

Up Up and Away?

The Ascension of Jesus.

Mark 16:15-20

The Ascension of Jesus.

Do me a favor: do *not* try to imagine it.

The Ascension is where things get *really* mysterious.

“The Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken into heaven.”

We envision Jesus being sucked into the sky, being vacuumed.

It is not exactly that.

There was an event that can be described.

But the deeper reality of the Ascension is beyond description.

In fact, if we stop at the descriptive aspect, we can miss the reality.

It is not primarily a question of location.

It is not a question of Jesus going from “here” to “there”.

Jesus is not playing Houdini.

Did not Jesus say (at the end of Matthew’s gospel, *just before Ascending*),

“Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

So, what is this all about?

How can one leave and stay at the same time?

Either Jesus was mistaken, or He must *not* be *elsewhere*.

Something did happen that day, in the presence of the Apostles,

and they no longer saw Jesus—and *we* do not see Jesus.

We thus conclude that Jesus is gone.

Wrong.

Jesus rose from the dead with a spiritualized body, a “glorified” body,

a body in conformity with the reality of heaven, of God,

beyond time and place.

Sure, He did fish and chips on the beach, and the Apostles touched His body.

But His appearances were an act of mercy,

to help those struggling with His death.

And they were for a time: 40 days in fact.

His body could not but be “taken into heaven”, i.e. into the mystery of God,

God who is *present*.

Jesus withdrew his bodily presence, and is thus *in-visible*,

but is in fact more present than ever.

Jesus *promised* to be present, a promise which He mysteriously reiterates in saying that He will send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who indwells us. We know this *in faith*—not because we have seen.

The Ascension of Jesus is, in a sense, the completion of the Resurrection. We live in communion with the Risen Lord.

Saint Augustine, in a sermon in the early 400s, for this special day, asks:

“Why do we on earth not strive to find rest with him in heaven even now, through the faith, hope and love that unites us to him? While in heaven he is also with us; and we while on earth are with him. He is here with us by his divinity, his power and his love. We cannot be in heaven, as he is on earth, by divinity, but in him, we can be there by love.”

As Saint Paul says,

“Your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3)

In other words, our hearts, who we are deep inside,
is joined to God, is, in a sense, *in God*.

Why do we not strive to find rest with him?

We have no need to worry.

Why do we so easily search for rest elsewhere, left and right, in things that, at best, bring only temporary rest—when we have permanent rest with him?

Let go and let him.

Let go.

He will “work with us and confirm the word with accompanying signs”,
as we read he did with the Apostles right after He ascended.

All we must do is want it and surrender.

Loving desire and loving acquiescence.

He is with us always until the end of the age...