

Ascension and Pentecost

The Ascension of Jesus Christ is a pivotal event in the Christian calendar marking the conclusion of His earthly ministry and His return to the Father in heaven. This event is recorded by Luke at the end of his Gospel (Luke chapter 24, verses 50 – 53) and in the Book of Acts (chapter 1, verses 9 -11).

The Significance of the Ascension:-

It affirms the divine nature and authority of Jesus Christ. By ascending to heaven, Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God, a position of power and honour. This is spelt out in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 19 - 23 which states that God *"raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion"*. The Ascension underscores the belief in Jesus as the eternal Son of God, who possesses all authority in heaven and on earth see Matthew chapter 28, verse 18. Remember that Jesus, our *"great high priest who has passed through the heavens,"* now intercedes on behalf of believers, providing them with access to God's grace and mercy. The Ascension assures believers of the efficacy of Christ's atoning sacrifice and His ongoing intercession, as He *"always lives to intercede for them"* (see Hebrews chapter 4, verses 14 – 16). Also the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Father leads to the fulfilment of the promise of the gift of Holy Spirit, see the Gospel of John chapter 14, verses 15 – 17 and chapter 16, verses 7 – 11.

Pentecost:-

The Jewish Feast of Pentecost was a harvest celebration coming 50 days after the Passover when the first sheaf of harvest was 'waved' in the Temple. It was also known as the 'Feast of Weeks' and the 'Day of the First Fruits'. See Leviticus chapter 23, verses 1 – 21. Paul being a Jew could integrate the Jewish feasts into his Christian theology. See the Easter Anthems in the Book of Common Prayer. Christ the 'First Fruits' at the Feast of the Passover, and the beginning of the harvest of lives given to the Lord at Pentecost in response to the call to repentance (see Acts chapter 2, verses 37 – 42).

In our celebration of Pentecost we should never forget that the giving of the Holy Spirit was to equip the Christian Church for the preaching of the Gospel. (See Matthew chapter 28, verses 16 – 20.)

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| 1) Jesus! the Name high over all,
In hell or earth or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly. | 2) Jesus! the Name to sinners dear,
The Name to sinners giv'n;
It scatters all their guilty fear,
It turns their hell to Heav'n. |
| 3) Jesus! the prisoner's fetters breaks,
And bruises Satan's head;
Power into strengthless souls it speaks,
And life into the dead. | 4) O that mankind might taste and see
The riches of His grace!
The arms of love that compass me
Would all the world embrace. |
| 5) His only righteousness I show,
His saving grace proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below
To cry "Behold the Lamb!" | 6) Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His Name,
Preach Him to all and cry in death,
"Behold, behold the Lamb!" |

Charles Wesley 1749