

Why did Jesus leave?

(Acts 1:1–14; 2:32–36)

We celebrate the ascension of Jesus to heaven after He was raised from the dead. Many, and probably most, who enjoy the holiday, do not know why we celebrate it. Before His crucifixion and resurrection Jesus's disciples were not glad about it either (John 14:27; 16:6). But once they gained a greater understanding (*cf.* Luke 24:26) we read of no complaints from them, only an anticipation of His return.

Jesus ascended to heaven for the benefit of believers (which is especially made clear at Pentecost), but also for His own benefit. He had to be exalted. God the Father lifted Jesus above all others, in honor, in privilege, and in authority. And for that reason alone it is right to celebrate His ascension.

I. God the Father lifted Jesus above all others in honor.

1. To be seated at the right hand of God was an honor. *Cf.* Mark 10:37ff; 1 Kings 2:19.
2. Because of His submission to the Father, Jesus was honored in at least three further ways (Philippians 2:5–11): by being given a name above every name, by having all bow at His name, and by having every tongue confess that He is Lord.
3. His disciples should have been glad that Jesus was returning to heaven because of the honor given to Him (John 14:28; *cf.* 17:5).

Love for Jesus should express itself in joy for His ascension and the honor He has received.

II. God the Father lifted Jesus above all others in privilege.

1. Jesus may give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31; *cf.* 2:38).
2. Jesus may intercede for His followers (Romans 8:34) as a seated Savior (Hebrews 8:1; 10:11–13).
3. Jesus will have His enemies for a footstool (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25).

Believers take advantage of a seated Savior by accepting His work as completed, enjoying His complete forgiveness, and praying that He gives repentance where needed.

III. God the Father lifted Jesus above all others in authority.

1. His authority has already been implied in His position, the obedience of the apostles (Acts 5), and His reigning (1 Corinthians 15:25).
2. His authority was stated in Matthew 28:18–20.
3. His authority is declared as well in Ephesians 1:22. The context relates it to the ascension (v 20) and repeats the honor and privilege given Him. Verse 22 adds that the Father has appointed Him to be head over everything for the church.

Believers should submit to Jesus as their Head and accept the fact of His gracious, sovereign reign even over tough times.

Celebrate the ascension of Jesus. Rejoice that Jesus has received the honor which is due Him. Take advantage of the privileges which He has been given. Rest in His authority.

Jesus had to enter His glory. And for that reason He ascended back to heaven. Believers benefit from His ascension, but most of all Jesus deserved it. Rejoice for Him.