth, and went to be baptized by His cousin John in the Jordan River. And so He began announcing the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth. He called 12 apostles, traveled from town to town preaching, teaching, doing miracles, connecting with people, and shepherding a growing number of disciples, all out of a home base in Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. After three years He headed south into Judea, where He eventually ended up in Jerusalem. There He was arrested, sentenced to death, and was killed by crucifixion. All this, the Bible explains, was to earn our forgiveness from our sins and to restore our place with God. Then on Easter He rose bodily again, winning the victory over human death. He broke free of the tomb and brought resurrection and new life to our world, offering it to each of us. He appeared to the women, then to the disciples, and then to hundreds of others.

Then, 40 days later, with disciples all gathered around, Jesus ascended back into heaven to go be with God, and be restored back to His place of divine glory. Jesus is back in glory, somehow hooked up with God the Father. The Bible says, “Seated at God’s right hand” to explain Jesus’ position of power, authority and glory.

So, the answer to our question ends with a problem. Are we left alone down here without Him? And, if Jesus isn’t around physically, then how is it that Christians claim to be followers of

Jesus—His disciples—and claim to have a personal relationship with Him? Is this a long-distance relationship...us here on earth and Him up in heaven?

Well, let's go to the Bible to look at some facts about where Jesus is and what that means for us. Let's go to the very beginning of the book of Acts.

Acts 1, starting in verse 1. “[Dear] Theophilus, [that’s who Luke, the author, is writing to] the first scroll I wrote [we now call that first letter the Book of Luke in our Bibles, that scroll] concerned everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning, 2 right up to the day when He was taken up into heaven. Before He was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles He had chosen. 3 After His suffering [that would be His death and resurrection in Jerusalem], He showed them that He was alive with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God’s kingdom. 4 While they were eating together, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. [Ooo, this is going to be exciting!] He said, ‘This is what you heard from me: 5 John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”

Verse 6, “As a result, those who had gathered together asked Jesus, ‘Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?’

“7 Jesus replied, ‘It isn’t for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by His own authority. 8 Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’

“9 After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, He was lifted up and a cloud took Him out of their sight. 10 While He was going away and as they were staring toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. [Angels?] 11 They said, ‘Galileans, why are you standing here, looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come [back] in the same way that you saw Him go into heaven.’”

So, Jesus is back in glory. But are we alone? Are we left as orphans?

Ten days later, the disciples were again gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, and, as described in Acts 2, what we call Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and filled them, just like Jesus had promised. Since then, the Holy Spirit comes into each person who commits to becoming a disciple of Jesus. *So, we are not alone.* We have Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus, people had God the Father *near to us*. In Jesus, God came so close that He was physically *right next to us*. But after Jesus physically went back to glory, God *came into us*. We are not alone! Actually, God came closer than He had ever been! We can claim to be followers of Jesus because we follow His path for our lives, and make Him our Lord. And we can have a personal relationship with Jesus because through the Holy Spirit in us, we carry Jesus’ very presence in our hearts. He is in us! It is not a long-distance relationship: actually, it is the most intimate relationship we can have. So, first takeaway, Jesus is physically in heaven, but spiritually, we have Jesus in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. My pastor friend and the guy on the team both were right!

But there’s more. Did you catch it? Christ’s ascension also reveals that although physically He left to go to be with the Father, we are told that physically He will come back to earth a second time. The angels, in verse 11, asked, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, *will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.*” The first time He came quietly and humbly as a baby. But when He comes back, it’s going to be different! There will be a lot of noise! It’ll be a big deal! He will come in full glory and majesty, on the wings of the morning, leading all the heavenly hosts—the angels. The first time He came to usher in the Kingdom of God. The next time, He’ll finish installing it! There’ll be the final battle. He will deliver the final blow to Satan and evil, and be victorious. Sin will be eliminated from His creation. All that has been unfair or wrong will be corrected and made right. He

will judge all the people. Those who do not have Him as their Lord and Savior will be cast in the same terrible place as Satan. But it will be a day of victory and joy for those who have called upon His name. He will restore paradise on earth, and we will all live with Him—physically and spiritually—forever, face to face!

So, *when's* that going to happen? Now, did you notice that just before Jesus ascended, the disciples asked Him that question, too? When will that be? In Acts 1, verse 6, “[they] asked Jesus, ‘Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?’” 7 Jesus replied, ‘It isn’t for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by His own authority.’”

So, our answer is the same as it was for them. We do NOT know when He will return. The Father has set that date and time, and only He knows when it is.

Now, one of you asked me about all those who claim they can figure out when the end times will be, that they look in the Bible—using passages in Revelation, and Daniel, and Ezekiel, and paring them with current events, and can pinpoint a time.

So, turn to 2 Peter 3. We pick it up in verse 8: “Don’t let it escape your notice, dear friends, that with the Lord a single day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a single day. 9 The Lord isn’t slow to keep His promise, as some think of slowness, but He is patient toward you, not wanting anyone to perish but all to change their hearts and lives.”

So, Jesus’ time of return is not taking forever! The reason He’s delaying is because He wants more people saved! So, while you’re waiting, keep an eye on the sky, but go get busy!

Verse 10, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.” So, we cannot know when it will be. It could be today. It could be any day. Only the Father knows!

And this brings us to our third takeaway. We do not know *when* Jesus will return, but we do know *that* He will return. And it is *soon*...not from a historical perspective...it’s been 2,000 years...but from our current perspective...it’s a whole lot closer now than it was! Our third takeaway is our application. If we know Jesus is coming back soon, how, then, are we to live our lives today?

Let’s keep reading in 2 Peter 3. “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a dreadful noise, the elements will be consumed by fire, and the earth and all the works done on it will be exposed.

“11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be? You must *live holy and godly lives*, 12 *waiting for and hastening* the coming day of God. Because of that day, the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. 13 But according to His promise we are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

“14 Therefore, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found by Him in peace—pure and faultless. 15 Consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as our dear friend and brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, 16 speaking of these things in all his letters. Some of his remarks are hard to understand, and people who are ignorant and whose faith is weak twist them to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.”

Did you catch that? Peter says that some of Paul’s writings are hard to understand! Isn’t that awesome! Do you scratch your head sometimes when you read Paul? So did Peter! You’re in good company! I love this! Also, notice, Peter already considers Paul’s writings as Scripture.

Anyway, verse 17, “Therefore, dear friends, since you have been warned in advance, be on guard so that you aren’t led off course into the error of sinful people, and lose your own safe position. 18 Instead, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him belongs glory now and forever. Amen.”

So, “what sort of people ought you to be?” What does Peter say? “You must *live holy and godly lives, waiting for and hastening* the coming day of God.” This is how we wait for “a new heaven and a new earth.” “While you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found by Him in peace—pure and faultless.” “Be on guard so that you aren’t led off course into the error of sinful people, and lose your own safe position. 18 Instead, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

So, take out your bulletin insert for your message notes. Where is Jesus now? Point 1: He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Point 2: He is with us, in our hearts, through the Holy Spirit. And Point 3: He’s coming back soon. Below Point 3, write down the question “so what?” Therefore, 3 more points: A) You must live holy and godly lives - Today, you must live and behave, and talk, and act, like Jesus. He’s in your heart. Holiness—godliness—is living like Him in your feet, and hands, and mouth, and attitudes. You have the Holy Spirit to live more like that today!

A) Live holy and godly lives. B) Hasten the coming day of God. How do we do that? Jesus says in Luke 1:11, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” We hasten Jesus’ return by sharing Him with others. Go talk to your neighbors. Connect with your coworkers. Tell them how Jesus helps you through your struggles. Show them by your life.

And C) Be on your guard so you’re not led off course. Hold fast to the truth that God has revealed in the Scriptures. Read your Bibles! Resist the bombardment of the world’s temptations and selfish ways. Bulk up on the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. You will be found by Him and find peace in a troubled and troubling world. This is how we keep an eye on the sky!

Perhaps an easier way to say this is to 1) get Jesus *out*...to others, and to 2) get Jesus *in*...into our hearts, and our lives.

So, Jesus is in heaven. The cat’s away, right? Well, not really, though. We have Him right with us, in our hearts. What do we, the mice, do? Do we play?

Kids, I want to bring this home to you, too. But don’t stop listening, adults!

In the Disney movie *Cinderella*—you’ve seen it, right?—there is a cat and mice. What’s the cat’s name? [Lucifer...that’s a name from the Bible...not very nice, though. Perhaps it’s an accurate name for cats! And then there are the evil siamese cats in *The Lady and the Tramp*...you know, the movie about the awesome and noble dogs. I think Disney preferred dogs. *101 Dalmatians*. I think that’s why Disney had to make the *Aristocats*, to redeem his image of cats! Anyway...]

The bad cat Lucifer is out to get the mice, and also mess up Cinderella’s life. So, what do the mice do? The mice *help* Cinderella! When the cat’s away, they don’t go off and do whatever *they* want. They get busy, work together, and get sewing. That’s a great image for how we keep an eye on the sky and wait for Jesus to come back someday. We get busy.

If we were were inside, we’d watch the clip from the movie...it’s called *The Work Song*. So, that’s your task...go watch the movie, or at least the song. “Cinderellie, Cinderellie.” And as you sing, “We can do it! We can do it!” I want you to be thinking about what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do as you wait for Jesus’ return, and what you can do to *hasten* it!

So, each morning this week, begin your day by asking, “Where is Jesus now?” Then, spend your day keeping an eye on the sky and answering that question, all while getting busy and singing, “We can do it! We can do it!”

Amen.

CLOSING SONG: *My Jesus, I Love Thee* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next week's message: What is like after you die?

Next week: Outdoor worship! Bring lawn chair and hat.

OFFERING: -Pastor David

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief." -2 Peter 3:10a

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

May the Holy Spirit fill you so that you "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him belongs glory now and forever. Amen." -2 Peter 3:18

CLOSING MUSIC -Sanctify