

My Neighbor Said:

“Where Is Mary’s Assumption in the Bible?”

The Church teaches that at the end of her life on earth, Mary was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. This dogma was formally defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950, but its origins lie deep in Christian history. The Church has not defined, and is unlikely to define, whether Mary died before her Assumption. Pope Pius XII simply states that “after the completion of her earthly life ... she was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven.”

By the fourth century, Church Fathers such as St. Ambrose and St. Epiphanius were teaching that Mary did not die a natural death. The Assumption was accepted without question by the sixth century when its feast day was established. Both Jerusalem and Ephesus have been claimed as the place where the Assumption happened—and they both present an empty tomb. The early Christians gave saints and martyrs the greatest honor and eagerly sought their relics—yet no site ever claimed to possess the bones of the Virgin.

One biblical passage that supports the dogma is Revelation 11:19–12:1: “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple ... And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” This woman is further identified as the mother of the Messiah—that is, Mary (Revelation 12:5–6). If Mary is in Heaven, that means she is not in her grave waiting for the General Resurrection with the rest of us.

Further, we know that we are subject to death because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:17). As St. Paul put it so concisely, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). But Mary was free from sin from the moment of her conception (see last week’s post on the Immaculate Conception). Since she did not do the “work” of sin, why should she collect the “wages” of death?

Finally, the Bible gives us two examples of similar occurrences in the Old Testament: Genesis 5:24 (Enoch) and 2 Kings 2:11 (Elijah). If God bypassed death for these righteous servants and took them directly into heaven, how else could Mary have been treated as she joined her son in the place He had prepared for her?

For further reading: [*Hail Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God*](#) (Scott Hahn); “[The Assumption of Mary](#),” “[Immaculate Conception and Assumption](#),” and “[The Assumption of Mary in History](#)” (Catholic Answers).

Do you have questions about God, faith, life, the Church, or other related topics? Drop them into the Question Box next to the Parish Bulletin Board. We will answer them ASAP and post them in FlockNotes and on the Bulletin Board each week.