

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Ascension; Christology; mission; justice; resurrection; paschal mystery; discipleship; conversion; soteriology

## Closing Prayer

God of power and might,  
in the mystery of the Ascension  
you have raised up and glorified your Son,  
and exalted our humanity at your right hand.

Confirm the good news your Church proclaims,  
so that when Christ returns in glory  
all nations may be gathered into the kingdom,  
where he lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · The Ascension, Year B<sup>2</sup>*

CPL • LBC Year B Ascension.odt • 2021-04-22

<sup>2</sup> *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

## Ascension Day

### Principal Service readings

*The reading from Acts must be used as either the first or second reading*

Acts 1.1-11 or Daniel 7.9-14

Psalm 47 or Psalm 93

Ephesians 1.15-23 or Acts 1.1-11

Luke 24.44-53

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *Final instructions and ascension*

<sup>44</sup>Jesus said to the disciples, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

<sup>50</sup>Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. <sup>51</sup>While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup>And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; <sup>53</sup>and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Luke 24.44-53 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Comments and Questions

Luke brings his first volume to a close with an account of a final appearance of Jesus (24.36-49) and a brief description of the ascension of Jesus (24.50-53) – providing an appropriate conclusion to his story of ‘all that Jesus said and did’ (Acts 1.1), and providing a transition to the story of Jesus’ prophetic successors that he will write about in his second volume.

The final appearance and ascension is very much a summary: in Acts Luke writes that Jesus appeared over a period of forty days to his followers, eating with them and speaking to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1.3; 10.41). Although, even after this, he appears to Stephen (Acts 7.55-56) and to Paul (Acts 9.1-9, 27).

In this final scene in Luke 24 we are firstly reminded of the way in which Jesus will be present to his community. There is the touching of hands and feet, and the eating of fish. In these things Luke is asserting both the reality of Jesus’ presence its difference from his former presence. The Emmaus story (Luke 24.13,35) emphasised the elusiveness and indistinctness of Jesus’ presence: Jesus could appear as a stranger and not be recognised. In this story, though the opposite is emphasised: he is not a ghost but a real person, as he says: ‘I am myself’ (24.39). And yet, the disciples are filled with a mixture of fear and joy. It is not quite the same ‘when he was with them’ (24.44), as now he is the commanding Lord. It is more than a resuscitation, it is definitely a resurrection.

Jesus reminds his disciples of how scripture is fulfilled in these events. He mentions the law, that is the Torah (literally ‘Instruction’ or ‘Law’), the prophets (that is, the Nevi’im = ‘Prophets’), and the writings, the Ketuvim (=‘Writings’, like the psalms)—hence TaNaKh. Luke builds up his account bit by bit. The account of the empty tomb showed the fulfilment of the passion prophecy. The Emmaus story showed that Moses and the prophets foretold the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Now the interpretive texts of the law, prophets and writings are shown as an interpretive key. The risen Lord shows how to use the texts correctly. The disciples worship Jesus, then he departs for heaven, with his hands lifted in blessing.

What connects the two accounts, Luke and Acts, is the Holy Spirit. The disciples are told to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the ‘power from on high’ (24.48). The ‘withdrawal’ of Jesus is not so much an absence as it is a presence in a new and more powerful mode. Moses laid hands on Joshua as his successor, who was then imbued with his authority, so that ‘the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord commanded Moses’ (Deuteronomy 34.9). Elijah bequeaths his spirit to Elisha (2 Kings 2.14). Thus the image of being clothed with power from on high is very fitting.

## Quotations

1

At his Ascension our Lord entered heaven, and he keeps the door open for humanity to enter.

Oswald Chambers, 1874–1917

2

In his life Christ is an example showing us how to live in his death, he is a sacrifice satisfying our sins, in his resurrection a conqueror, in his ascension a king, in his intercession a high priest.

Martin Luther, 1483–1546

3

Christ is already in that place of peace, which is all in all. He is on the right hand of God. He is hidden in the brightness of the radiance which issues from the everlasting throne. He is in the very abyss of peace, where there is no voice of tumult or distress, but a deep stillness – stillness, that greatest and most awful of all goods which we can fancy; that most perfect of joys, the utter profound, ineffable tranquillity of the Divine Essence. He has entered into his rest. That is our home; here we are on a pilgrimage, and Christ calls us to his many mansions which he has prepared.

John Henry Newman, 1801–1890