



# THE NEW SHOFAR

**Question: “What’s the difference between you and God?”**

**Answer: “God never thinks He’s you.”**

## *Ascension*

*We proclaim Jesus as the Christ, dead, risen ascended and reigning*

The ascension is the feat that brings together some of the key elements of the saving works of Jesus as well as setting down the reassurance and hope that is there for those who dare to believe and to act on that belief...

*The Risen and Ascended Christ, who reigns from the throne he shares with his Father, exercises an absolute authority over all creation. He will return in glory at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.*

The ascension is not something that comes out of the blue in the New Testament. **Psalm 110:1** prefigures (points forward to) both the ascension and the enthronement of the Risen Christ... *Yahweh says to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.* According to the biblical tradition Enoch was taken up into heaven (**Genesis 5:24**) as was Elijah (**2 Kings 2:1-18**).

### **What is important is the theology, not the details of the act**

We often underrate the ascension, concentrating on the events that seem far more important – the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus. But what the ascension does is link the Jesus of history, the one we read about in the New Testament with the Christ of faith.

This distinction between the Jesus of the gospels and the Christ in whom we believe today is something of a false division. Both are truly the One sent by the Father for our salvation. Being aware of this dual way of looking at Jesus can be helpful in our spiritual reflections. The idea is that Jesus, as a historical figure, is not the One the church worships. We give thanks for the incarnation and without it being a reality, the Church would not exist and salvation would not be ours. However, when we ponder our prayers, creeds and liturgies, we see the fullness of Jesus who is our Christ, the historical realities as well as the implications and effects of who he was and what he did in the cosmos.

The ascension brings these two together, acts as a kind of bridge between the two. It is important because it serves to highlight what Jesus means for us today as our Christ. This is what Paul highlights in teachings like those of **Ephesians 1:20-21**... *God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come...*

### *Christ reigning as priest, prophet and king*

And what does he do after he ascended? The Letter sees the Ascension bringing Christ into the heavenly phase of his priesthood, now that the earthly ministry has been

accomplished. As the Christ, Jesus continues to carry out the will of his Father as the risen, ascended and reigning. This he does as priest, prophet and king.

**Prophets** were tasked with speaking God's Word to people. In the Old Testament, this included both proclaiming God's truth to others and revealing God's plans for the future. Some of the prophets also performed miracles and healings. In these earlier models, the people of the time understood how Jesus's words showed him to be such a prophet. He taught the Word of God, often speaking in parables.

**Old Testament priests** served as mediators between humans and God. It was the priests who offered sacrifices on behalf of the people. Jesus is our Mediator and our High Priest: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). **Hebrews 4–10** details the way in which Jesus is our ultimate High Priest and how His priesthood is far superior to the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews also explains how the Old Testament system of priests served to foreshadow the ministry of Jesus. The Levitical priesthood of Aaron's line was not intended to continue forever. Jesus' priesthood is eternal.

**The office of king** in the Old Testament is illustrated well by David. God called David a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). He promised to David, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16). This promise was fulfilled in the Messiah, who was also given the title "Son of David." Jesus is this Son of David and the rightful King. This is why the angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus *will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end* (Luke 1:32–33).

### ***The promise of the Ascension***

It was not God's original plan that death enters the world; however, it was through sin and turning away from God that death became a part of human existence. In God's plan, it is not the human body that would last forever, but the human soul. Today, as we celebrate this feast, we recognize its spiritual meaning for us. After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His Disciples for 40 days, eating and drinking with them, proving to them that He was no mere ghost. He truly lived. Rather, His body now had new properties. He suddenly appeared among them, walking through closed doors. He appeared at many different locations. This indicated to us the properties of the risen body. This is another aspect of the Ascension of the Lord that is important for us to understand. It is the fact that without Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit would not have come. It was Christ's ascension that made Pentecost possible. *It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you,* Jesus told His disciples (**John 16:7**). The event is the completion of the Easter mysteries of the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is the final step before the Holy Spirit comes to us. Christ's ascension is the ultimate goal for each and every one of us. It reminds us that He will come back again someday at the end of time. We need to be prepared for the remaking of the world at its conclusion.

As Pentecost draws near, we celebrate the feast of the Ascension in anticipation of the coming and the revival of the Spirit within each one of us. The Spirit was given to us in our baptism and fully bestowed upon us in our Confirmation. On this feast, we come

together praying that we open our lives to the Spirit and become true witnesses of Christ in the world.