

Ascension

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[0 : 0 0] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Please be seated. Out of all the feast days that commemorate the activities of our Lord, I would say that the Feast of the Ascension is either the most misunderstood or the most overlooked part of Christ's ministry.

We place great emphasis on Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, but we overlook or underemphasize the narrative of Christ's ascension into heaven. Now, why is that the case?

Well, we all believe that the actions and events of the biblical story are important, and we want to place proper attention to the events that have an impact on our own lives, right? For us, the ascension seems to be just another necessary step in God's plan.

The Holy Spirit cannot be sent until Christ leaves, so it is necessary for Christ to go up into heaven, we say. Well, that is most certainly true, and St. John the Apostle records Jesus' words about the Spirit being sent when he departs in St. John chapter 16.

[1 : 1 6] But the consequences of the ascension for our lives is more than just the next step in God's plan of redeeming the world. The ascension means something for us because Christ is the example of what shall happen to us if we continue steadfastly in the faith.

Just as Christ ascended into heaven to be with the Father, so shall we ascend. We have biblical examples of holy people who have ascended into heaven.

Genesis records in chapter 5 that Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. The book of Hebrews mentions that Enoch was taken so that he should not see death.

The prophet Elijah also ascended into heaven while he was walking and talking with Elisha. After Elisha asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit, Elijah ascended into heaven.

Now these things happened because these men were holy people. But they are also witnesses of two future realities. The first is Christ's ascension into heaven, and the second is our own ascension into heaven.

[2 : 2 9] Christ, the one who took on flesh and assumed human nature, ascends into heaven to sit at the right hand of God. So we, like Jesus, our brother and Lord, we will be made like him.

In our ascension, we will be changed. St. Paul writes in the Epistle to the Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his, Christ's, glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

In response to heretics claiming that Christ merely became man in appearance only, St. Athanasius, the theologian, said this, What is not assumed cannot be saved.

If Christ truly became man, which he did, and he ascended into heaven, which he also did, then we truly have an inheritance in heaven with the Father.

The ascension, along with the incarnation, shows us that we can truly be partakers of God's nature, for our Lord became man.

[3 : 41] The ascension is therefore a truly praiseworthy thing. The apostles worshipped God when Jesus ascended into heaven. Now, the scriptures don't exactly state why they did this or what was on their minds during their worship.

While we cannot know what was in their minds in that moment, there are things that we can praise God for because of the ascension. We praise God because he will make us like Christ.

We praise God because human nature has been redeemed from sin and death and brought up to heaven. We praise God because while we live in this corruptible world and in these corruptible bodies, we will be made incorruptible at his return and worthy to be with God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen.