

# An Ascension Perspective

Luke 24:44—53 (v. 52—53)

## Introduction

You will notice the word “observed” in the heading of your worship folder. That is because the Ascension of Our Lord was Thursday, forty days after the resurrection, as Luke tells us in **Acts 1**. We do this when a major feast day falls on a weekday, instead of a Sunday. We observe them on the nearest Sunday because we don’t celebrate them on their day. Oh, we do have a Circuit Ascension service on Ascension Day, but so few people attend that, if we didn’t observe it today, most of our members wouldn’t know Christ had ascended to the Father.

## Why the Ascension is Important

You may ask, “Why is the Ascension of Jesus so important?” It is part of the cycle the Christian Calendar celebrates, the salvation story. In one year, we celebrate the Incarnation and Birth of Christ, His life, ministry, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Church Age, and the Second Coming of Christ. The Ascension is a pivotal part of all this. Here are four things it accomplishes.

### *It puts a cap on Jesus’ earthly ministry (John 20:17)*

First, the Ascension puts a cap on Jesus’ earthly ministry. In the garden, when Mary is confronted with the risen Christ, He tells her, “*Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father*” (**John 20:17**). He was preparing her for His departure. His earthly ministry was over and there was coming a time when He would not be physically present. He spent the next forty days appearing and disappearing to His disciples, preparing them for His leaving.

### *It establishes the reign of Christ (Ephesians 1:20—23)*

When the divinity of the Son of God assumed His humanity at the Incarnation, the dual nature of Christ became permanent, eternal. So, when Paul says in **Ephesians 1** (read **Ephesians 1:20—23**), he is saying that *Christ, as true man, is not only present everywhere, but also now fully exercises His divine power over the universe*, as the **Explanation to the Small Catechism** says. The Ascension establishes the reign of Christ.

### *It allows the Spirit to come (John 16:7)*

In the Upper Room, Jesus told His disciples, “*If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you*” (**John 16:7**). The Holy Spirit gives us faith. Where would we be without Him?

*It allows for His presence (Matthew 28:20)*

When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He said, *“I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20)*. Before the Ascension, Jesus could appear and disappear, but His presence was local. He could only be in one place at one time. Now that He has ascended, spiritually, He is always with us, and physically in the Sacrament of the Altar.

## Our New Perspective

We can see the new perspective the Ascension gives us in the last two verses of our Gospel lesson. Look at what the disciples did after they saw Him return to the Father.

*We are aware – “worship”*

*They worshiped Him.* With this Ascension perspective, they were now aware. They were aware of not only their surroundings, but who Jesus really is. While He was with them, they saw Him as Master and Lord. They knew He was the Christ, the Messiah. Now, they know He is God, for God is the only One worthy of our worship. We worship Him because He is God and has ascended to assume His throne.

*We are joyful – “great joy”*

*They returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* The disciples had been afraid. But in their Ascension perspective, they have great joy. Johannes Bugenhagen said: *What are we afraid of under this king, under this head with whom we are one because we are his members?* We have great joy in this Ascension Perspective.

*We are hopeful – “continually in the temple blessing God”*

*They were continually in the temple blessing God. Hebrews 10* says that we are not to *neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but [encourage] one another, and all the more as [we] see the Day is drawing near (Hebrews 10:25)*. Because of His Ascension, we have the hope of resurrection when He returns. This is why we continually come to the house of God to bless Him.

## Celebrate the Ascension

So, let us celebrate the Ascension of Our Lord and the blessings of forgiveness, salvation, life, and resurrection we have in Him, proclaiming one more time that Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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