

## The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven (Year A)

### The *Catechism* on the Mystery of the Ascension

1. The Creed: “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father”
2. Resurrection: Jesus’ soul and body reunited in glorified state (CCC 645-47)
3. Ascension: “irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory” (CCC 659-60)
4. Bodily: Christ is “seated bodily” at the right hand of the Father (CCC 663)

### Acts 1:1-11—The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven

1. “Forty days”: time of transition and purification (Gen 7:4; Exod 34:28; Deut 8:2)
2. “Lifted up” in a “cloud”: A sign of Jesus’ divinity (John Chrysostom, *Acts* 2)
  - a. “The LORD” makes “*clouds*” his “chariot” (Psa 104:2-3)
  - b. “The LORD” rides on “a swift cloud” (Isa 19:1)
3. “Into Heaven”: visible “heaven” (=the sky) vs. invisible “heaven” (=God’s realm)

### Psalm 47—The Enthronement of God in Heaven

1. Enthronement Psalm: The LORD is “king over all the earth” (v. 2)
3. “God” has “*gone up*”; he “sits on his holy throne” (v. 5, 8)

### Ephesians 1:17-23—He is Seated at the Right Hand of God

1. Christ sits “at his right hand in the heavenly places”
2. Christ is above the Angels: every “rule,” “authority,” “power,” and “dominion”

### Matthew 28:16-20—“I Am With You Always”?

1. Matthew’s Gospel: no narrative of the ascension of Jesus (cf. Luke 24)
2. So why this passage? “*I am with you always*, to the close of the age” (Matt 28:20)?

### St. Thomas Aquinas: Why Didn’t Jesus Stay on Earth?

“Christ’s Ascension into heaven, whereby He withdrew his bodily presence from us, was more profitable for us that His bodily presence would have been. First of all, in order to increase our faith... “You shall see Me no longer”:--For “blessed are they that see not, yet believe” (John 16:16; 20:20)... Secondly, to uplift our hope, “If I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and take you to Myself, that where I am, there you also may be” (John 14:3). For by placing in heaven the human nature which He assumed, Christ gave us the hope of going thither... Thirdly, in order to direct the fervor of our charity to heavenly things... “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1-2). (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, 57, 2).

### The Ascension and the First “Novena” Before Pentecost

1. 40 Days after Easter: Ascension
2. 50 Days after Easter: Pentecost

### 3. 9 Days in Between?

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet... *All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer*, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Acts 1:12, 14)

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Ascension of the Lord, Year A)

1. Many Christians reflection on the role of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection? What role, if any, does the mystery of his Ascension play in your spiritual life?

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2. What does it mean to you to say that Christ is "king" over all the angels? What about king over all earthly kingdoms? The entire universe? What is the implication of this reality for our daily lives?

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3. If Jesus was really raised from the dead, then why didn't he stay here with us? Why does he say "I am with you always" (Matthew 28) and then ascend into heaven?

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### For Further Study

1. CCC 659-664: the Church's official teaching on the mystery of the Ascension.
2. Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, *From Death to Life: The Christian Journey* (Ignatius Press, 2016). Contains a fantastic chapter on the mystery of the Church as a heavenly reality and how Christ's ascension fits into the overall plan of salvation.
3. Gerrit Dawson, *Jesus Ascended: the Meaning of Christ's Continual Incarnation* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004). A wonderfully rich theological study by a Protestant scholar on the mystery of the Ascension. Draws heavily on Scripture and tradition.