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*As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy.*  
LUKE 24:51-52

## How Far Is Up?

**I**t depends upon your understanding of **cosmology**, the religious explanation of the nature and structure of the universe. If Jesus ascended into heaven, how far up did he go? This also depends upon your understanding of cosmology. These are not foolish questions. We might not be experts in the field of cosmology, but many of us know a bit about galaxies, spacetime, and black holes, if only from *Star Trek*. So with this minimal cosmological knowledge, how should we understand Acts 1:9 when “a cloud took [Jesus] from their sight”? Did he just keep going up?

In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul refers to Jesus’ ascension, but he does not describe a mystifying event, as the Gospel reading does. Instead, he speaks of Jesus’ exaltation at God’s right hand. Perhaps it was fitting that Jesus ascended into the sky a little way, emphasizing that what occurred was more than mere physical exaltation. Rather, it is a way of stating that Jesus has now achieved honor and glory far beyond anything that is human, earthly, or created. He now enjoys divine glorification.

Still, even Paul uses metaphorical language when he says that Jesus sits at God’s right hand in heaven. We know that heaven is more than a place but is also a state of total fulfillment. We also know that to be seated at the host’s right hand means to be awarded the place of honor at the banquet. So, Paul is saying that Jesus enjoys total fulfillment in the place of honor next to his Father, where he is now praised as the beginning and end of all that is. This is reason to rejoice.

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### FOR *Reflection*

- \* *Pray the responsorial psalm today.*
- \* *At his ascension, Jesus said his followers would be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Are you one?*

