

*He was taken up*  
*into Heaven*

 *and he sat at the right  
hand of the Father*

*Ascension Day 2025*  
*Bible Readings <sup>and</sup> Reflections*



Each year, 40 days after Easter, churches around the world mark the Ascension of the Lord, celebrating the moment when Jesus returned to Heaven; physically rising into Heaven in the presence of His apostles. The Ascension is one of the key events in the life of Christ, and it is recorded in several places in the Bible, not just the 2 we have heard read out [Luke 24:50-53; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:6-12].

In some church traditions, who clearly like a party, they not only celebrate Ascension Day itself but squeeze in an additional 8 day afterfeast between Ascension Day and the next big day in the church calendar Pentecost. I'm not suggesting that we go for the full 8 day afterfeast, but I at least am guilty of almost forgetting the Ascension altogether...

After Jesus' death and resurrection at Easter, Jesus continues to meet with his followers, continuing to teach and prepare them for what would come next. Then, on the 40th day, He led them to the Mount of Olives, blessed them, and was taken up into Heaven.

Jesus' final promise before ascending was that His followers would receive the Holy Spirit, who would give them power to witness to the ends of the Earth (Acts 1:8).

Why is it important? The ascension is important to Christians because through it Christ completed his work on earth, the work of our redemption. It showed that Jesus really had overcome death – he wasn't just resurrected to die again, but to live forever. It demonstrates that Jesus is now with the Father. We can still talk to him as a friend but He is a friend who is God ruling and reigning in heaven.

Also by returning to Heaven, Jesus opens the way for all who follow Him. The Ascension is a sign of hope that eternal life is possible. He goes to prepare a place for His followers [John 14:2-3].

But the Ascension was not just the end of Jesus' time on Earth. It was a new chapter for Jesus's followers and a pointer to what comes next in the Christian story.

I'd like you to try and imagine for a few moments how the disciples felt in that period between the ascension and when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Perhaps they were full of awe at what they had seen - the risen Jesus being taken up to Heaven, the thought He was there sitting enthroned next to his Father God. But also they may have felt strangely bereft as they could no longer chat with Jesus face to face. But they knew Jesus had been truthful when he tried to prepare them for his death and resurrection, so they had good reason to believe Him when He told them that the promised Holy Spirit was coming, a comforter and helper.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did come and fill Jesus followers as promised, and they again experienced the closeness to God they had known when Jesus walked among them. The same Holy Spirit was with them and is with us now to help us fulfil Jesus's mission and to bring the things of heaven to earth. So let us make ourselves open to the Holy Spirit in us as we worship the risen and ascended Christ.

# Day 1



## Read all about it

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

### The Ascension of Jesus

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

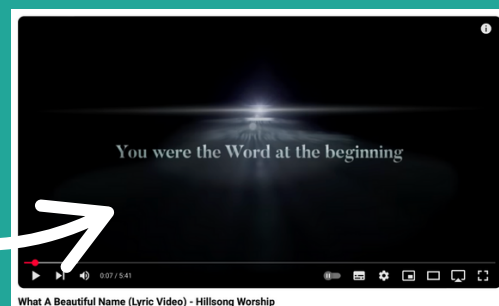
-Luke 24:45-53

## Reflection

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# Praise

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Luke is the only one to mention the blessing Jesus gave to the disciples during his ascension, with outstretched arms. Obviously, we have no record of what Jesus specifically said to them. In other Bible passages Jesus is called the great high priest and, to me, this moment, which Luke thought significant to record, is reminiscent of the Old Testament priestly blessing in Numbers 6:

<sup>22</sup> The Lord said to Moses, <sup>23</sup> “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: <sup>24</sup> ““The Lord bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”’ <sup>27</sup> “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

When I reread this, I was struck particularly by the final line “they will put my name on the Israelites and I will bless them”. Upon Googling, I found this explanation: “It signifies that God's presence and protection are bestowed upon those who are blessed”. How powerful is this imagery? Especially in light of the promise from Jesus in Luke’s gospel, that he is going to “send you what my Father has promised” – the Holy Spirit. We are forever in God’s presence now, by His Spirit living in us, “clothed with power from on high”, something that could not have happened without Jesus’ ascension.

## Picture this



Women at the Grave of Christ and Ascension of Christ (so-called „Reidersche Tafel”); Ivory; Milan or Rome, c. 400 AD

# Day 2

## Read all about it

Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

-Acts 1:6-11

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

-Ephesians 1:19-23

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## Reflection

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you”. I don’t always feel like I have power in my everyday walk with Jesus. I *know* that I have the Spirit of Christ in me, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27) but sometimes I’d just like Jesus to be physically here instead, to be honest.

In her book “Listening to God”, Joyce Huggett says, “...contemplative prayer is essentially listening prayer. But it would not necessarily be words that I would be hearing. Rather it would be an awareness of the presence of the indwelling Christ.” Maybe sometimes, to feel that power, all we need to do is spend time contemplating the indwelling of Christ’s Spirit in us, thanks to the sacrifice he made for us, and as a result of his ascension into heaven...

From Spurgeon: “The very same power which raised Christ is waiting to raise the drunkard from his drunkenness, to raise the thief from his dishonesty, to raise the Pharisee from his self-righteousness, to raise the Sadducee from his unbelief.”

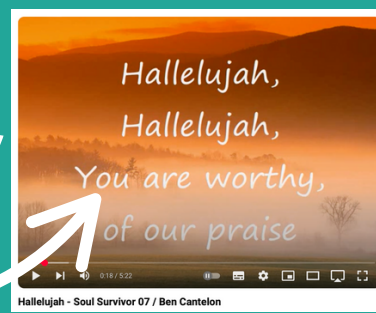
Who in your life could you pray for today to experience this power, available to us because Jesus ascended (it could be you!)? Remember: ALL things have been placed under Jesus’ feet; we can pray for his Kingdom to come into ALL situations.

## Picture this



16th century, German "disappearing feet" by Unknown author

Praise  
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# Day 3



## Read all about it

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.

-Mark 16:19

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## Reflection

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was proof of the promise that Jesus is now in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. The term “God’s right hand” in the Bible refers to the Messiah who has the same power and authority as God to subdue his enemies.

*The Lord says to my lord:*

*“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”*

-Psalm 110:1

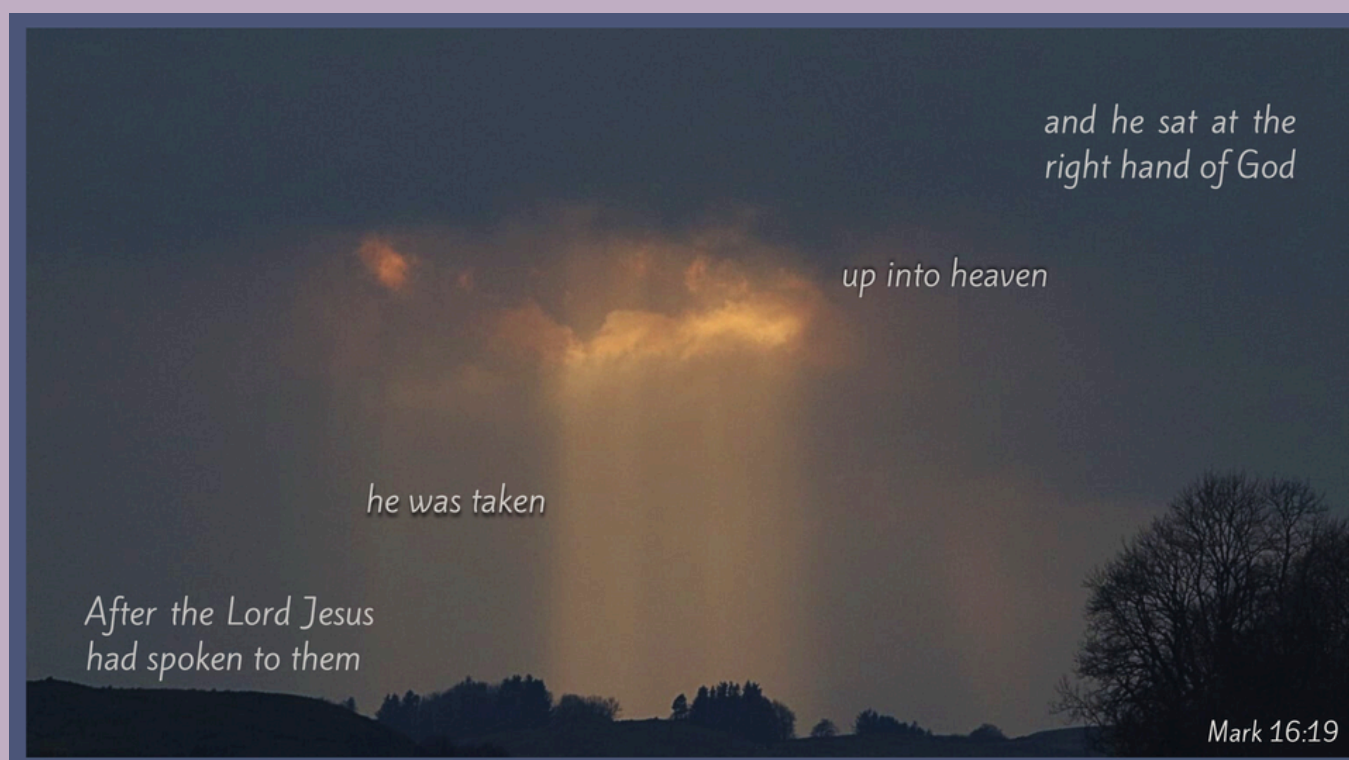
*“It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”*

-1 Peter 3:21-22

In Romans 8:34, Paul says that Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also “interceding for us”. It’s pretty hard for me to get my head round the fact that Jesus, right now, is praying for you and me. Reflect on this image for a while... because another crazy fact is that if you are now in Christ and Christ is in you, the spiritual reality is that you too are seated in the heavenly realm with the Father (Ephesians 2:6).



## Picture this



# Day 4

## Read all about it

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

-Hebrews 4:14

For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

-Hebrews 9:24-28

## Reflection

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Jesus' sacrifice was made on the earth, and as Fran said on Sunday, his work here was completed. He ascended to become our mediator and high priest in heaven. His sacrifice has done away with our sin. Done away with it. Are you living totally in this freedom? What does it look like to profess your faith and hold firm in your current circumstances, as the writer of Hebrews tells us to do?

The Troparion of Ascension Day in the Orthodox Church is a hymn sung to commemorate Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven, which says:

“O Christ God, You have ascended in Glory,  
Granting joy to Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit.  
Through the blessing they were assured  
That You are the Son of God,  
The Redeemer of the world!”

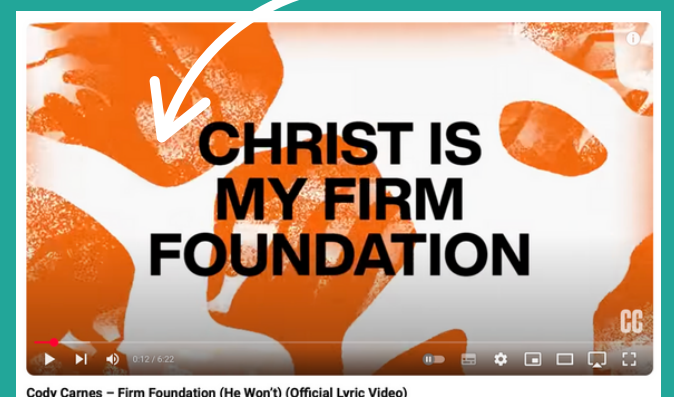
## Picture this



Workshop of Ghirlandaio, 15th century, [Domenico Ghirlandaio](#) - Silvia Blasio (a cura di), Marche e Toscana, terre di grandi maestri tra Quattro e Seicento,

## Praise

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Cody Carnes - Firm Foundation (He Won't) (Official Lyric Video)