

The Ascension Of Jesus

What Significance is the Ascension of Jesus to each of us personally and to the Church as a whole?

The Ascension of Jesus was prophesied.

Psalm 110:1 [NIV] *“The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”*

God the Father [Yahweh] is inviting Jesus [Adonai] to sit at His right hand, the position of honour and delegated authority.

Luke 22:69 [NIV] *“But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”*

Jesus knew what His future position was going to be.

The Ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God the Father was preached by first century church.

Ephesians 1:18-22 [NIV] *“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church...”*

Hebrews 1:1-3 [NIV] *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”*

Jesus the Son of Man totally at one with God the Father. What Jesus the perfect human being [100% human as well as 100% God] has accomplished is the highest goal we are to aim for, to be at one with God, not God, but in perfect union with Him.

1 Peter 3:18, 22 [NIV] *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit...” ... “...who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand, with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”*

It was the Holy Spirit that raised the man Jesus from the dead after He had laid down His life for our redemption from sin.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

When we surrender our lives to God the Holy Spirit will also raise us from the grave and give us an eternal spirit body.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 [NIV] *“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.”

We join Jesus in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

Jesus hinted at His Ascension during His preaching.

John 6:62 [NIV] *“What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!”*

The ascension of Jesus is one of the great events in the life of Jesus and the Church.

Luke 24:50-52 [NIV] *“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”*

Acts 1:9-11 [NIV] *“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.”*

Mark 16:15 [NIV] *“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

Hebrews 4:14 [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”*

Ephesians 4:8 [NIV] *“This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”*

After Jesus was raised from the dead He appeared several times over a period of 40 days but all these appearances were temporary.

Acts 1:3 [NIV] *“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”*

At the empty tomb.

John 20:10-17 [NIV] *“Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus. “Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.*

Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

On the road to Emmaus.

Luke 24:13-35 [NIV] *"Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread."*

To ten of the disciples in Jerusalem.

Luke 24:36-49 [NIV] *"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

John 20:19-23 [NIV] *"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

To the disciples with Thomas present.

John 20:24-29 [NIV] *“Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

In Galilee.

John 21:1-4 [NIV] *“Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus.”*

At the time of Jesus’ ascension His disciples were still ignorant of why He had died and was now leaving them.

Acts 1:6 [NIV] *“So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”*

Jesus did not answer this question.

The question reveals partly why they had been following Jesus, they still had a “*what’s in it for me?*” mentality.

They did not know why Jesus was crucified.

They did not know why Jesus was raised from the dead.

They did not know why Jesus came to the earth at all!

Instead of answering the question the disciples asked, Jesus pointed them to the Holy Spirit whom He had already told them would reveal all things to them.

Acts 1:4-5 [NIV] *“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.”*

Luke 24:49 [NIV] *“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

It was after this sighting of the resurrected Jesus that He ascended to Heaven and the disciples no longer saw Him in the flesh.

Acts 1:9 [NIV] *“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”*

Why should we study the Ascension?

The ascension is an essential link between the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The ascension account tells us where Jesus is now, what happened when He arrived at God's throne, and what He is doing now.

The ascension account tells us that Jesus will come again.

Pertinent facts about the Ascension:-

- a) Jesus went up, His body rose visibly just like the resurrection Jesus retained His body. A transformed body but still a body.
- b) **Acts 1:9** [NIV] *"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight."*
One moment the disciples saw Jesus, the next they did not see Him.
This shows how literal His ascension was.
- c) The fact all this happened *"before their very eyes"* demonstrated that no faith was needed for this to be believed. Unlike the act of the resurrection when there was no eye-witnesses.
- d) **Acts 1:11** [NIV] *"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."*
Jesus' body remains with Him in Heaven.
1 Timothy 2:5 [NIV] *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"*
Paul emphasises this point. We are to be encouraged that there is a human man now at the throne of God.
John 1:1 [NIV] *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*
Jesus was God, also with God at the beginning.
John 17:5 [NIV] *"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."*
Jesus asked to receive again His Glory which He had relinquished when He came to earth.
The ascension was an answer to Jesus' own prayer.
But now He is there in a body. Before Jesus entered the womb of the Virgin Mary Jesus was fully God but without a body.
John 1:14 [NIV] *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*
Jesus became flesh.
Hebrews 10:5 [NIV] *"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;"*
Jesus received the body that had been prepared for Him.
The eternal Son of God returned to Heaven with a body He will have throughout the endless eons of eternity.
- e) **Ephesians 1:20** [NIV] *"...which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms"*
At the ascension Jesus took His seat at the Father's right hand, symbolic of power and authority.
This shows that Jesus was God and equal to God, as the Word had been from the beginning.
This is not only symbolic but also literal.

- f) The ascension was the personal vindication of Jesus.
1 Timothy 3:16 [NIV] *“Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.”*
 Until the ascension Jesus’ vindication had been subjective.
 Jesus knew who He was but this was by the spirit alone.
John 3:34 [NIV] *“For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.”*
 Jesus got His sense of purpose and identity by the witness of the Holy Spirit who was with Him continually without any limit of support for Him in His physical state.
 Although Jesus was rejected by the authorities of Rome and Israel, religion and state, the Holy Spirit gave Him all the fulfilment He needed.
 [We too can experience confidence of who we are and fulfilment in the work we do by the same Holy Spirit, even if we are rejected by religious leaders and the state.]
 Now in heaven Jesus has open and objective vindication.
- g) At the ascension Jesus received the ultimate seal of approval by the Father.
Philippians 2:9 [NIV] *“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name”*
 The Father gave to Jesus the Son of Man His own name Yahweh.
- h) At the ascension Jesus begins His reign as King Jesus.
1 Corinthians 15:20-25 [NIV] *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”*
 This reign of King Jesus will continue until the last enemy of God has been subdued, and all who are willing to be saved are saved.
Revelation 19:16 [NIV] *“On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”*
 All will be subject to Jesus and He will be openly vindicated by all people.
- i) At the ascension Jesus began His role as our High Priest.
Romans 8:34 [NIV] *“Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*
 In His role as High Priest, Jesus speaks on our behalf to God the Father.
Hebrews 4:14-16 [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*
 We have a High Priest who is well qualified to intercede on our behalf before God’s Throne.

The Ascension of Jesus is the basis for our answered prayers.

John 14:12-14 [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

When we pray *“in the name of Jesus,”* that is in the same way and asking for the same things as Jesus did when on earth.

We will receive guaranteed answers, for every prayer Jesus made was answered, because He only asked what was the Will of the Father.

John 6:38 [NIV] *“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”*

Jesus always did what was God’s Will, not His own.

John 5:30 [NIV] *“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”*

Jesus had double hearing, as He was listening to anyone speaking to Him, He was also hearing what the Father was saying about the situation and how He should act, and what He should say.

We also need to have the same double hearing. We answer and act only as we are shown and told by the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13-16 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”*

We only “see” Jesus now when He is made real to us by the special presence of the Holy Spirit.

When we are not grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit by our words or actions, or our lack of words and actions, He will make Jesus very real to us and we will know His Will.

Colossians 3:1 [NIV] *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.”*

All our attention in life needs to be centred on Jesus. For it is only through what He has done for us and what He can do in and for us as our High Priest that we have any right to exist.

Ephesians 2:6 [NIV] *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”*

This attention to Jesus must be so real and He needs to be so near to us as our being seated right next to Him in Heaven.

This is how important the Ascension of Jesus is to each of us personally.