

"Jesus' Ascension into Heaven"

by Pastor Jeffrey Miskus

Preached on the 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Text: Acts 1:9-14

DATE: January 30, 2011

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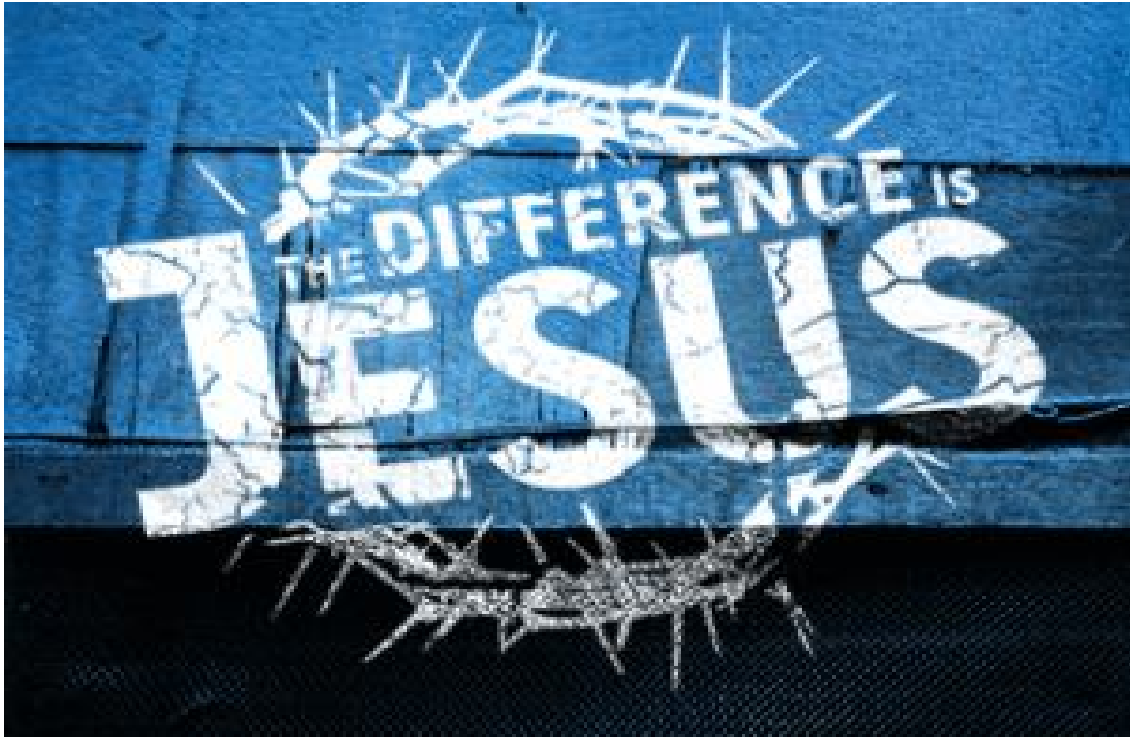
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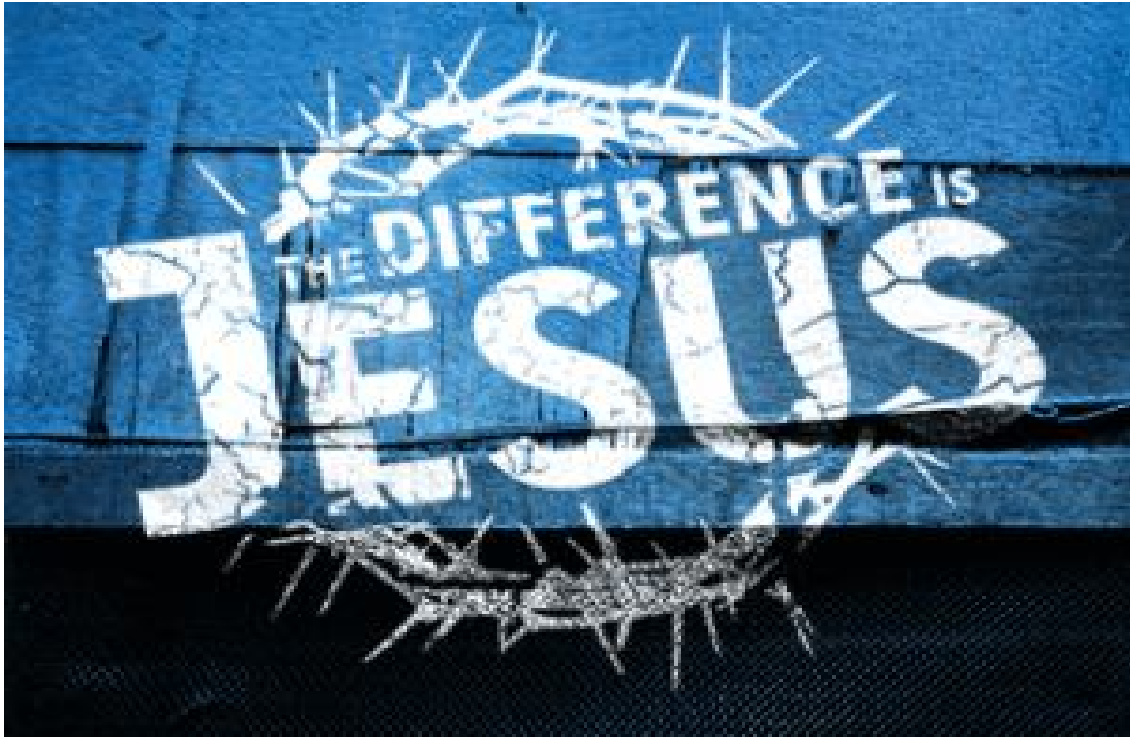
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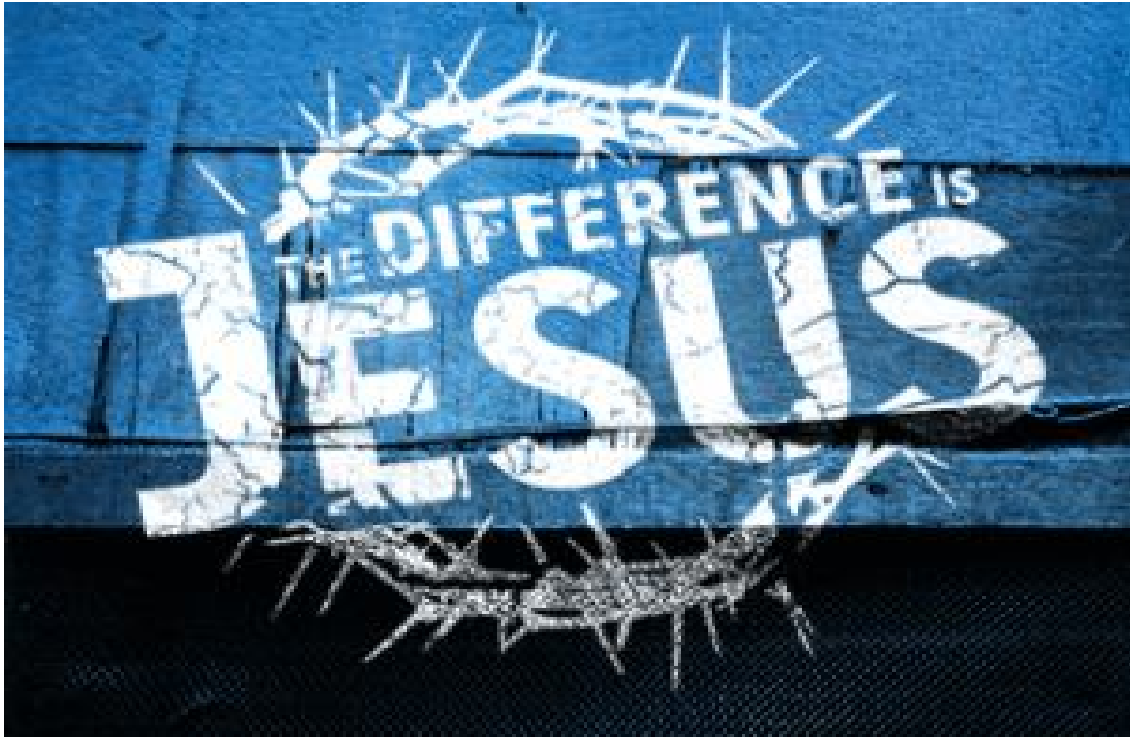
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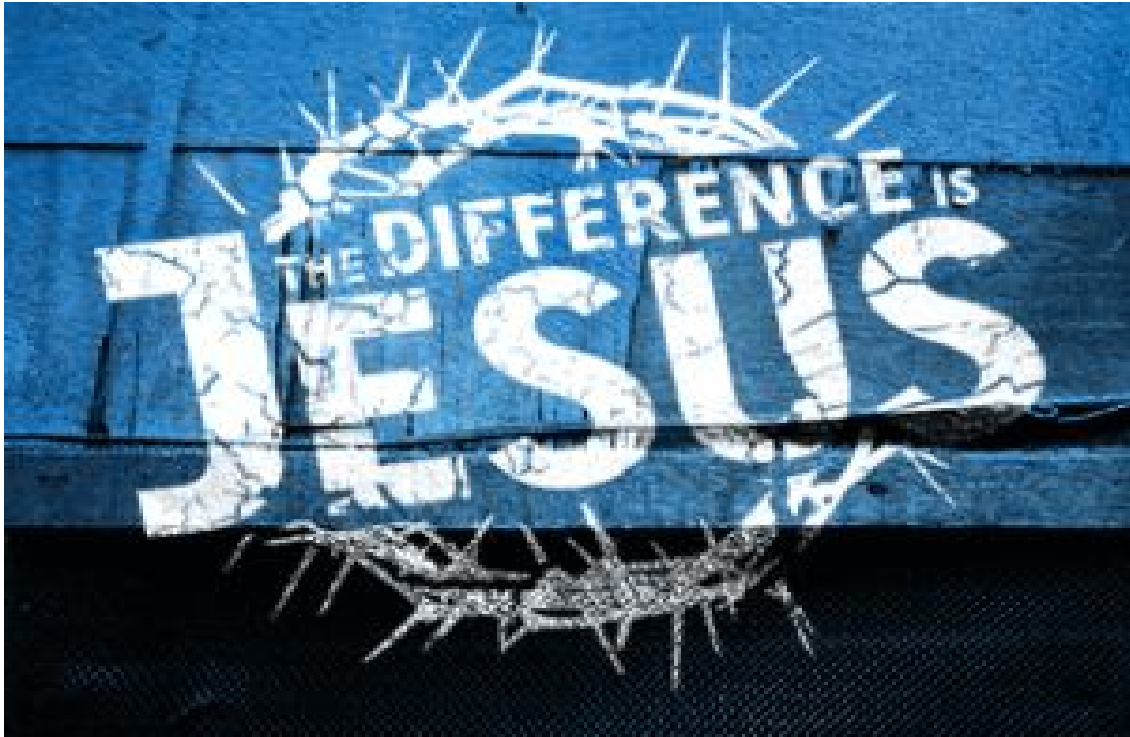
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by Pastor Jeffrey Miskus

Preached on the 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Text: Acts 1:9-14

DATE: January 30, 2011

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Today we continue our Study of the Book of Acts. This book of the New Testament begins where the Gospels leave off – more specifically it covers what happened to the church after Jesus rose from the dead. It also answers important questions like... What did the Church look like after Jesus ascended into heaven? Who were the leaders of the early Church? How did the Church develop and organize? Did the early Church have problems like the Church does today? Were there divisions in the early church like there are today? Were their nasty issues that the Church fought about like there are today? And what was the emphasis of the early church?

Two weeks ago we noted that the first few verses of Acts reveal to us that the risen Lord Jesus Christ is still leading his church. After Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God. He's also told them to wait for a powerful gift from the Father – the Holy Spirit. All too often I hear people talking about the church as though it were some human invention. Brothers and sisters – read for your selves about who is in charge. But still, people will say that after Jesus died the disciples changed his teachings or lost them or did their own thing and organized the church. I challenge you to look for yourselves – THE RISEN LORD JESUS IS ORGANIZING THE CHURCH, DIRECTING, MOTIVATING, AND LEADING HIS DISCIPLES.

After teaching the disciples over a period of 40 days we read the following... Acts 1:9-11, "After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "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." This event is what we call Jesus' ascension. It's where he literally ascends, or 'goes up' into heaven. As his disciples watch he literally goes up into a cloud. This leaving is different than his other leavings as Jesus didn't simply vanish from their sight. They physically watch a supernatural event take place as Jesus physically ascends into heaven. It will be another act of Jesus that they must witness to the world.

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At Jesus' transfiguration the cloud is not natural – but the supernatural presence of God the Father. So as Jesus ascends into heaven, the cloud appears and God the Father welcomes him. And then the bewildered disciples get an explanation... (Acts 1:10-11), "They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "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." Were these angels? Was it Moses and Elijah? We don't know for certain which it was – but either way – this is a supernatural event with a revelation about the future. This same Jesus who was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead – who has been teaching you over these past 40 days – he will return in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

Jesus himself spoke of his return in this manner as well... here are two passages to consider... Matthew 24:30, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. Matthew 26:64, "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." One day, The Risen, Glorified, King of Kings, Jesus Christ will return to earth from heaven, visible to all, on the clouds of heaven.

But there is a message in this to the church. First of all – Jesus rules heaven and earth - He has ascended to God's right hand with all authority in heaven and on earth. Secondly – we as his followers are told he is returning someday in glory. And finally – a message regarding what we are not to be doing – don't just stand there star gazing and looking up into the sky The message of the two men in white is clear... we are not to spend our time staring at the heaven's in wonder about when Jesus is coming back. We have been given a mission by Jesus to be his witnesses throughout the world.

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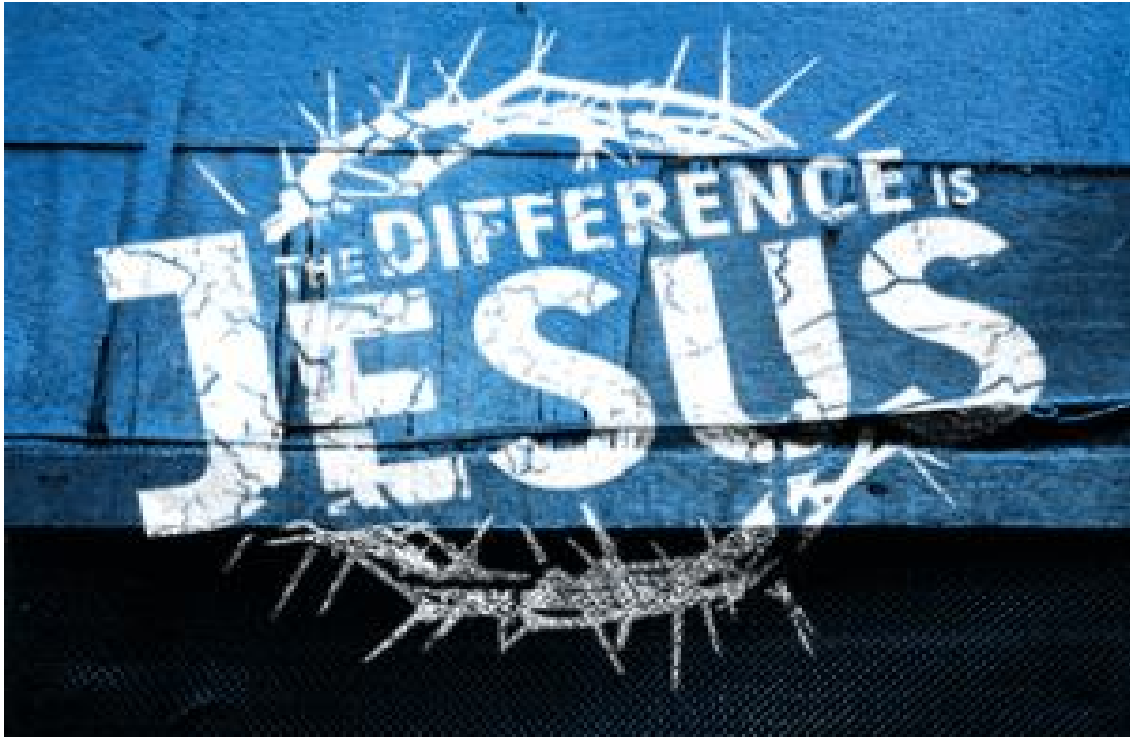
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