

Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1:1-11

Eph 1:17-23

Lk 24:46-53

In his account of the Resurrection of Jesus, St Luke tells us how the disciples were gradually led from fear to wonder; from wonder to faith; from faith to joy and from joy to service. Yet the disciples still had to be convinced of the victory of God over evil so they would go out and proclaim it to the world.

There had to be a moment when the change was made from the physical presence of Christ, recognised by voice, touch and appearance, to having faith in the spiritual presence of Christ known in the heart and soul. Jesus' final departure was the trigger for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the strengthener who would lead them in their mission. If Jesus didn't leave them, they would keep waiting for more appearances and the Holy Spirit could not be sent to them. This is why the disciples returned to Jerusalem full of joy. They knew that they would not be abandoned by Jesus.

The theological implications of the Ascension were tremendously important to those first Christians. It wasn't the final chapter of the life of Jesus and His return to the Father. It was the confirmation that Jesus was Lord of the whole universe, a Lordship that in the Old Testament was thought to belong to God alone. Our second reading from Ephesians makes this very clear.

The Ascension was an ending but also a beginning. Jesus' mission during His earthly life was handed on to His agents on earth who knew that because of the power of the Spirit, their mission was Jesus', not their own, so despite any trials and difficulties, they would not be abandoned. Neither will we!

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