

THE ASCENSION AND EXALTATION OF JESUS IN LUKAN THEOLOGY

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the theological significance of the event most often designated as the *ascension*, which Luke narrates in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:2, 9-11, and 22.¹ This event is also sometimes referred to as the *assumption* of Jesus. The latter term, while utilized far less frequently in the literature, may well be a more apt designation for the event, at least for the purposes of the present study. First, the term *assumption* signifies “the taking up of a person into heaven,”² and thus well captures the idea conveyed by the passive verbal forms employed in the Lukan narrative to describe Jesus’ being taken up into heaven. Second, this term also provides a suitable alternative designation for the event delineated in the above cited passages vis-à-vis the passages that refer to Jesus’ exaltation on resurrection day in terms of ascension. While this point in regard to the need for clear terminological demarcation of these respective events, together with the theological ramifications of distinguishing between the events, will receive further elucidation in later sections of this essay, what needs clarified from the outset is my use of terminology throughout the foundational exegetical sections of the paper: for reasons that will become far more clear later in the essay, the event

¹The present study began as a paper written in 2013 for Martin W. Mittelstadt’s Ph.D. seminar on Luke-Acts at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO, USA. It was later revised and presented in January 2016 during an afternoon session at the 24th William W. Menzies Annual Lectureship Series at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, Philippines. I gratefully acknowledge both the theologically stimulating interaction during the AGTS seminar on Luke-Acts, and the feedback received from Donald Hagner, Bob Menzies, Marlene Yap, and others after the paper was read at APTS, which proved to be of great assistance in identifying points in need of further revision in preparation for publication.

²*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “Assumption.” <http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/assumption> (accessed May 24, 2016).