

Why did Jesus Ascend to Heaven? The MTG 5-5

In each of the three readings this week we hear the Good News. Christ has died and risen from the dead! Then, of course, we hear He ascended to heaven. But why did He ascend to heaven? Let's look closely at the readings...

The first chapter of Acts we hear the story. Jesus rose from the dead and told his apostles to wait for "the promise of the Father...in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." He told them, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses...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." He told them to wait for the promise of the Father - the Holy Spirit. What were they to do while they waited? A few verses later it says, "All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer." We pray as we wait for the power of the Spirit in our lives. But what of the Ascension?

In the second reading (Ephesians) we read about God the Father of glory and "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...he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body." Why did Christ ascend? To be seated in His rightful place and the right hand of God the Father. Indeed, His glory and righteousness demanded this, but there is another reason. God "gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body." Christ is the head of the Church, His body. What is Christ doing at the right hand of the Father? (*What is He doing??*) "He is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). "For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a copy of the true one, but heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf (Hebrews 9:24)." What is Christ doing at the right hand of the Father? He is interceding for us!! Do not ever forget this astounding fact of God's mercy and love. He lives forever to make intercession for us!! Take some time and think of Christ interceding for you to the Father, the God of the universe. We can barely comprehend the awesome wonder of this incredible love Jesus has for us.

The message is reinforced in the Gospel. "Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Wait for the Holy Spirit. Wait and pray. He "blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven." Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father to intercede for the disciples (and for us). "They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God." We praise God always for His wonderful and merciful plan. The temple is the where the Word and worship and presence of God is. This where we need to continually be. In His Word, worshiping Him and realizing His presence with us always.

God has done miracles for us. God has died for us. God has risen from the dead. But God's goodness doesn't stop there. We wait and pray. God gives us His Spirit (more next week). Then Jesus intercedes for us at the mighty throne of God. Asking the Father's mercy on us through Body broken for us and His Blood shed for us.

Jesus had to ascend. He is with us in a special way at Mass. He is with us in the tabernacle and at adoration. He is with us always (Matthew 28:20). He loves us. He is interceding for us right now. Let us thank Him and worship Him, in His presence, always.

He is risen! Alleluia!

He is ascended at the right hand of the Father! Alleluia!

He is with us now! Amen! Alleluia!

In Him and through Him and with His Merciful Love,
Paul Ditter