

Over the years, have you returned to your high school or college since you graduated? Each fall high schools and colleges around the country plan a Homecoming. It's a time for graduates to venture back to their old stomping grounds. It's a time for alumni to return to their alma mater and get reacquainted with familiar faces and friends.

If you think about it, Jesus' Ascension, his return back to heaven is a lot like **HOMECOMING**, for 2 reasons: 1) *It reminds us that Jesus returned to his old stomping grounds.* 2) *It assures us that believers in Jesus will be reacquainted with familiar faces and friends.*

- 1) Let's see now ... Born as a human ✓
- Live perfectly under the law ✓
- Substitute and suffer for all people ✓
- Die to remove sins ✓
- Come back to life in 3 days ✓
- Fulfill every OT promise & prophecy ✓
- Conduct a 40-day workshop to prepare followers for departure ✓

Jesus successfully completed his “To-Do” list. He's ready to return home. He would be disappearing from the sight of his followers. This would be different from what he had done since his resurrection. During those 40 days he would appear suddenly, miraculously – on the road to Emmaus, in the upper room, a couple of times – then vanished just as quickly, but he knew he would see them again.

This time, while the disciples watched, he was taken up higher and higher into the sky until a cloud hid him from their sight.

Now, we could debate whether the disciples understood what they witnessed. But that won't change the Lord's purpose. He was carrying out his promise, repeated again and again, of a Homecoming. Or, as he put it: **“I will ascend and return to my Father, where I was before.”**

His Homecoming would allow him to resume his rule over heaven and earth with royal power. No

longer would he be visibly present as the humble Son of Man. He would now be invisibly present everywhere as the exalted and ascended Son of God.

Now in heaven: **“He is seated at the right hand of God.”** While we confess this truth in our Creeds, do we understand it correctly? You don't really picture Jesus sitting on a golden throne, or at God's side, do you? Because if you did, that would mean that Jesus is restricted to one place. How can an *omnipresent* God be confined to one place? The idea of a God, who fills the whole universe with his presence, is way too much for our tiny brains to take in. That's why God uses picture language to bring the God, who is beyond our understanding, down to our level.

Sitting on a throne, or at God's side is God's way to express his *omnipotence*. There's none stronger. And he rules the universe with this wonderful combination of power and grace for believers.

Yes, that too boggles our minds, but it doesn't make it untrue. By faith, we receive this truth of Scripture as fact. We cherish it. We find comfort in it. We thank him that he is our all-powerful King, who also happens to be our always-gracious Savior.

Jesus Ascension is like Homecoming, reminding us that Jesus returned to his old stomping grounds. And it also assures us that believers in Jesus will be reacquainted with familiar faces and friends.

- 2) It would take too long to list all the blessings Christ's Ascension holds for us, as believers. So, let's pick 5 and identify their significance.

Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

Jesus' Ascension is the Father's stamp of approval on the substitutionary work Jesus did while he was here on earth. He met perfectly the flawless standards established by God which no one could

meet. He paid the full price established by God as punishment for those who sin with his innocent death on the cross. His triumphant resurrection along with his victorious ascension were 2 ways the Father gave 2 thumbs up to his Son's work.

Romans 8:34: "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is interceding for us."

Jesus' Ascension means he's your attorney, pleading your case in his Father's courtroom. Your daily sins require his daily intercession. Your attorney's conversation with the Judge goes something like this: *"Father, this penitent sinner stands before you asking for your forgiveness. I represent them and paid for their sins once and for all. You accepted my payment when you raised me from the dead and welcomed me back home. In your grace, pardon them, so they can remain ours and join us here in heaven one day."*

John 14:2,3: "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Jesus' Ascension is the guarantee of your own ascension, when you'll get reacquainted with familiar Christian family members, faces and friends. Jesus has gone ahead to get everything ready for those who remain faithful even to the point of death. And if he's getting everything ready for you, he most certainly will return so he can take you there to enjoy it!

Acts 1:11: "Men of Galilee," the angels said, "Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Jesus' Ascension is another one of those times in our salvation story when angels pop up:

- 1) Delivering Jesus' birth announcement to Mary,
- 2) At Jesus' birth, in the sky to the shepherds,
- 3) After Jesus' temptation to strengthen him,
- 4) During Jesus' agony in Gethsemane to comfort him,

- 5) As part of Jesus' resurrection announcement to the women,
- 6) And here ... While Jesus' ascended.

I don't know about you, but I need reminders. I use lots of post-its. It seems that one of the effects of sin is that it's messed up our ability to remember things.

It's easy to forget about blessings God's. And yet, we can list all the challenges we face. We forget about the sins we commit against others. And yet, we remember the sins others have committed against us.

Of course, the God who knows all things, knows we need reminders. Jesus' Ascension is a powerful reminder! We tend to remember people be the way they looked, the last time we saw them.

Our last glimpse of Jesus was 43 days ago. We saw him in the Garden of Gethsemane, on trial before Pontius Pilate and then on a cross outside of Jerusalem. Just 40 days ago, we saw him again, but not where we expected to see him. He wasn't in the tomb. Who could forget his hands when he came to visit on Easter evening in the upper room? They still had the wounds from the nails. How valuable that the scars on his hands stick in our minds, our sins are forgiven!

One day, the angel promised: **"This same Jesus,"** the Savior we've come to know and to love, **will visibly return from heaven.** We celebrate Jesus' Ascension as a reminder of what our Savior's nail marked hands did for us and our salvation. We also celebrate it to remember a heavenly Homecoming, both his and ours.

For the believer, the sight of Jesus' return will bring the invitation we've been aching to hear, **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."** That's where alumni of the Lord go to get reacquainted with familiar faces and friends. See you there!