

# WORKSHEETS

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# The Ascension & Pentecost





## DID YOU KNOW?

1. The Ascension of the Lord is the slava of the city of Belgrade. On the Ascension in 1403, despot Stefan Lazarević declared the city of Belgrade as the capital and the feast of Christ's Ascension became the slava, a religious holiday for the city.
2. In the 4th century, a basilica dedicated to this holiday was built on the site of Christ's Ascension into heaven.
3. Ascension is one of the moving feast days: it falls on the same day, but the date changes because it depends on when Pascha falls.
4. The Ascension of the Lord is always celebrated on Thursday, forty days after Pascha and ten days before Pentecost.
5. The largest historical and legal document of the Serbian medieval state, the famous Dushan's Code, was promulgated on the Ascension of the Lord in 1349, and supplemented also on the feast of the Ascension of the Lord on 1354.



Dushan's Code



*The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*

Sundays after the Christian Pascha are dedicated to the commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ. In addition, they highlight special events that describe the deity of Christ, His power and glory, which further established the truth of the events of Christ's Resurrection.

On the 40th day after Christ's Resurrection, the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is celebrated. On the 50th day after Christ's Resurrection, the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, Pentecost, is celebrated.

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|---|--|
| Bright Sunday- Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ      | ▶ Sunday of St. Thomas   |
| Sunday of the Myrrhbearers                                | ▶ Sunday of the Paralytic  |
| Sunday of the Samaritan woman                             | ▶ Sunday of the Blind man  |
| The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ                    | ▶ Sunday of the Holy Fathers of 1 <sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council |
| Pentecost- The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles |  |

## from the Feast of Pascha to Pentecost

- **Bright Sunday**- dedicated to the event of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Feast of Feasts. The Gospel of John (1: 1-17).
- **Sunday of St. Thomas**- dedicated to the Apostle Thomas, who doubted that the Lord rose from the dead. Touching the wounds of Christ, Thomas was convinced and said: "My Lord and my God." The Lord warned him, saying that blessed are those who have not seen but have believed. The story is described in the Gospel of John (20, 19-31).
- **Sunday of the Myrrhbearers**- dedicated to the Myrrhbearing women and the righteous Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus - witnesses of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. The myrrhbearers came to the tomb very early on the first day of the week to anoint the body of Christ, but they only found a stone torn from the Tomb and the Angels in light-colored garments. The story is described in the Gospel of Mark (15, 43-47 and 16, 1-8).
- **Sunday of the Paralytic**- dedicated to the event of the miraculous healing of the Paralytic, who suffered for 38 years. Jesus healed the Paralytic in a pool in Bethesda . The story is described in the Gospel of John, (5, 1-15).
- **Sunday of the Samaritan woman** - dedicated to the Samaritan woman who recognized Jesus as the Savior in a conversation at Jacob's well near the city of Sychar. This brave woman became a Christian, receiving the name Photini, and preaching the Gospel around the world. It is celebrated on April 2. The story is described in the Gospel of John, (4, 5-42).
- **Sunday of the Blind Man**- dedicated to the healing of the Blind from the birth of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. The miracle embittered the Jews because it was done on the Sabbath day, although it clearly testified to the divine power of Christ. The Blind man believed in Christ, that he was the Son of God, and he regained his sight. The story is described in the Gospel of John, (9, 1-38).
- **Sunday of the Holy Fathers of 1st Ecumenical Council** - dedicated to the event of the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in 325. On this Sunday the Church of God remembers the 318 God-bearing Fathers and their struggle in defense of the gospel news that Jesus Christ was truly the Son of God who was born into the world and became man.



Christian Pentecost is one of the most magnificent church holidays. It has its origins in the apostolic age. Of the Christian holidays, only Pascha and Pentecost have their roots in the Old Testament. The Acts of the Apostles describes in detail the event of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles:

“And in the fulfilling of the day of Pentecost, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly a sound came out of the heaven as borne along by the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And tongues as of fire appeared to them, being distributed; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled of the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2, 1-4)

### **Is the mystery of the feast of Pentecost only in the fact that the Holy Apostles began to speak in different tongues?**

Certainly, the event of glossolalia attracted the attention of those gathered. Everyone could understand the message of the Holy Apostle Peter about the Resurrection of Christ in their own language. However, during His earthly life, the Lord performed greater miracles, spoke the language of love, and again provoked contradictory reactions from his contemporaries.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles definitely revealed the expectations of the Old Testament. This means that, if in the events of the Old Testament the grace of the Holy Spirit was poured out only on the chosen individuals of the chosen people, in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is poured out on every man who believes that Christ is the Son of God the Savior of the world!

### **Where is the connection between the feast of Christ's Resurrection and the feast of Pentecost?**

On several occasions, in the events before the suffering, the Lord promised the Apostles that He would send them the Holy Spirit. However, Christ had to suffer for the Spirit to be sent. Suffering, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost must not be separated. For this reason, Christ commanded His disciples not to leave the Holy City of Jerusalem.

After the Ascension of Christ in glory, the disciples expected the event of the descent of the Holy Spirit. And on the fiftieth day after the Resurrection, and on the tenth day after the Ascension, the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles. The Acts of the Apostles point out that the Holy Apostle Peter gained three thousand souls by the power of the Holy Spirit. Everything that the Apostles could not understand during the life of Christ was revealed on the fiftieth day after Christ's Resurrection. Ordinary fishermen become wise hunters of people and entire nations are baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Venerable Justin Popovich points out that the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles is the birthday of the Church of God. Moreover, on the feast of Pentecost, Orthodox churches are decorated with green grass.

Church iconography describes this event with an icon of the Apostles sitting on the side while in the middle there is an empty place intended for the Lord who ascended to heaven ten days earlier

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. The officers then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!" The Pharisees answered them, "Are you led astray, you also? Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed." Nikodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."



*Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*



## Test your Knowledge

### 1. Where is Pentecost mentioned?

- A. The Old Testament
- B. The New Testament
- C. In both the Old and the New Testament

### 2. How do the Acts of the Apostles describe the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles?

- A. Like the roar of a strong wind
- B. As a word
- C. Like a song

### 3. To whom did the grace of the Holy Spirit flow?

- A. On individuals
- B. On the Apostles
- C. Neither on individuals nor on the Apostles

### 4. Which Apostle gave a sermon on the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles?

- A. John
- B. Jacob
- C. Peter

### 5. How many people received the teaching about Jesus as the Son of God that day?

- A. Five
- B. About three thousand
- C. One hundred

### 6. In which book of the New Testament is the event of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles described?

- A. Acts of the Apostles
- B. Gospel according to John
- C. The book of Revelation

ANSWERS: 1, C; 2, A; 3, C; 4, C; 5, B; 6,

The Ascension of the Lord is celebrated on the fortieth day after the Resurrection of Christ, when the Lord ascended to heaven before the disciples. In the period of forty days after the glorious Resurrection, the Lord appeared to the disciples and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God. He sat at the table with them, took and blessed the bread and gave it to His disciples (Luke 24:30). During this period, Christ reminded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. On the fortieth day after the Resurrection, Christ led His disciples to Bethany, raised His hands and blessed them, and ascended to heaven. The event of Christ's ascension to heaven is described in the Gospel of Mark (16:19), the Gospel of Luke (24:51) and the Acts of the Apostles (1:9).

Holy Bishop Nicholai Velimirovich notes that "the Ascension of the Lord from earth to heaven is as great a surprise for people as His descent from heaven to earth and birth in the flesh was a surprise for the angels." The Ascension of Christ and sitting at the right hand of the Father was incorporated in the Nicene-Constantopolitan Creed. This feast day completes the event of Christ's Resurrection from the dead, because human nature was also glorified and by ascending to heaven its original dignity was restored.

The place from which Christ ascended to heaven was highly respected from the very beginning. Empress Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine the Great, built a beautiful basilica that was later destroyed. Today, a small church marks the place of Christ's Ascension into heaven. Even today, it is possible to see the Savior's footprints at the event of Christ's Ascension.

Following the example of the feast of Pascha, church processions (litanies) on the feast of the Ascension of the Lord began to be organized very early in places throughout the Christian world.



At that time, Jesus, having risen from the dead, stood in the midst of his disciples and said to them, "Peace to you." But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.

"And when he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.



## Test your Knowledge

**1. Who built a beautiful basilica at the place where Jesus Christ ascended to heaven?**

- A. Constantine the Great
- B. Empress Helen
- C. The Apostles

**2. On what day does the Ascension of the Lord fall?**

- A. Sunday
- B. Saturday
- C. Thursday

**3. Where did this event take place?**

- A. Bethany
- B. Jerusalem
- C. Nazareth

**4. According to the Gospel what did Christ do before ascending to heaven?**

- A. He blessed His disciples
- B. He didn't say a word to His disciples
- C. He anointed His disciples

**5. For how many days did Christ appear to His disciples after the Resurrection from the dead?**

- A. Fifty days
- B. Forty days
- C. Seven days

**6. What does Christ do in front of His disciples after the Resurrection?**

- A. He reads parts of the Scripture
- B. She doesn't say anything and listens
- C. He breaks bread

ANSWERS: 1, B; 2, C; 3, A; 4, A; 5, B; 6, C.

Confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the resurrected God-man is the foundation of every Christian symbol of faith (creed). Examples from the New Testament books confirm that everyone who wanted to become a Christian had to freely profess faith in Christ as the Son of God. Certainly, in Peter's brief confession of faith, but also in other, often complex baptismal confessions, the teaching about Christ as the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary is the central message.

The basis of the apostolic preaching is the event of Christ's Resurrection from the dead: "If Christ does not rise, your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15, 17). The sermon concerns not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Man, the meaning of life and victory over death (see Rom. 4, 25).

The Church of God has faced temptations from the very beginning. The encounter of biblical thought with the ancient view of the existence of the world brought obvious challenges in communication. In the early Church, conflicts caused strong upheavals on the global stage. For that reason, the teaching of the Church was defined in places called councils. The councils were both local and general-universal.

The first Ecumenical Council was held in Nicaea (Turkey), in 325. The Council of Nicaea was convened by Emperor Constantine the Great. About 300 bishops from the East and the West participated in the work of the Council, although the vast majority were from the Christian East. The main reason was the teaching of Presbyter Arius. He raised a lot of dust with the public attitude that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, but the most perfect creation of God. The danger was in the thought that the Son was created meaning, therefore, that there was a time when He did not exist.

The dispute lasted for more than fifty years and was a great test for the correct confession of faith. The Arian heresy spread to all parts of the Roman Empire, and faith was actively discussed at various social events.

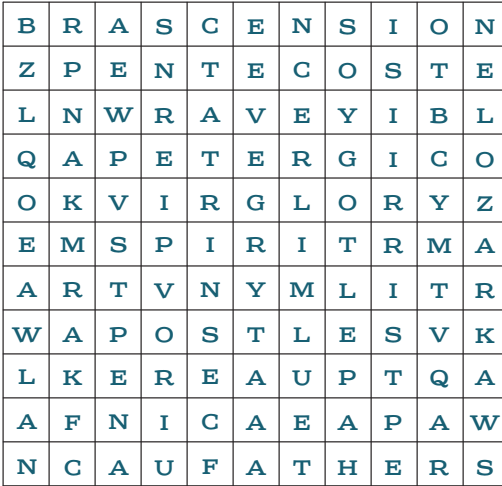
The Church's response was to emphasize the events of Scripture. The position about Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who is not a sublime creature but the Creator of the whole world, born from the Father before all ages, is affirmed. In addition, the Church emphasized the events of Christ's earthly life as salvific for wounded human nature. Christ's entry into the world and historical currents is an event of divine freedom and love. He who is free from any necessity enters the world with the desire to save it. With the event of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, human nature is renewed and glorified.

What is the significance of this teaching for modern Orthodox Christians? The teaching of the First Ecumenical Council should tell us that God created the world out of nothing by the Wisdom of God and that the world did not come into being by any chance. The Orthodox Church does not believe in happenstance or coincidence, but in God as the meaning of life. The teaching of the Church emphasizes God the Father as the Creator of heaven and earth and everything visible and invisible.

A large number of Fathers contributed to this teaching, which is confessed at every baptism and at every Holy Liturgy. It is worth mentioning Saint Nicholas, Saint Athanasius the Great, the Venerable Paphnutius, as well as many others. The Sunday before Pentecost is dedicated to the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.



*The icon of the feast of Pentecost*



ASCENSION

PENTECOST

PETER

GLORY

SPIRIT

APOSTLES

NICAEA

FATHERS



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