

JESUS IS THE GOD OF JESHURUN

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ May 8, 2016

²⁶ “There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. ²⁷ The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, ‘Destroy him!’ ²⁸ So Israel will live in safety alone; Jacob’s spring is secure in a land of grain and new wine, where the heavens drop dew. ²⁹ Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places.” (Deuteronomy 33:26-29)



Dear blessed saints on this day we celebrate Jesus’ ascension into heaven,

How many of you have a nickname of sorts? Perhaps it’s a nickname or pet-name that your parents gave you. Perhaps it’s a moniker you received for something that you did – either epic or embarrassing. Maybe it rhymes with either your first or last name. Maybe this nickname has stuck with you for many years, maybe it was only a short-time thing. I would guess that most people have had a nickname at some time during their lives. Just as it is true for people today, the same applied to individuals in the Bible.

In our Sunday morning Bible Class we heard a nickname for one of the Judges of God’s people Gideon – his nickname was Jerub-Baal, meaning he contended with the god of the Midianites. One of Jesus’ own disciples, Thomas, had the ‘nickname’ of Didymus, which means ‘twin.’ God even had a nickname for the people of Israel. It’s a nickname that was in our first lesson for this morning, and unless you were paying close attention, you may have missed it. The nickname God gave to Israel that is used by Moses in Deuteronomy is the name Jeshurun.

The name “Jeshurun” is only used four times in the entire Old Testament, three of which fall in the last two chapters of Deuteronomy. Like many names in the Bible, this one brings out a particular aspect of God’s people. It’s a poetic name for Israel, picturing it as God wants it to be, the righteous Israel. If you know anything about the Israelites described in the Bible, they were far from righteous, and yet God still used this name for them, not because he overlooked their wickedness, but because he credited righteousness to them on behalf of Jesus.

We like the Israelites have been far from righteous, far from what God wants us to be. And yet, we can lay claim to that same nickname God gave to Old Testament Israel – Jeshurun. Not because of anything good in us, but because God credits his righteousness to us who believe in Jesus Christ. And it is on this day when we remember the ascension of that risen Jesus into heaven, we remember what a blessing it is that Jesus left this earth physically. It is his ascension that reminds us that JESUS IS THE GOD OF JESHURUN:

1. Ascending to heaven on the clouds
2. Having already rescued you and
3. Preparing a place for you

(1)

We heard the account of Jesus' ascension in our gospel for this morning. We heard how Jesus led his disciples out to the nearby town of Bethany. We heard how he told them to stay in the city until the Holy Spirit would come upon them. And then as he was blessing them, Jesus began to ascend into the air. In something completely unexplainable, Jesus gave his disciples one last miracle with which to remember him. Not only was this a way for Jesus to show his disciples that his work on earth was done, but it was a way to show them that his work on earth was continuing, through them.

It's pretty clear that the disciples didn't always grasp the meaning of what Jesus was teaching them, but that didn't stop him from teaching. As we consider the ascension this morning we want to grasp the truths that Jesus taught when he finally left the earth. Sometimes, Christians might get the impression that Jesus left his disciples and now everything was up to them, or that because Jesus left we have uncertainty in decisions we make, who to vote for, or what to do with my life. And while Jesus does not give us answers to every question we have, he has given us an overarching principle of how to live. We wouldn't use this overarching principle of love if Jesus remained on this earth and gave us answers to the specific questions we ask.

The book of Deuteronomy helps to bring out an important reason for Jesus ascending into heaven. For many, the only acquaintance to this book is when they were asked to memorize the order of the books of the Bible. But when you ask them what's in it, they're at a loss. You might look at the book of Deuteronomy as the diary of Moses. Moses, you may recall, led the Israelite nation out of slavery in Egypt, and ended up wandering with them in the desert for 40 years. Over these 40 years, Moses not only recorded what happened, but he also reminded the next generation of everything that had happened too. This section of Deuteronomy, at the end of the book, Moses is giving them a final encouragement as they finally are preparing to enter the Promised Land. The land that God promised to their forefather Abraham. Moses gives several similar assurances to the people of Israel as Jesus gave to his disciples, and we're going to take a look at three of them. They can all be wrapped up in the phrase, JESUS IS THE GOD OF JESHURUN.

Jesus is God of the ideal Israel. The ideal Israel are not those who have the physical blood of Abraham running through their veins, but the ideal Israel are those who have the faith of Abraham (Galatians 3:17). The ideal Israel is not those who have done anything to make themselves ideal, but it is Jesus himself who makes them ideal, who makes them worthy to enter eternal life. JESUS IS THE GOD OF JESHURUN.

Just like there is no one like the God of Jeshurun, there is no one like Jesus. The first similarity that is brought out is the riding on the clouds. Moses records, "**he rides on the heavens to help you and the clouds in his majesty.**" There are a few other recorded instances of God riding on the clouds, but this one makes very clear why he does it. Even though Moses was leaving the people, they would still have God, a God far superior to any other God, a God who rides upon the clouds, "**to help you.**" Which is the same reason Jesus ascended into heaven.

Had Jesus stayed here on this earth, he would be limited in who he could help and be with. With Jesus ascending to ride on the clouds of heaven, it reveals his power and majesty. He is able to help you because he knows exactly what you're going through. He is able to help you because he has the power. And while there may be times in your life where you are wondering how God is using that power, we know he is there, if nothing else because of the promise he made. **"You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the mighty one and coming on the clouds of heaven."** It is describing the last day, when he will show his power to the world and...well that's getting ahead of ourselves.

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JESUS IS THE GOD OF JESHURUN unlike any other because of what he did. And once again we see a parallel between what God did for the Israelites and what God did for us. God rescued the Israelites from captivity in Egypt, and he has liberated us too.

He liberated us from our slavery to sin. Now if you've been around church for any amount of time, I bet you've heard that phrase before, about how we were "slaves to sin." But do we always consider what that means? We have an idea of what slavery is, but I doubt very much that any one of us has actually been a slave. Just imagine what it would be like if you had no freedom at all. Imagine what it would be like if you had no choice in what you did, what you ate, where you slept. Imagine what it would be like if your family could be bought or sold without any input from you or them. When the Bible calls us slaves to sin, that is what we were.

Sometimes we get this mistaken idea in our heads that we got ourselves out of this slavery. That one day we decided not to have sin as our master so we just walked away from sin and followed Jesus. But is it realistic to think that a slave owner would stand for this insubordination? Not only is this unrealistic, but it is an insult to Jesus who has already saved us. Because the Bible describes it a different way. Instead of just walking away from sin, the Bible describes an epic ransom. Jesus paid for our freedom with his own blood, which meant that sin could lay no claim on us to stay. JESUS IS THE GOD OF JESHURUN who has already rescued you. It is complete, there's nothing more you can do.

Having already rescued you, don't you think he would make sure that you get what you need – both physically and spiritually? One way he does that while you walk on this earth, is by reminding you again and again that this is not your final home, but rather that you are wandering through the wilderness, like the Israelites, waiting for your promised home of heaven.

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This is what the Israelites had to look forward to. Here they had been wandering around in the desert for the past 40 years, the oldest of this generation were only children when they had left Egypt. And they were looking forward to finally getting to this land that God had promised. And God promised to be with them when they entered the land. God promised to **"drive out your enemy before you."** Imagine the excitement that permeated the Israelite camp, they could almost taste it.

This is also what Jesus' ascension proves to you. It proves that JESUS, THE GOD OF JESHURUN is going to prepare a place for you. Not only is he watching after us now, but he is getting our room ready in heaven. And when everything is ready, when God says it is time he will bring us into the Promised Land of heaven. For after the disciples were staring up into the clouds two angels appeared beside them and said, **"This same Jesus you have seen go into heaven, will come back from heaven in the same way."** He will come as judge over the earth, condemning all who chose to remain as slaves to sin, but coming to gather to his own, those who have believed in him.

But that time has not yet come, and in a way we long for it, just like the Israelites longed to enter their Promised Land. But in another way, we see a wonderful opportunity before us. We have an opportunity to share this news with others. We have the responsibility from Jesus not just to live our lives as Christians, but to tell people about why we live our lives this way. This is why any church should exist. It should exist to be able to spread the good news.

Unfortunately, some may not be receptive to this news, some may still chose to remain slaves to their sins. But others may not, and that is not for us to decide or determine. Our job, is to tell people about JESUS THE GOD OF JESHURUN, for he is like no other. When we neglect this duty, it could mean that someone isn't getting to heaven. But when we take this task seriously, we get to see the power of God working faith in someone new, not counting their sins against them. May the GOD OF JESHURUN, the ideal Israel, give you strength and encouragement to share the news of Jesus' death, his resurrection and his ascension. Amen.