

# The Ascension

**Objective:** The students will be able to state that the Feast of the Ascension is celebrated forty days after Pascha.

## **For the Catechist**

In the scriptures we read ". . .he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight" (Acts 1:9). Also, the Ascension of Jesus is expressed in the Creed: "He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father." The Feast of the Ascension celebrates Jesus returning to His Father and Jesus' Lordship in heaven. This feast reveals the final destiny of man and of all things. Jesus leads us to the Father. Through Jesus all humanity is united to God.

In the *God With Us* series, this lesson is the first presentation of the Feast of the Ascension. The children are told of the two aspects of this event: the return of Jesus to the Father and Jesus' glorification from the Father. To help the children understand the meaning of glorification, the introduction asks the children to think about the honor and praise we give to sports figures and television stars. This lesson goes on to explain the honor and glory given to Jesus for His humility and obedience. The contrast between the earthly and heavenly glories are obvious, and the children need to realize and accept that the heavenly glories are so much more important. The student lesson places the emphasis on following Jesus who was obedient to God and glorified in heaven.

**The Icon of the Ascension.** The icon gives us a visual representation of this event. Jesus is seen as ascending in glory while He is seated on a throne surrounded by angels. In the foreground is the Mother of God with the apostles. They represent Jesus' inheritance, the Church physically left behind on earth awaiting the promised descent of the Holy Spirit. The risen and glorified Lord Jesus will send His Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

## **Lesson Plan Overview**

**Opening:** Troparion of Pascha

**Introduction:** Discussion about heavenly and earthly glory.

**Read Text Aloud:** Have students volunteer to read the text. Use questions in the teacher manual to discuss the lesson.

### **Activity Tracks:**

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- *Basic:* Ascension
- *Group:* "Honor and Glory" Poster
- *Craft:* "Jesus Is Our Light" Etching

**Closing:** Troparion of Pascha

## **Icon Packets:**

*Come Bless the Lord:*  
The Ascension

## **Teaching Pics:**

Ascension (F7)

## ***Background Reading***

*(Direct quotations from the sources noted)*

### **The Feast of Ascension**

"The Feast of Ascension commemorates the return of Jesus to the glory of His Father, the present mystery in which Christ now sits at the right hand of the Father as High Priest and Savior. At the Ascension, we see the humanity of Jesus enthroned with the Father, just as we saw the divinity of Jesus revealed through His body at the Transfiguration. The fifty days close with the solemnity of Pentecost, proclaiming the coming of the Holy Spirit, whom our Lord promised would be our Paraclete (comforter and advocate) forever." (*LLI* 54-55).

### **The Fifty-day Period after Pascha**

"This Pascha-Pentecost period was celebrated as early as the first half of the second century. It included the feast of the Ascension which celebrates the return of our Lord to the right hand of the Father in glory and falls on the fortieth day after Pascha (always Thursday), according to Luke's chronology (Act 1:3). This feast became part of the liturgical cycle after Pentecost, dating from about the fourth century.

"Another ancient feast of the fifty day period after Pascha is *Mid-Pentecost* celebrated on the twenty-fifth day. It is a theological feast that celebrates the giving of life by God through the resurrection of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. The readings emphasize nourishment with spiritual gifts. The Gospel for the final day of Mid-Pentecost (the following Wednesday) recounts the story of the multiplication of the loaves (Jn 6:5-14). Indeed, the whole Pentecostarion commemorates God's gift of Himself to us filling us with life: Resurrection (Pascha); faith in Christ (Thomas Sunday); His presence in the Eucharist (Mid-Pentecost); deification (Ascension); and the gift of the Spirit (Pentecost)" (*LLII* 38).

# The Lesson Plan

## **Opening**

Let's say [or sing] "Christ is risen!" three times for our opening prayer. [Modify the text according to jurisdiction.]

## **Introduction**

Today I have some pictures of people you might recognize. Do you know any of them? [From magazines or the newspaper, cut out pictures of sport figures, television stars, and familiar religious people—the Pope, Mother Teresa.] Why do we know these people? (Their records, the money they make, their good deeds). The newspapers and television praise these people. Another word for praise could be exalt. When we honor these people we give them glory. Is giving honor and glory a good thing? (Yes) Do you think we should honor people because they make a lot of money? (No) Let's think of some reasons we think we should honor and praise people. (They are nice, good, kind) Let's look at our pictures again and find which people we honor because they are good to other people. (The Pope)

That is what the Church thinks too. The Church praises and honors the people who have followed Jesus and obeyed God. In our Church we sing songs and say prayers that include the words honor and glory. We sing praises to God, the Theotokos, Jesus and the Saints.

Today we are going to read about the way Jesus is honored and exalted in heaven because he acted with humility and obedience to God. What does humility mean? (To think you are just like everyone else, to know you are not better than anyone.) What does obedience mean? (It means to listen and follow.)

Let's read our lesson.

## The Ascension

After Jesus had risen from the dead, He appeared to His disciples. He taught them many things about the Kingdom of God. He explained why He had died on the cross and rose from the dead. He told the disciples that God wanted people all over the world to hear the Gospel.



**T**hen he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the

Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And [behold] I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."  
(Luke 24:45-49)

Jesus' disciples had lived with Him and had seen His death on the cross. He appeared to them after His resurrection. They were His witnesses; people who could talk about what they had seen. It would be their job to tell the world how Jesus was our Savior. But they could not do this alone. They needed the Holy Spirit whom the Father had promised to send.



## Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

**... the Holy Spirit whom the Father has promised to send.**

What did Jesus tell the disciples when He appeared to them? (Many things about the Kingdom of God) The disciples were His witnesses. What does that mean? (They saw and talked to Jesus. Now they can talk about what they saw.) Why did Jesus promise to send the Holy Spirit? (To help the disciples tell people all over the world about God)

**It takes place 40 days after Pascha.**

What is the name of Feast that takes place 40 days after Pascha? (The Ascension)

**... was taken up to heaven.**

What do you think the apostles thought as they watched Jesus "taken up to heaven"?

[Let the children share their ideas about the amazement at what has just happened according to the Gospel passage.]

**In the Creed we express our belief that Jesus ...**

What does the Ascension tell us? (We can be one with God.) Where is Jesus sitting in heaven? (At the right hand of the Father) In what prayer do we say those words? (The Creed)

After forty days, Jesus returned to His Father. We remember that Jesus returned to His Father on the Feast of the Ascension. It takes place 40 days after Pascha.



**T**hen he led them (out) as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he taken up to heaven. (Luke 24:50-51)

On the Feast of the Ascension we are reminded that we, too, will be with God. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. We live in the hope that we will be with God.

That Gospel tells us that through Jesus we will be one with God. In the Creed we express our belief that Jesus

"ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and of His Kingdom there will be no end."



## They knew Jesus would keep His promise.

*What do you think glorify means? (Honor; respect). Why is Jesus glorified in heaven? (He obeyed God.) We thank Jesus for helping us see more clearly what God is like. What are some ways we can thank Jesus? (Praying, singing praise to Him, wanting to be like Him in everything we do) What did Jesus promise? (To send the Holy Spirit)*

**Let's Review:** *What do you remember on the Feast of the Ascension? (Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after Pascha.) What does glorify mean? (To honor, praise, exalt) Why is Jesus glorified in heaven? (Because He obeyed God and granted us eternal life)*

The apostles saw Jesus ascend into heaven. He had promised to send the Holy Spirit, but He did not tell them when the Holy Spirit would come. They had to wait. They prayed as they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit to be with them. They knew Jesus would keep His promise.



Ascension Thursday remembers Jesus' return to His Father. The Feast of the Ascension is celebrated 40 days after Pascha.

**Words to Remember:**  
**Ascension:** Jesus returns to His Father, promising to send the Holy Spirit. Our Church celebrates the Ascension on the 40th day after Pascha.  
**Kingdom of God:** When people follow God's way in all things.

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## Activity Tracks

### Basic: Ascension

[This worksheet is in the student text.]

*Today we learned that Jesus is glorified in heaven. Let's review what we know about Jesus as we read the sentences and follow the directions.*

**Ascension**

Complete the puzzle at the bottom of the page by following the directions given in each sentence.

1. If Jesus appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection put **A** in Box 1. If not, put **Z** in Box 1.
2. If Jesus told His disciples about the Kingdom of God put **S** in Box 2. If not, put **Y** in Box 2.
3. If Jesus told them He would send them a Helper—the Holy Spirit—put **C** in Box 3. If not, put **K** in Box 3.
4. If after forty days Jesus no longer appeared to His friends, put **E** in Box 4. If He did appear to them, put **Q** in Box 4.
5. If after forty days Jesus returned to His Father, put **N** in Box 5. If not put **W** in Box 5.
6. If Jesus did what His Father wanted Him to do, put **S** in Box 6. If not put **L** in Box 6.
7. If the Church remembers Jesus' return to the Father, put **I** in Box 7. If not, put **V** in Box 7.
8. If the joy of the Resurrection filled His friends and made them rejoice, put **O** in Box 8. If not, put **B** in Box 8.
9. If by returning to His Father, Jesus received glory put **N** in Box 9. If not, put **U** in Box 9.

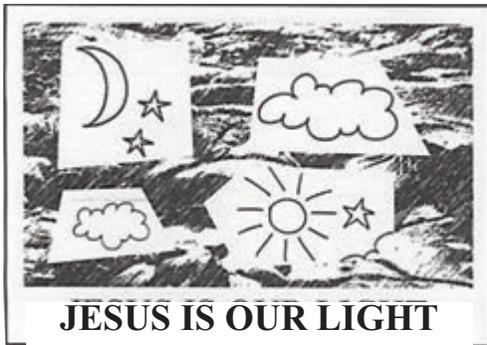
A	S	C	E	N	S	I	O	N
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.

Now read the letters in the boxes.  
What does the Church call this Feast remembering when Jesus returned to His Father?

**Group:** "Honor and Glory" Poster

*Materials:* Magazines, poster board, markers, glue, scissors

*We learned that Jesus was glorified in heaven because He obeyed God. Today let's look for pictures that show people obeying God. What are some ways to obey God? (Helping other people, praying, going to church, etc.) Let's make a poster today to show all the ways we can honor and give glory to God. [Have the students cut out pictures of any scenes and paste them on the poster board. Have someone print neatly HONOR AND GLORY TO GOD at the top of the poster board.]*



**Craft:** "Jesus Is Our Light" Etching

*Materials:* Crayons, plain white paper and scissors

[Have sample ready to show children.] *Today we learned that Jesus was glorified in heaven. Why was He glorified? (He united us with God) Another way to think about this idea is by remembering that Jesus brought light into the world. The Ascension of Jesus Christ shows us that we can live in this light forever. Today we are going to make an etching that shows the dark does not completely overcome the light. The stars, moon, and sun give us light. We are going to call our etching "Jesus Is Our Light." Why is that a good title? [Hold up example.] (Jesus gives us light just like the stars, moon and sun.) Let's start our etchings. Print the title at the bottom of the page like the example. Use bright-colored crayons to cover the rest of the paper in any way you want. Next, color over the paper with black crayons. Be sure you do not color over the title. Now, use the sharp edge of your scissors to etch symbols of light such as the sun, moon, stars, etc.*

**Closing:** *Let's say [or sing] "Christ is risen!" three times for our closing prayer. [Modify the text according to jurisdiction.]*