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## ASCENDED!

Commentator Paul Harvey used to say, *"that's the rest of the story."* The Gospel of John seems to close with a curious omission. John talks about the ascension with-in his Gospel, but not at the end. Actually, this strengthens the authenticity of the Gospels. Differences in the four accounts add credibility, because they show the Bible is not made-up. The narrative is not artificially coordinated. It is authentic history.

**1- GLORIFICATION** - Writing after the other Gospels, John intends to provide a different perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus. One of his oft-stated themes is the "**glorification**" of Jesus. John opens with grand statements about the majestic pre-incarnate glory of Jesus in Heaven. And then John focuses carefully on how Jesus is glorified on earth, as the Christ, the Lord, the Son of God.

Six times Jesus talks about His "**glorification**" as His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In John chapters 7, 12, 13, and 17 He refers to these events as already completed. In John 12 Jesus prayed, *"for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!"* God's voice answered, *"I have glorified it and I will glorify it again."* In John 13, Jesus announced, *"Now is the Son of Man glorified,"* referring to His impending crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus talks specifically about His ascension in John chapters 1, 3, 6, 20, but not in 21. Because of the resurrection, the ascension is viewed "*good-as-done.*"

**2- ASCENSION** - Luke chapter 24 gives the fullest account. Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, saying, *"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about Me (in the Old Testament) must be fulfilled."* Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, *"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins be proclaimed in His name to all nations."* This is Luke's account of what's called the "Great Commission," which appears in all four Gospels.

Then Jesus says, *"You are witnesses of these things. And behold I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."* This is the promised Holy Spirit. Then Luke reports Jesus' ascension, *"and lifting up His hands He blessed them. While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him."*

**3- COMMISSION** - Notice two important features of the ascension of Jesus. First, it COMPLETES His earthly ministry. Just before He ascends, Jesus reviews His words and works to His disciples, then He goes into heaven - so the Holy Spirit can come to earth, to indwell His disciples. Second, the ascension of Jesus CONTINUES His earthly ministry - through His disciples. Jesus the Son of God transitions from personal physical ministry on earth to spiritual ministry in the person and power of God the Holy Spirit.

Luke continues his narrative in the book of Acts, writing, *"In the first book, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen."* Luke says Jesus presented Himself alive to them after His suffering, by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Luke reports, *"and while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, Jesus said, 'you heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" The disciples wondered if this meant Jesus would now "restore the kingdom to Israel," meaning, to fulfill their earthly Messianic expectations.*

But Jesus said to them, *"It is not for YOU to know times or seasons that the Father has 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 all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."* This is how Jesus' ministry will continue through His disciples. Luke writes, *"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."*

These eyewitnesses to His ascension waited 10 more days. Then on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Passover, the promise was fulfilled. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, as recorded in Acts 2. This is the same Holy Spirit who baptizes and indwells every believer. And the reason YOU are left on earth is to be a witness for Jesus. YOU are commissioned to tell everyone the Good News!