

# The Ascension of Jesus Christ

The observance of the Feast of Ascension is of ancient times. Bishop Eusebius hints at the celebration of it in the 4th century. At the beginning of the 5th century, St. Augustine says that **it is of Apostolic origin**, and he speaks of it in a way that shows it was the universal observance of the Church long before his time. Frequent mention of it is made in the writings of St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and in the Constitution of the Apostles.

The Pilgrimage of Aethria speaks of the vigil of this feast and of the feast itself, as they were kept in the church built over the grotto in Bethlehem in which Christ is traditionally regarded as having been born. Representations of this Feast are found in and frescoes dating as early as the 5th century.

**Ascension Day** or **Feast of Ascension** is one of the important Christian festivals celebrated in all over the world. This day marks the last appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ to His followers, disciples and Apostles after His resurrection at Easter. Ascension Day falls on the Thursday, exactly 40 days after the Easter. We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, in His flesh, ascended above all visible heavens into the highest heaven, the dwelling-place of our Almighty God and the blessed ones and sits at the right hand of God, The Father.

## Why is the ascension of Jesus Christ important?

While there has been much emphasis on the death and resurrection of Jesus, far less attention has been given to His ascension, or His return to the Father in heaven. What is the significance of this event?

Acts 1:9-11 tells us what happened to Jesus after 40 days of appearances following His resurrection:

- “<sup>9</sup> And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; <sup>11</sup> which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

The other direct reference to Christ's ascension is made in St. Luke 24:50-53:

- “<sup>50</sup> And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: <sup>53</sup> and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”

From these passages, several observations can be made.

**First**, the ascension clearly marked the end of Christ's earthly ministry. What began in a manger in Bethlehem ended with His return to His Father in heaven.

**Second**, the ascension marked the success of His earthly mission. Jesus completed all that His the Father had designed for Him to accomplish. His birth, miracles, teaching, his trials

and tribulations, death, resurrection; and appearances had proven His divine nature and had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah's first advent.

**Third**, the ascension marked the time when Jesus once again enjoyed His heavenly glory. During His time on earth, with the exception of the Transfiguration (St. Matthew 17:1-9), Jesus limited any expressions of the heavenly glory that He enjoyed prior to His earthly birth. His ascension began a new period during which Jesus would once again reign without limiting Himself to His earthly role.

**Fourth**, the ascension marks the beginning of the time when Jesus starts preparing a place for His followers. St. John 14:2-3 records, “<sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

**Fifth**, it indicated the beginning of His new work as High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16) and Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15).

**Finally**, the ascension established the pattern for Jesus Christ's return. As the angels in Acts 1 told the disciples, Jesus will return just as He left (also refer to Daniel 7:13-14).

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, currently reigns in heaven. His ascension marks the beginning of the time in which the Church should actively communicate the life of Jesus when He was on earth - His Teachings, His Sermons, His Parables and His Miracles as well as His trials and tribulation to bring many to become His faithful followers; who will live with Jesus Christ for all eternity in the place He has prepared for all His believers.

God Bless

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