

The Ascension of Our Lord (2018)

Acts 1:1–11 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Ephesians 1:15–23 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the

saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Luke 24:44–53 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. **While he blessed them, he parted**

from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

In the Name of Jesus.

OF COURSE He ‘blessed them’ on His way up to heaven! Angel Gabriel proclaimed Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, ‘Blessed,’ for God had been gracious to her! The first word from the mouth of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!’ And the THEME from Jesus’ mouth when He began to fulfill all that was written of Him in Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, was the word of blessing: ‘bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.’

And to ‘set up’ the Ephesians reading today—about OUR ascension and reign with our King, Jesus, NOW!—Saint Paul announces: ³ **Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed** us in Christ with every spiritual **blessing** in the heavenly places,¹

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Eph 1:3). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

My dear ones: Just what WAS the ‘blessing’ Jesus did or spoke, or whatever, as He went up into the cloud? When THAT comes clear, we are blessed indeed!

The BEST PLACE to go check on what sort of advocacy, what ‘speaking well’ of people Jesus did, is the Gospel in which the Ascension is recorded! As we have already heard! ‘Men are going to abuse you; it is YOUR BLESSING to PRAY for them, intercede for them! Men are going to indict you, lay out the charges, be judge, jury and executioner over you—they did it to ME!—but now that I have risen from the dead and ascended to make My Father keep His promise to y’all, the HAPPIEST word I can say to you, My BLESSING is this: ‘Right when and where the next man is doing HIS WORST to instill FEAR, Y’ALL take fear away! At the very crisis moment of accusation and pinning down and displaying the weakness and fault and mistake of any poor son of God, you will have to LOOK...DOWN...TO...SEE...ME—
TO...SEE...HEAVEN....

When YOU defend, forgive, raise from death to life, raise from hell to heaven—

Who are we talking about here? Saint Luke makes clear:

³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments²

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”
⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”
⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”³

My friends, I’m sure y’all are WAY ahead of me on this, this morning! If the Father above pardons those who CRUCIFIED the Christ!—then THEY TOO are IN with God, as acceptable as anyone else; as ESSENTIAL, NECESSARY, as what Saint Paul calls ‘The FULNESS of the Him Who fills all things in all things! The CHURCH!’

The apostles surely got this! That is why they ‘they

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 23:33–34). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 23:39–43). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.’ Oh, it’s just about the LAST WORD of this Gospel! ‘BLESSING!’

Peter disowned his best bud, Jesus. But Saint Luke records—that RIGHT WHEN AND WHERE Peter was calling on heaven to CURSE HIM, if he even KNEW the Lord: And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly. ⁴

So everything is turned over and made new and everything sad is coming untrue!

FRIEND of God CANNOT mean now the poor sinner who is most attached to HIM—but, rather, the poor sinner WHOM God cannot live WITHOUT—check with the Son of God!

And a ‘son of God’ is a title to spread smiles all around, now, since GOD has switched from DEMANDING from any of US, to just giving; giving His Son; now, giving Whom He promised His Son all along: The Lord and

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 22:60–62). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Giver of Life!

Is that why there's a ten day gap between the Ascension Day—40 after Easter—and Pentecost, and the visible arriving of the Holy Spirit—50 after Easter? To cheer up even people like you and me! The Risen King of Israel, the Christ, spent TEN WHOLE DAYS tugging on His Father and repeating to Him: You PROMISED! You PROMISED! You PROMISED!

And now, the very BREATH of the Living God, Who FIRST gave us walkin-around life, to thrive in THIS WORLD, now is only too happy to give us New Life, by His Word, by His Baptism, in His Church—but give that Life to WHOM?

In Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he writes of husbands and wives—and knows nothing better than to correlate husbands and wives with the Bridegroom Christ, and His Bride, the Church! And at the end of the lesson we heard today, Saint Paul called the Church, 'The Fullness of Him Who fills all things in all things!'

Husbands rightly, most HAPPILY bless their wives as their 'better halves.' Actually, that's pretty 'weak tea!' Not just 'half!' Heaven's blessing cannot be so small! 'My fullness! My completeness! My reason for living!'

(You see, that title I wear, ‘Husband of the year!’, is NOT an honorary title! You need to go out there and earn that DAY AFTER DAY AFTER DAY!....)

The greatest command of God is ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all whatever you are!’ And the second is of the same kind: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself!’

What the Ascension of Jesus Christ teaches us is this: God creating us, Christ dying and rising for us, The Spirit ONLY HAPPY when He dwells IN US—this is NOT some sort of ‘afterthought’ on the part of the Blessed Holy Trinity! No!

My dear ones: The Ascension of Jesus is the FINAL revelation that GOD considers THE...WHOLE...POINT...OF...BEING...GOD:

YOU!

Me too!

And a whole bunch of others, from ALL NATIONS:

Who are DESPERATE to hear a kind word from above, or from fellow children of God here below, until He comes again.

The Lord makes clear that His prayer that He teaches us is NOTHING BUT a cry for the Father above to keep His Promise, and to have His Spirit live in us and make US holy!

He is keeping that promise, not only when we fail to keep the commandments, and He pardons us!

He keeps that Promise even when the NEXT MAN is so CLEARLY guilty, and WORTHY of the indictment of God and man, heaven and earth...

And we're left praying that when the Lord returns He returns STILL speaking kindly to us, blessing us!

What is the worst temptation into which we fall and in which we fail? 'I thank you, Lord, that I am not like other men! Look how many ways I am different and worth you notice!'

No wonder that the Church has sung at the giving of Christ's Body and Blood for the forgiveness of THAT worst of all sins:

Save us, Lord! Hosanna!

BLESSED is HE that comes in the Name of the Lord!

My dear Christians, disciples, friends of God:

Your God CANNOT LIVE without you, in the Name of Jesus! Amen!