

The Spirit Empowers



The Church of the Ascension, Jerusalem

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Acts 1:1-11)

Luke's story of Jesus from his ministry to his ascension

^{1*} "In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught ^{2b}until the day **he was taken up**, after giving instructions through the holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ^{3c}He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days* and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Jesus' command to wait for the Holy Spirit

^{4d}While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father" about which you have heard me speak; ^{5e}for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit." ⁶When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going* to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ^{7*} ^{7*}He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. ^{8*} ^{8*}But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Luke's description of Jesus' ascension and the apostles' gaze and the message of the angels

^{9h}When he had said this, as they were looking on, **he was lifted up**, and a cloud took him from

their sight. ¹⁰ⁱWhile they were looking intently at the sky as **he was going**, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. ^{11j}They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This **Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven** will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven."

THE FOCUS: The Ascension of Jesus

COMMENTARY

- In vv.1-3, Luke, the author, recalls the story of Jesus in his first book, the Gospel.
- Again, Luke writes to the same person, Theophilus (not a man on the streets, but someone who is learned, cultured or who can reproduce copies for other communities).
- Luke presents Jesus giving last instructions.
- In vv.4-8, Jesus tells something about the Holy Spirit: promise of the Father; they will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit, they will have power and will have mission to give witness to all of the world, not only to Palestine.
- In vv.9-11, we see Jesus finally taken into heaven. While the apostles were gazing upward, two men (believed to be angels) appeared to reveal to them what will happen in the future. Jesus will come again.

REFLECTIONS

The Church on earth now has to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit; when the apostles have received the Holy Spirit, they have to give witness to the ends of the earth. These "barriotic" apostles must now go national and global. They will make known the person of Jesus to all kinds of people.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9)

GOD MOUNTS HIS THRONE TO SHOUTS OF JOY: A BLARE OF TRUMPETS FOR THE LORD.

SECOND READING (Eph 1:17-23 or 4:1-13)

^{17r}That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a **spirit of wisdom and revelation** resulting in knowledge of him. ^{18g}May the eyes of [your] hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is **the hope** that belongs to his call, what are the **riches of glory** in his inheritance among the holy ones, ^{19r}and what is **the surpassing greatness of his power** for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might, ^{20s}which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, ^{21f}far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. ^{22u}And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ^{23v}which is his body,* the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

THE FOCUS: The Gift of the Spirit

COMMENTARY

- References to his ascension: vv. 20 and 22. They describe Jesus who is now out there in the heavens.
- The Reading like the first one mentions about the spirit: It is the spirit of wisdom and revelation (=Holy Spirit) in contrast to the pagan spirit that enveloped the Ephesians (pre-Christian views, Gnostic elements)
- The author prays that God may give the Christian believers the same Spirit that gives them many benefits: hope, riches, greatness
- Jesus is the highest authority, in charge of all.

REFLECTIONS

God lavishes his people as Christ his Son governs over them. Christ who ascended into heaven is still in-charge of us here on earth.

GOSPEL READING (Mk 16:15-20)

Mission Sending

^{15r}He said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever

does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. ^{18g}They will pick up serpents [with their hands], and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Ascension

^{19k}So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God.

Mission in Action

²⁰But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.*

THE FOCUS: Jesus commands his Apostles to proclaim the Good News of Salvation

COMMENTARY

- Scholars believe Mk ends in 16:8. So, our Reading was not in the original Mark gospel
- But this is in the canon. The Christian churches preserved this Reading in their liturgies.
- It is clear here that we cannot discuss the mystery of ascension without the mission of the apostles and the church.

REFLECTIONS

The 11 apostles, to be true to their name, must be sent (*αποστειλλειν* means to send).

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

Before ascending, Jesus instructs his apostles to wait for the Holy Spirit and then do their mission (*First Reading*).

Jesus now is at the throne of God, having authority and power over us and over all things. The destiny of Jesus is also ours (*Second Reading*).

Before ascending, Jesus commands his apostles to preach, baptize, etc. for the salvation of humankind. The apostles obey. (*Gospel Reading*)

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