

Jesus Goes Home – the Ascension

Acts 1 v 1-11

Context:

Luke wrote two books which are included in our New Testament, both of them originally written for someone called Theophilus. Luke's Gospel is one of four accounts describing the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Luke didn't know Jesus personally, but he tells Theophilus at the beginning of his Gospel that he carefully researched everything so he could write an orderly and accurate account for him. His second book is known as The Acts of the Apostles (or simply 'Acts'), in which he continues the story of Jesus after his resurrection as the apostles go out into the world to spread the good news of Jesus in word and deed. Luke begins this second book with the ascension of Jesus. Let's see how it happened and explore its significance.

Observation:

1. What does Luke say was the basic content of his first book (v 1-2)?
2. How did Jesus spend the 40 days between his resurrection and ascension according to v 3?
3. What command did he give them in v 4-5?
4. What question did they ask Jesus in v 6?
5. How did Jesus answer their question in v 7-8?
6. What then happened according to v 9?
7. What did the apostles do and who appeared to them in v 10?
8. What did the angels tell them in v 11?

Meaning:

1. Luke says in v 3 that Jesus spent 40 days providing his followers with convincing proof that he was alive and teaching them about the Kingdom of God. Can you name some of the specific occasions mentioned in the New Testament on which Jesus appeared to his followers to convince them he was alive? What do you think 'the Kingdom of God' is and what kind of things might Jesus have taught them about it in those 40 days?
2. In light of v 4 and v 8, why do you think it was imperative that the apostles remained in Jerusalem?
3. To what extent and in what ways is the Holy Spirit still essential to our mission today?
4. What do you think the apostles meant by their question in v 6 and how are Jesus' words in v 7-8 an answer to their question?
5. In v 9 Luke describes, in very brief detail, the ascension of Jesus. Why do you think it was important for the apostles to see Jesus ascend in this way and what might some of the reasons be for Jesus going back to the Father in heaven (i.e. what part does the ascension play in the good news about Jesus and what did it accomplish)? – for some clues see: John 14 v 1-6, John 14 v 12-14, John 16 v 5-15, Hebrews 4 v 14-16, Hebrews 9 v 24-28, Ephesians 2 v 4-10, Ephesians 4 v 7-13, Revelation 5 v 1-14.
6. What is the significance of the angelic words in v 11 and why might those words be an encouragement to the apostles then and to us now?

Application:

1. What difference should the ascension of Jesus make to your daily life?
2. How should we spend our time as we await the fulfilment of the angelic promise in v 11 of the return of Jesus, something Christians have been expecting for the last 2,000 years – see 2 Peter 3 for some excellent advice.

Pray:

- Thank God for the ascension of Jesus and all it has accomplished.
- Thank God for the promise of Jesus' return.
- Pray for grace to live faithfully in the light of the past ascension and promised return.