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### The Assumption (not ascension) of Mary

The Assumption (not Ascension) of Mary has been part of the Catholic faith from the apostolic era though the church defined the dogma only 1950. This is evident from the testimonies of the early church writings.

Anti catholics propagate that the assumption could not have happened because in the Bible Jesus specifically said

*And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. (Joh:3:13:)*

The Catholic dogma of the Assumption of Mary in no way conflicts with what is said in John 3:13. Jesus is the only one who 'ascended' up to heaven 'by His own power', while a few others (Enoch, Elijah, Moses, Mother Mary, etc) were 'taken up' by God and not by any 'power of their own'. The problem with the Bible not mentioning Mary's Assumption, (or even the deaths of Mary or most of the Apostles, for that matter), is that the Gospel record ends **before** any of these events occurred. The death of Mary and the apostles Peter, Paul, John, etc do not appear in the Bible because the books of the Bible were written before the deaths of these happened. The death of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus, and James the son of Zebedee who was put to the sword by Herod happened before the completion of the Book of the Acts of the apostles and thus appears in the Bible

Some people confuse themselves with the words 'ascended' and 'assumed'. They think Catholics believe Mary "ascended" into heaven. That's not correct. Christ, by his own power, 'ascended' into heaven. Mary was 'assumed' or taken up into heaven by God. She didn't do it under her own power. **Jesus raised himself up by His own power.** Jesus lifted Mary up. Jesus was her personal Saviour. The doctrine of Mary's Assumption states that Mary:

"...having completed the course of her earthly life, **was assumed** body and soul into heavenly glory." Pope Pius XII, 1950

This clearly shows that Mary did not raise herself up. Yes, she needed a Saviour.

The Bible says in 1 Cor 15:22 that Christ is the first to be resurrected bodily and that only on the Last day the rest will be resurrected.

*1 Co:15:22: For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Co:15:23: But every man in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.***

This is certainly true but with a few exceptions as we see in the Bible, such as Elijah, Enoch and Moses. There is no explicit statement in the New Testament that proclaims Mary's Assumption. Likewise in the Old Testament we see that there is no mention of the assumption of Moses, but the New Testament Book of Jude hints at the assumption of Moses bodily. It appears from the New Testament, (Jude 9), that Moses too was believed by the Apostolic authors to have been assumed into heaven, even though no record of this appears anywhere in the Old Testament. The incident quoted in Jude comes from the apocryphal (non-scriptural) account of the assumption of Moses. This, incidentally, provides a biblical record of an important teaching that was passed down over an extremely long period purely by non-biblical Tradition. As said earlier, in the case of the assumption of Mary not appearing in the Bible, is not surprising because most of the New Testament was written before Mary was assumed into heaven.

The Bible affords several examples of unusual departures. The first is the righteous Enoch.

*"Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him" (Gen 5:24).*

St. Paul informs us that

*"by faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and 'he was not found, because God had taken him'" (Heb 11:5).*

There are also unusual circumstances surrounding the death of Moses.

*"He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Bethpeor, but no one knows his burial place to this day" (Deut 34:6).*

This mystery is augmented in the Epistle of Jude.

*"But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you'" (Jude 9)*

The parting of Elijah was also extraordinary.

*"As they [Elijah and Elisha] continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended into a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kgs 2:11).*

Finally, during Jesus' transfiguration:

*"Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him" (Mt 17:3).*

The implication is that these two Old Testament saints, who represent the law and the prophets, appeared in bodily form.

Luke portrays Moses and Elijah as two 'men' who appeared 'in glory' and spoke with Jesus.

*(Lu:9:30, 31: And, behold, there talked with him **two men**, which were Moses and Elias. Who appeared **in glory**, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.).*

Matt 27:52-53 suggests the possibility of a bodily assumption before the Second Coming:

*"[T]he tombs also were opened, and many **bodies** of the saints who had fallen asleep **were raised**, and coming out of the tombs **after his resurrection** they went into the holy city and appeared to many."*

Did all these Old Testament 'saints' said of in Matt 27:52-53 die and have to be buried all over again? There is no record of that, but it is recorded by early Church writers that they were assumed into heaven, or at least into that temporary state of rest and happiness often called "paradise," where the righteous people from the Old Testament era waited until Christ's resurrection (cf. Luke 16:22, 23:43; Heb. 11:1-40; 1 Pet. 4:6), after which they were brought into the eternal bliss of heaven.

Paul describes an experience whereby a man was "caught up to the third heaven," possibly "in the body."

*2Co:12:2: I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.*

So even though God will one day give a glorious assumption to all of us, he has already given it to a number of people, and the teaching of the Catholic Church is merely that Mary is one of them.

These events regarding Enoch, Moses and Elijah lay a biblical foundation for accepting the reality of the rapture. The word "rapture" comes from the Latin word *raptus*, *rapare* that means, "to carry away." In Christian theology it finds a basis in Paul's epistles.

*"For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the cloud to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:15-17).*

*"For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor 15:52).*

The relevancy of these biblical passages is that they support an argument of fittingness. It is suitable that Mary, who was never touched by sin, should experience the fruits of Jesus' resurrection by being bodily assumed into heaven at the end of her earthly life.

However, there is one passage of Scripture that does imply Mary's Assumption. In portraying Mary as the ark of the covenant (Rev 11:19), she is described in bodily terms.

*"And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1).*

Scholars have interpreted the imagery of this vision in multiple layers referring to Mary, the Church and even Israel. However, the possibility of multiple meanings does not negate the specific application to Mary. It is she, alone, to whom it can be most accurately affirmed:

*"she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev 12:5).*

This reading, of course, requires the reader to look for a deeper meaning than that normally given by commentators. The woman, to them, refers to some collective entity, such as the Church. However, since the dragon is always identified with Satan, and the child always Christ, and these are both singular entities, it makes sense that the woman should be identified first as a singular entity, and secondarily as a collective entity. The singular entity is, of course, Mary. John's vision of Mary in heaven with her son, Jesus, only makes sense if she had been Assumed into heaven, as Pope John Paul II as well as Pius X have stated.

And this is, of course, what the Apostles believed happened, according to what the Bishop of Jerusalem said at the Council of Chalcedon.

At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, when bishops from throughout the Mediterranean world gathered in Constantinople, Emperor Marcian asked the Patriarch of Jerusalem to bring the relics of Mary to Constantinople to be enshrined in the capitol. The patriarch explained to the emperor that there were no relics of Mary in Jerusalem, that "Mary had died in the presence of the apostles; but her tomb, when opened later . . . was found empty and so the apostles concluded that the body was taken up into heaven. *John of Damascus, PG(96:1)(A.D. 747-751)*

St. John saw a woman, in Heaven. This woman is the woman who gave birth to the "man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." That child was Jesus. The woman who gave birth to Jesus is **crowned** -- with 12 stars, a symbol of the tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles of Israel. The crown shows clearly that she is a Queen.

If it was granted to Elijah, Enoch & Moses, then why not Mary. If God would assume Elijah into Heaven, wouldn't Jesus do the same for His own mother? Wouldn't God do the same for the mother of the Word (God) made flesh, the New Eve, the Ark of His Covenant, His most perfect creature, the woman who not only touched God, but carried Him in her own body, nursed Him, raised Him up from childhood, prompted His first miracle at Cana, whom at the end of His life on earth at foot of the cross He did not leave as an orphan but presented to the 'disciples Jesus loved, etc.? Jesus did not allow the hands that cared for him to be corrupted, nor the heart that loved him so much... if he did it to Enoch and Elijah, why not to his Mother?

The Church is the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom! Christ is the King, His Mother is the Queen Mother, and we are their subjects. The resurrected Christ, being King of the everlasting Davidic Kingdom lifted His mother, the 'Gebirah' or Queen mother to be seated at His right hand, as in every Kingship in the Davidic line. Jesus is the Son of David and the genealogy in Matthew links Mary to the Davidic line. Being the Son of David makes it customary for her to occupy the title Queen Mother." God had sworn an oath that there would always be a Davidic king and that the kingdom of David would be restored in its former glory, and in fact, greater glory.

*1Ki:9:5: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.*

*Ac:2:30: Therefore (King David) being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;*

This King to whom God has given the throne of David, and Son of the Highest and whose Kingdom there shall be no end, this same Jesus was conceived and brought forth by Mary who then is of course the much honoured 'Queen mother' of the never ending Davidic Kingdom.

**Lu:1:30-35: And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**

*Revelation 22:16: I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

**In the Davidic Kingdom, the head was obviously the King, who is now Christ. Second to the King was the Queen Mother. If you remember from 2 Kings, King Solomon would bow to and obey his mother Queen Bathsheba. Mutual honor and obedience was given between the King and the Queen Mother, but ultimately the King was the head of the kingdom. Mary has been given the honor of being Christ's Queen Mother as demonstrated by her heavenly queenship in Revelation 12.** Just as in the Davidic kingdom, our mother sits at the right of the King in His Heavenly abode.

In Scriptural terms therefore, just as Jesus's Messianic Kingship is prefigured in the role of King of Israel, so Mary's role is prefigured in that of the Gebirah. The existence of this rare and unusual institution in Israel and Judah is providential. It reflects and prefigures the Messianic order. Mary is Heavenly Queen Mother, because her son Jesus is the Heavenly King. She has been lifted up to heaven to be seated at the right hand of the King Jesus.

The doctrine of the Assumption says that at the end of her life on earth Mary was assumed, body and soul, into heaven, just as Enoch, Elijah, Moses and perhaps others had been before her.

Mary is mother of the New Humanity (Christians), just as the first Eve was the mother of humanity. And, because she is the New Eve, she shares the fate of the New Adam. Whereas the First Adam and Eve died and went to dust, the New Adam and Eve were lifted up physically into heaven.

The Assumption of Mary, taken up by God body and soul into Heaven, is the fourth Dogma on Virgin Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII in his Munificentissimus Deus in 1950:

*"We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory. Hence if anyone, which God forbid, should dare willfully to deny or to call into doubt that which we have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic Faith" (44-45)...*

*... "it is our hope that belief in Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective" (42)...*

*... "as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages" (40).*

In short, her body wasn't allowed to corrupt, it was not allowed to remain in a tomb. This was a long held belief by Christians since the time of the early Church, despite its recent definition as dogma. Pope Pius XII also stated that he was relying both on scripture and on "apostolic tradition". As an infallible pronouncement, the Dogma of the Assumption is thus a mandatory belief for Roman Catholics. No pope since has issued an infallible dogma. This doctrine is based on the vision of John in Revelation 12:1: *A great sign appeared in the sky a Woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*

## **The Ark of 'his' Covenant seen in the Temple in heaven**

The dogma is especially fitting when one examines the honor that was given to the ark of the covenant. It contained the manna (bread from heaven), stone tablets of the ten commandments (the word of God), and the staff of Aaron (a symbol of Israel's high priesthood). Because of its contents, it was made of incorruptible wood, and Psalm 132:8 said,

*"Arise, O Lord, and go to thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy might."*

In the Ark of the Old Covenant was housed the tablets of the law, the Word of God etched in stone. In it also was placed manna, bread from heaven. And in it also was the rod of Aaron, the sign of priestly office. In the New Testament now we have Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant in which is carried the incarnate Word, the Bread of Life and our new high priest. This Ark prefigured the incarnation of God the Son in the womb of Mary.

*"The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the Most High will overshadow thee (Greek epikiasei); that is why he who shall be born will be called the Son of God..." (Luke 1:35).*

*Ex:40:34: Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

This verse explicitly establishes a link between Mary as bearer of the New Covenant and the Ark of the Old Covenant. The Gk. word for "overshadow" ("epikiasei") was used of the bright cloud at the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Mt

17:5; Lk 9:34) and is reminiscent of the Shekinah of the OT, which represented God's Presence (Ex 24:15-16; 40:34-8; 1 Ki 8:4-11). The Greek Septuagint translation word for *overshadow* is *episkiasei*, which describes a bright, glorious cloud. It is used with reference to the cloud of transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:34) and also has a connection to the *shekinah* glory of God in the Old Testament (Ex 24:15-16; 40:34-38; 1 Ki 8:10). The word "overshadow" is a rare verb. It's used to describe what the Holy Spirit does over the top of the Ark of the Covenant. And so it doesn't take much scholarship to see the connection that is probably intended by Luke as he recounts this. Mary is, therefore, in effect, the new temple and holy of holies, where God was present in a special fashion. Mary became like the Holy of Holies in the Temple, where God dwelt. God gave extremely detailed instructions on constructing the ark, since it was to contain His Law (Ex 25-30 and 35-40). Mary had to be that much more holy, since she was to carry the Word of God in the flesh (Job 14:4). Further parallelism between Mary and the Ark is indicated in comparing Lk 1:43 with 2 Sam 6:9, Lk 1:44 with 2 Sam 6:14-16, and Lk 1:39-45,56 with 2 Sam 6:10-12. This Ark prefigured the incarnation of God the Son in the womb of Mary.

St. Luke clearly wanted us to see Mary as the New Ark in that, inspired by God, he parallels many of his verses with those used to describe the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament. More direct parallels of Mary as the New Ark occur as well:

**2 Samuel 6:9** And David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"  
**Luke 1:43** And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

**Luke 1:42** and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

**2 Samuel 6:14,16** And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. . . . King David leaping and dancing before the LORD . . .

**1 Chronicles 15:29** And as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David dancing and making merry . . .

**Luke 1:44** For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy.

**2 Samuel 6:10-11** So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David; but David took it aside to the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD remained in the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite three months . . .

**Luke 1:39,56** In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, . . . And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

Moreover, in the book of Revelation our vision is directed to the double symbol of the Temple and the Woman, the dwelling-place (or New Ark of the Covenant) of God our Savior. In Revelation after 580 years without an Ark, Jewish Christians look up and see a sign. It's the Ark of the Covenant in heaven which had not been seen in 580 years approximately. It's been lost for that long. John sees it in Revelation up in heaven and the very next thing he sees is a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars, a Queen Mother. The woman who is to give birth to Jesus Christ, Mary who is also the type of the Church.

*Re:11:14: The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.Re:11:15: And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.Re:11:16: And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,Re:11:17: Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.Re:11:18: And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.Re:11:19: And **the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament:** and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*

The ark of 'His Testament', the old Testament or the new one ? Of course the New, not the Old chest. The Old Testament with the old ark of the testament is gone now that the New covenant was sealed by the Blood of Christ, as we see said in Hebrews 9: 1 to 12

*Heb:9:1: Then verily **the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.** Heb:9:2: For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. Heb:9:3: And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Heb:9:4: Which had the golden censer, and the **ark of the covenant** overlaid round*

about with gold, **wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;** Heb:9:5: And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Heb:9:6: Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. Heb:9:7: But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: Heb:9:8: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Heb:9:9: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Heb:9:10: Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. Heb:9:11: **But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands,** that is to say, not of this building; Heb:9:12: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

The **Ark of His New covenant** is seen in the Temple in heaven in Rev 11:19, by John as being 'in heaven'.

If a mere vessel was given such honor, how much more should Mary be kept from corruption, since she is the new ark—who carried the real bread from heaven, the Word of God, and the high priest of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ.

Some argue that the new ark is not Mary, but the body of Jesus. But truly she like the Ark of the Old Testament, carried the real bread from heaven, the Word of God, and the high priest of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ. Jesus on the other hand did not carry the real bread from heaven or the Word of God or the High Priest of the New Covenant, because Jesus Himself 'was' the real Bread, He was Himself the Word made flesh, He Himself was the High Priest of the New Covenant. Even if they do not see Mary as the Ark, it is worth noting that 1 Chronicles 15:14 records that the persons who bore the ark were to be sanctified. There would be no sense in sanctifying men who carried a box, and not sanctifying the woman that carried God himself! After all, wisdom will not dwell "in a body under debt of sin" (Wis. 1:4 NAB).

After all, if Mary is immaculately conceived, then it would follow that she would not suffer the corruption in the grave, which is a consequence of sin [Gen. 3:17, 19]. From her conception she was set aside, chosen by God, to be the New Eve, the one to bear Christ to the World. Death and decay are the punishments for original sin, and since Mary was free from this stain, she was free of its consequences. So why did she die? If she died, it was because she was united with Christ. Mary has been declared in Genesis at the beginning of creation itself to be in enmity with Satan. The Assumption is not an arbitrary presumption; it follows from Mary's sinlessness. Since bodily decay results from sin (Ps 16:10), the absence of sin would allow for instant bodily resurrection at death. Mary, since she was sinless, was preserved from the three-fold curse of sin (Gen 3:16-19), as well as from a return to dust. Perhaps at the instance of her death. Catholics believe it is Jesus who did this for her.

As the Virgin Mary remained an ever-virgin and sinless, it is viewed that the Virgin Mary could not thus suffer the consequences of Original Sin, which is chiefly Death. Jesus and Mary are both considered sinless by Catholic and Orthodox.

## **Is Mary's Assumption a new doctrine?**

No. It is a very old belief in the Church. What happened in 1950 was that the Pope "defined" it as a Catholic dogma. This did not make it a new doctrine - it simply reinforced its status.

The fact that the Christian Community has believed from the earliest days that Mary was taken bodily into heaven can also be proved from the fact that **no-one ever claimed to have her relics**.

From the times of the persecutions, **relics of the Saints had an immense value**. In the early Christian centuries relics of saints were zealously guarded and highly prized. The bones of those martyred in the Coliseum, for instance, were quickly gathered up and preserved—there are many accounts of this in the biographies of those who gave their lives for the faith. Cities vied for the title of the last resting place of the most famous saints. Rome, for example, houses the tombs of Peter and Paul, Peter's tomb being under the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Likewise, the graves of John and Timothy were at Ephesus. The grave of Luke was in Greece, whereas the grave of Mark was in Alexandria, Egypt; later being transported to Venice. Likewise, the grave of James was at Jerusalem; the grave of Mary Magdalene was at Marseille. And, even the graves of the Old Testament saints were similarly venerated -- such as the graves of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at Hebron; the grave of Rachel at Bethlehem (Matt 2:18), and the grave of David in Jerusalem itself (Acts 2:29). So, why did **NO** early Christian ever speak about a grave of the Virgin Mary? Unless there never was one.

**Any Church or city that could have claimed to hold Mary's body, or even a single bone from her finger would have at once become one of the richest and most popular places of pilgrimage in the world.** Valuable were relics that many were accused of fraudulently manufacturing them just to draw pilgrims and create wealth. Yet from the earliest days **no-one has claimed to have the body of the Virgin Mary - or even as much as a single small**

**bone.** Why not? Plenty claimed to own part of the True Cross or even the Crown of Thorns. So why did no-one claim to have Mary's body? There is **one** reason. Quite simply because **no-one would have believed them.** From the earliest days of the Church everyone **KNEW** that Mary's body was not on earth. Every Christian knew that she had been assumed bodily into heaven. If there had been room for any argument about that fact, if there had been room for the slightest doubt, then some church somewhere would have claimed to have had Mary's body. We know that after the Crucifixion Mary was cared for by the apostle John (John 19:26- 27). Early Christian writings say John went to live at Ephesus and that Mary accompanied him. There is some dispute about where she ended her life; perhaps there, perhaps back at Jerusalem. Neither of those cities nor any other claimed her remains, though there are claims about possessing her (temporary) tomb. Certainly relics of Our Lady would be regarded as having greater value than those of any Saint or Apostle, so nearly was she related to Christ. And why did no city claim the bones of Mary? Apparently because there weren't any bones to claim and people knew it. Here was Mary, certainly the most privileged of all the saints, certainly the most saintly, but we have no record of her bodily remains being venerated anywhere.

Early references to the Assumption of Mary include Timothy of Jerusalem in around 380 AD, who wrote: "Wherefore the Virgin is immortal up to now, because He who dwelt in her took her to the regions of the Ascension,"

Around 390 AD, we have the writings of St. Epiphanius of Salamis. Now, St. Epiphanius was a native of Palestine (so he would have been familiar with all the Sacred Traditions of the original Jewish Church in Jerusalem). Yet, in around 390, St. Epiphanius moved to the Greek island of Cyprus, where he was elected to be the Bishop of Salamis. Thus, around this time, we have this Palestinian bishop writing to his Greek flock about the end of Mary's earthly life. And, speaking very diplomatically, he writes:

"Say she died a natural death. In that case she fell asleep in glory, and departed in purity and received the crown of her virginity. Or say she was slain with the sword according to Simeon's prophecy. There her glory is with the martyrs, and she through **WHOM THE DIVINE LIGHT SHONE UPON THE WORLD IS IN THE PLACE OF BLISS WITH HER SACRED BODY.** Or say **she left this world without dying** for God can do what He wills. Then she was **simply transferred to eternal glory.**" (Haer. lxxix, 11).

The mere fact that he mentions the Assumption in passing shows that it was currently known to be an established belief - an established theologoumenon (theological opinion).

Indeed, a similar case comes to us from St. John Damascene. Although he wrote in the 700's, he tells us a of Tradition from his own, Jerusalem city-church about its bishop Juvenal, who represented the Church of Jerusalem at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, about 50 years after St. Epiphanius was writing. And St. John tells us ...

At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, when bishops from throughout the Mediterranean world gathered in Constantinople, Emperor Marcian asked Juvenal the Patriarch of Jerusalem to bring the relics of Mary to Constantinople to be enshrined in the capitol. The patriarch explained to the emperor that there were no relics of Mary in Jerusalem, that "Mary had died in the presence of the apostles; but her tomb, when opened later . . . was found empty and so the apostles concluded that the body was taken up into heaven. *John of Damascene, Homily on Dormition, PG(96:1)(A.D. 747-751)*

The next witness we have is Gregory, Bishop of Tours in Gaul; the year, 590. Borrowing in all probability not from Pseudo-Melito but from a Syriac *Transitus* of the fifth century, Gregory states very artlessly:

"After this, the apostles scattered through different countries to preach the word of God. Subsequently blessed Mary finished the course of this life and was summoned from the world; and all the apostles were gathered together, each from his own area, at her home. On hearing that she was to be taken up (*assumenda*) from the world, they kept watch with her. All at once her Lord came with angels, took her soul, delivered it to Michael the Archangel, and disappeared. At daybreak, however, the apostles lifted up the body together with the funeral-bed, placed it in a tomb, and kept watch over it, in readiness for the Lord's coming. And again, all at once the Lord stood by them and ordered the holy body taken up and carried on a cloud to paradise. There, reunited with the soul, it rejoices with His elect and enjoys eternity's blessings which will never end." [Gregory of Tours, *Lib I miraculorum: In gloria martyrum*, cap 4, PL 71:708; on the date, W.C. McDermott, *Gregory of Tours: Selections* (1949), p. 9; on fifth-century Syriac *Transitus*, which Jugie regards as oldest, cf. W. Wright, *Contrib to Apoc Lit of NT* (1865), p. 46f; Jugie and Altaner believe it likely Gregory borrowed from an early Latin translation.]

Apocryphal writings detailing the Assumption have been dated back to the 200s.

The Catholic Church does not, however, claim to derive this doctrine from any of these early writers, but from Apostolic Tradition itself, which these early sources merely point to.

The dogma states that "*The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians.*"

The Preface of the Assumption reads: "She was taken up to heaven as "the beginning and the pattern of the Church in its perfection, and a sign of hope and comfort for your people on their pilgrim way."

The Assumption is an anticipation of the hope of all men, the Resurrection of the Body!, of the full body and soul. It is a symbol of the general resurrection of all believers, of what the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and Bride of Christ will experience at the end of history.

All the prophecies in the Bible about Mary can be applied to the Church, and all the prophecies about the Church can be applied to Mary. The same applies to her life: We should understand Mary in light of the mystery of the Church. Vatican II's Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, tells us that Mary is a symbol or icon of the Church, of all Christians. She is a model of the Church, and The Assumption of Mary points to a profound gift to all believers, the resurrection of the body!

Pius XII states the dogma is based on the Sacred Writings (Scripture): "*All these proofs and considerations of the holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation.*" (Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*)

And not "amazing" if one considers in Scripture that Enoch and Elijah were "assumed" to heaven, body and soul; and perhaps Moses if we interpret Jude's mention with the apocryphal literature (*Assumption* or *Testament of Moses*) as an "assumption" of the body of Moses. Jesus ascended to heaven on his own power, body and soul, and it is only fitting that His own Mother, the holy Mother of God, would also not see corruption. All true Christians will eventually be sinless and bodily assumed (resurrected and glorified) in heaven. The Blessed Virgin Mary, being a type of the Church as all the Fathers taught, is an example of the perfected Christian in heaven (cf. the holy, stainless, blameless Church mentioned in Ephesians 5:25-33; Heb 12:22ff; Rev 21:1ff). Mary received that perfected state (in soul and body) before the rest of Christ's Church by the grace of God.

"Often there are theologians and preachers who, following in the footsteps of the holy Fathers, have been rather free in their use of events and expressions taken from Sacred Scripture to explain their belief in the Assumption. Thus, to mention only a few of the texts rather frequently cited in this fashion, some have employed the words of the psalmist: 'Arise, O Lord, into your resting place: you and the ark, which you have sanctified'; and have looked upon the Ark of the Covenant, built of incorruptible wood and placed in the Lord's temple, as a type of the most pure body of the Virgin Mary, preserved and exempt from all the corruption of the tomb and raised up to such glory in heaven.

"Treating of this subject, they also describe her as the Queen entering triumphantly into the royal halls of heaven and sitting at the right hand of the divine Redeemer. Likewise they mention the Spouse of the Canticles 'that goes up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense' to be crowned. These are proposed as depicting that heavenly Queen and heavenly Spouse who has been lifted up to the courts of heaven with the divine Bridegroom.

"Moreover, the scholastic Doctors have recognized the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God as something signified, not only in various figures of the Old Testament, but also in that woman clothed with the sun whom John the Apostle contemplated on the Island of Patmos. Similarly they have given special attention to these words of the New Testament: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women,' since they saw, in the mystery of the Assumption, the fulfillment of that most perfect grace granted to the Blessed Virgin and the special blessing that countered the curse of Eve." (Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*)

As for biblical evidence for the belief, Pius XII refers to several texts and Marian types: the holy Ark of the Covenant; Psalm 132(131):8; Psalm 45(44):10-14; Song of Songs 3:6; 4:8; 6:9; Rev 12:1ff (cf. 11:19); Luke 1:28. If the "Ark" of Psalm 132:8 or the "Woman" of Revelation 12 is the Blessed Mary, then the Scriptures directly "prove" the Assumption. But scholars interpret these texts different ways. As Pius XII explained, the Church Fathers were "rather free in their use of events and expressions" taken from Scripture. But neither Pius XII nor the Fathers ignored the Scriptures when speaking of Mary's Assumption into heaven:

"These [the "Sacred Writings," the Scriptures] set the loving Mother of God as it were before our very eyes as most intimately joined to her divine Son and as always sharing His lot. Consequently it seems impossible to think of her, the one who conceived Christ, brought Him forth, nursed Him with her milk, held Him in her arms, and clasped Him to her breast, as being apart from Him in body, even though not in soul, after this earthly life. Since our Redeemer is the Son of Mary, He could not do otherwise, as the perfect observer of God's law, than to honour, not only His eternal Father, but also His most beloved Mother. And, since it was within His power to grant her this great honour, to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that He really acted in this way." (Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*)

The Scriptures are the ultimate theological foundation for the dogma, according to Pius XII.



The Catholic Church was commissioned by Christ to teach all nations and to teach them infallibly—guided, as he promised, by the Holy Spirit until the end of the world (John 14:26, 16:13). The mere fact that the Church teaches that something is definitely true is a guarantee that it is true (cf. Matt. 28:18-20, Luke 10:16, 1 Tim. 3:15).

### **Isn't the Queen of Heaven a pagan goddess?**

Jeremiah warned about those pagans who offered incense to a goddess they called the 'queen of Heaven'! Yes, there was a pagan Canaanite goddess referred to as "queen of heaven" -- but there is also a pagan king in Ezra 7:12 who is referred to as "king of kings," just as Our Lord is in Revelation 19:16. Does this mean that when Protestants sing Handel's "Messiah" -- "King of Kings, Lord of Lords!" -- that they are worshipping a pagan king? Let's hope not. Pagans call their gods "God," too; does that prevent Protestants from calling God "God"? When Catholics sing the praises of Mary, the Queen of Heaven, they are not worshipping some pagan "queen of heaven" or worshipping her as God any more than Protestants worship a pagan king by referring to the "King of Kings." They are simply giving honor to the mother of Jesus per the Scriptural prophecy "all generations will call me blessed."