



## Chapter & verse – Nigel Uden (page 19)

Read Acts 1:1-11, followed by Nigel Uden’s article.

1. What adaptation of Bible stories, by artists, musicians, filmmakers etc, have you enjoyed?
2. Nigel’s article begins by highlighting the artistry of musicians and visual artists compared to understated biblical narratives. He quotes a theologian who describes biblical accounts of Christ’s ascension as ‘unsentimental, almost uncannily austere’. What words or phrases would you use to describe the biblical text (particularly verses nine to 11)? What images does it bring to mind?
3. Next, Nigel compares Rembrandt’s and Dali’s depictions of Jesus’ ascension into heaven. What is your impression of these paintings? How do they compare to your impressions of the biblical text?
4. Nigel’s fourth paragraph explains how Bach’s ‘theological reflection and imagination’ in response to the ascension leads him to compose a Credo that’s ‘vivacious – full of celebratory trumpets, dancing strings and excited voices’. What feelings does this story evoke in you and what kind of music would you use to express them?
5. Contrasting Jesus’ being raised to heaven with his first coming to earth, Nigel suggests that the ascension exists ‘so that we don’t confine our depictions of Jesus’. In what ways can our words and actions confine Jesus? Do we use enough of the ‘the language of awe’, as Nigel suggests might be necessary?
6. Contemplating the ‘other-than-us holiness of Christ’, Nigel depicts Christians kneeling before God ‘not so much in unquestioning certainty as in restless questing’. Have there been times of restless questing in your spiritual journey? What might churches do to support people in such times?
7. ‘Luke suggests [the ascension] is the necessary precursor to ... receiving the Holy Spirit,’ says Nigel. He adds: ‘Their purpose as disciples was not simply to worship, but also to witness.’ How might we be better disciples, and walk in Jesus’ footsteps today?



**For further reflection:** ‘... O God, reach the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?’ Psalm 71:18

**Prayer:** Jesus Christ, who came among us and took our humanity upon yourself, raise up our humanity with you into heavenly places. Help us to tell your story, in all its awe. Amen.

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