

- “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.”
- Mark gives us this lesser-known and briefer account of the Ascension; the account in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles is much more descriptive and better known.
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- Christ’s body was glorified at the moment of His Resurrection, as seen by new properties it had—moving through locked doors, vanishing from sight at will, etc.
- But His true glory still was veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity...much as His Body and Blood, soul and divinity even now remain veiled under the appearance of ordinary bread and wine in the Eucharist.
- He walked, talked and even ate with the apostles until His Ascension.
- Jesus’ discourse with Mary Magdalene outside the tomb: “*I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*” ((Jon 20:17)...indicates a difference in His resurrected glory, and that which He would unveil at His Ascension as He returned to that mysterious realm of Heaven from which He came to us...far beyond our conception of time and space.
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- Jesus’ Ascension marks the entry of His humanity—our humanity—into divine glory...glory symbolized in the account in the Acts of the Apostles by the cloud upon which He ascended to Heaven, where He is seated from then on God’s right hand.
- A cloud commonly is given to manifest God’s glory.
 - On Mt. Sinai in the story of the Exodus.

- The pillar of cloud leading the Israelites in the desert.
- And the cloud descending upon Jesus and the apostles at the Transfiguration—the cloud from which the Father proclaimed: *“This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.”* (Mark 9:7)
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- And Jesus’ Ascension is not simply a literary device or symbol, but an actual historic occurrence.
- He foretold of it in a couple of places in the Gospels...especially notable in John 6—where Jesus speaks of the need to eat His flesh and drink His blood for salvation, causing many of His disciples to be dismayed and confused.
- But Jesus says to them: *“Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?”* (Joh 6:62 RSV)...telling them in advance the proof that they would witness if they stayed with Him.
- And Jesus, the one priest of the new and eternal Covenant, *“... entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands...but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”* (Hebrews 9:24)...permanently exercising His eternal priesthood *“to make intercession”* for *“those who draw near to God through him.”* (CCC 664)

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- Why did Jesus ascend to Heaven and not stay with us in bodily?
 - He tells the apostles: *“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you...When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”* (John 16:7-13)
 - That is what we celebrate next weekend—the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the birthday of the Church.
 - Jesus’ Ascension begins the final stage of coming of the Kingdom of God.

- As head of the Church, He goes before us into the Father's kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in hope of one day being with him forever.
 - Both Peter and Paul describe Jesus as the "firstborn from the dead"; so, too, is He the "first-ascended" into Heaven, whom we are to follow.
 - This is our entire hope as disciples of Christ.
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- We look at the Ascension and wonder: "How can that be?"
 - But is anything beyond the power of God—He who created all that is?
 - When St. Paul is on trial in the Acts of the Apostles, he cries out to the Jews: "*Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?*" (Acts 26:8)...implying "Have you so little faith in the power of God?"
 - Likewise, why would we think the Ascension is "hard" for God?
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 - It is unbelievable to some because it is far beyond our own abilities and understanding.
 - But tell someone in Jesus' time that one day a person can easily travel halfway around the world in a day, or that he could speak to someone halfway around the world in real time...and that would have seemed just as fantastic...not because such things are impossible (in fact, they are now commonplace), but only because it is beyond his simpler knowledge and understanding.
 - How much more so are the divine acts of God Himself not literally impossible, but simply beyond our own limited understanding?
 - Oh...but intellectual pride tends to balk at admitting there is something that I cannot understand.
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- As the Resurrection gives us faith, the Ascension gives us hope and longing, as we remember Jesus' words to us: "*...I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be.*" (John 14:3)
- This is the hope which we, His disciples, are sent to proclaim to the world. If we truly love our neighbor, how can we not want for them this greatest of all things?
- As Paul told his judge when the judge joked with him about Paul about to convince even himself to be a Christian: "*...I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become [so]...*" (Acts 26:28-29)
- So go out this coming week and seek to bring others to Christ by your word and example. That is the mission He gives to us.
- If each of us brought even one person into the Church, we would be packed beyond capacity...and what a wonderful thing that would be.
- Sure, some will reject it...and some may even reject you for asking.
- But those who accept it—and certainly God...they will love you for it...forever.

[Acts 1:1-11](#)

In the first book, Theophilus,
I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught
until the day he was taken up,
after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit
to the apostles whom he had chosen.
He presented himself alive to them
by many proofs after he had suffered,
appearing to them during forty days
and speaking about the kingdom of God.
While meeting with the them,
he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem,
but to wait for “the promise of the Father
about which you have heard me speak;
for John baptized with water,
but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

When they had gathered together they asked him,
“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”
He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons
that the Father has established by his own authority.
But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,
throughout Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”

When he had said this, as they were looking on,
he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.

While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going,
suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them.

They said, “Men of Galilee,
why are you standing there looking at the sky?

This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him
going into heaven.”

[Ps 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (6) **God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

All you peoples, clap your hands,
shout to God with cries of gladness,
For the LORD, the Most High, the awesome,

is the great king over all the earth.

R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

or:

R. Alleluia.

God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy;

the LORD, amid trumpet blasts.

Sing praise to God, sing praise;

sing praise to our king, sing praise.

R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

or:

R. Alleluia.

For king of all the earth is God;

sing hymns of praise.

God reigns over the nations,

God sits upon his holy throne.

R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

or:

R. Alleluia.

[Eph 1:17-23](#)

Reading II

Brothers and sisters:

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,

give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation

resulting in knowledge of him.

May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened,

that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call,

what are the riches of glory

in his inheritance among the holy ones,

and what is the surpassing greatness of his power

for us who believe,

in accord with the exercise of his great might,

which he worked in Christ,

raising him from the dead

and seating him at his right hand in the heavens,

far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion,

and every name that is named

not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things beneath his feet

and gave him as head over all things to the church,

which is his body,

the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Gospel **MK 16:15-20**

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Go into the whole world

and proclaim the gospel to every creature.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved;

whoever does not believe will be condemned.

These signs will accompany those who believe:

in my name they will drive out demons,

they will speak new languages.

They will pick up serpents with their hands,

and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them.

They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them,

was taken up into heaven

and took his seat at the right hand of God.

But they went forth and preached everywhere,

while the Lord worked with them

and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.