

# Ascension Day 2018

## New Life is Coming

Acts 1:1-11

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Merry Christmas! Goes the great proclamation as we make our way through the Advent season, a very joyous time of year where people are brought together and good cheer is in the air. The Incarnation brought God into our very midst! It is truly a doctrine to celebrate for without assuming our humanity, humanity could not have been redeemed. To save us God had to become one of us that our sinful natures could be conquered! But it would take more than the Incarnation to straighten out sinful humanity. If a miraculous birth was required to bare our sins then it would take another miracle to redeem our natures. The death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the assurance that there is more to us than just this life of love and war. The Resurrection is proof that this tactile life is only a beginning.

So we must ask, was Jesus incarnate to remain eternally earthbound? Was Jesus resurrected from death after His crucifixion to spend eternity walking the earth spreading the good news that one day we too could walk around forever? A little tongue and cheek but I think we need to be aware that the Ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father is just as important as Christ's birth and resurrection.

Without the birth of Christ there could be no redemption for our sins, for what would not be assumed in Christ could not have been forgiven. And without His resurrection he would be numbered with the rest of the religious leaders who remain in the grave to this very day. But Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and on those in the tombs bestowing life. So Christ, entering humanity came down to our level with purpose in order to take us heavenward to our rightful place in the Kingdom of God. And that is our path! Currently we walk in the light of Christ while we remain until we too are carried to our heavenly home like as we have seen Christ Ascend. Ascension is a new level of life in Christ that we cannot comprehend this side of

Heaven. Ascension is not a death but a transition from this life to the next.

When someone we care for dies we go through a mourning process. When Christ was bodily on earth he was loved by his followers and they hung on every word...they became a family. As Jesus's earthly journey continued the followers of Christ would eventually have to come to terms with his crucifixion and death. They would find themselves in mourning, afraid and confused. But then, three days later, he stands before them! He is alive...he risen from the dead! They knew there was something special about this Jesus who walked and ate with them, but this, this was miraculous! Things have become more clear...things have become more real.

For forty days after his resurrection, Jesus again eats with his disciples and instructs them further. Much will lay on the shoulders of those to whom the foundations of the Church will lie. Then, after speaking to them about the comforter, the Holy Spirit that he would send, *"they beheld, and he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."* Right before their very eyes Jesus Christ ascends into the heavens that the Holy Ghost may enter the hearts and minds of believers everywhere.

It is only after the Ascension that the Holy Ghost could descend and that Christ could enter each and every heart that would be open to him. The Ascension is not a sad event, it is not a death but leaves us with the promise of continued fellowship as well as the promise of our own personal resurrections and ascensions for we too shall one day join the Lord in the clouds. Don't believe me, listen to St. Paul:

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

(1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

Luke begins the Book of Acts as though the entire ministry of Christ was only a beginning, *“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus **began** both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up...”* The ministry of Jesus Christ was only a beginning that would guide mankind through the following centuries within the boundaries of the Church. It is because of the Ascension that Christ is glorified and continues to work in us to make the Kingdom known. It is because of the Ascension that we can have hope in Christ because he does not lay in a grave but is risen from the dead trampling down death by his own death only to take it up again ascending to the Father that we may become the body of Christ and ascend ourselves into the place prepared for us! The Ascension proves the reality of the resurrection, the Ascension clears the air for a deeper understanding within the fellowship of the Apostles and the Ascension puts away any misconceptions concerning any other religion on earth! Glory be to God our redeemer liveth!

And make no mistake about it...Christ is not ascended to some place far far away. He is not Luke Skywalker somewhere in the depths of space. It is because of his ascension that he transcends time and space and is now closer to you than you can conceive.

Without the ascension Christ could not be spiritually present in every sacrament, his physical presence would preclude that. The ascension of Christ to the Father's right hand tells us there is more to come...that a place is being prepared for us as the Holy Spirit prepares us for that place. The Ascension is the realization of the end of Christ's personal and physical ministry on earth and that our earthly lives are only the beginning of a much greater life...a life found in the Triune essence of God.

The purpose of our earthly lives is to regain that right relationship we once had with the Father in the beginning. The Fall took us out of our Garden home, placing us within new and fowler constraints of time and space. But our Lord has prepared a way of escape through his body and blood that we may once again rise to our proper place where we are destined to be.

Don't let the miracle of the Holy Table be lost on you as we come to receive the precious body and blood of our Lord and Savior truly present in the elements of bread and wine. The Incarnation, the resurrection, the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost are the mercies of God Almighty that we might be saved and come to everlasting life.

To the glory of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost Amen.