

Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday – Luke 24:50-53 – The Ascension.

The events recorded now did not take place on the day that the Lord Jesus suddenly appeared to the disciples in the room. The ascension took place 40 days later (Acts 1:3).

Luke's account of the Ascension in his gospel is brief, possibly because he already had in mind that he would begin his account of the Acts of the Apostles with the Ascension. What he does tell us here is that Jesus takes his disciples out as far as Bethany, a fact that he doesn't make in his book to Theophilus (Acts). But it wasn't the whole way to Bethany, rather just to the point where the road divides at the Mount of Olives, and one route takes you to Jericho and the other to Bethany. It's interesting, more than noteworthy, that the agonizing experience of Jesus (in the Garden of Gethsemane) and now his ascension into heaven both take place on the same ridge, that is, the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12).

When Jesus and his disciples reached the place Jesus had chosen for his ascension, they speak, then there is silence; Jesus lifts up his hands, and he blesses them. The Greek then says, 'it came to pass'. Words that denote that something significant is happening. As the words of blessing are being spoken, Jesus is separated from them; slowly, visibly, he ascends, being carried up into heaven. Their eyes follow him (Acts 1:10). During the 40 days between the resurrection and this day, Jesus had come and gone from their presence, but they knew that this raising of his hands, this blessing, this visible carrying of him into heaven, meant that they would not see him on the earth again. He had gone. Gone to be anointed at the right hand of the Father in heaven, as the Mediator King.

Today the risen, glorified man, King Jesus, rules over all creation. Exercising all authority in heaven and on earth. Sending forth his Word in power throughout the world, fulfilling his office as Prophet. Praying for and gathering in his elect, chosen people as our Great High Priest. We, like the disciples on that day, worship him with great joy and await his visible, vocal and victorious return to bring us to Himself, so that we might dwell in his wonderful presence for all eternity.

Give thanks to God for the life of the Lord Jesus, for his miracles, for his teaching, for his life, for suffering and death, for his resurrection, for his ascension, for his succession, and for his Mediatorial rule. Pray for and seek his return with love and daily obedience, rendered in joy and utmost delight. And do it all to the Glory of God, as your chief end in life.

Thursday – Luke 24: 44-49 – They are to herald the good news!

Having led the disciples and followers present through the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning himself, and having opened their minds to understand the scriptures, Jesus now emphasizes the truths concerning his 'suffering', his 'resurrection', and the 'proclamation' of the same throughout the world, beginning in Jerusalem. These are the truths that Jesus would have these men and women, and ourselves, hold onto and then to herald to others. They and we, had and have no other message to declare, but the one which the risen glorified Christ gave to them and us. This is the message for this time of year and every time of year. The message of his wrath-bearing suffering, his life-giving resurrection - this is what is to be on our hearts, minds and lips.

This message is to be proclaimed and heralded to all the nations, and we must, like those in Jerusalem on that day, take responsibility for not merely hearing this, but owning it. What wonderful opportunities are afforded us to pray for, support and participant in the proclaiming of this good news in our neighbourhood, city, province, nation, and across the world. What a blessing it is to be part of a church that has an increasingly global presence, which makes those opportunities so much easier to be realized.

Note that they and we do not go on our own strength, for they would soon have, as we have today, the one promised by the Father to accompany them, the Holy Spirit, the other Paraclete, the other Helper. The one who will come alongside and, with power, realize the eternal purposes of the Father through His Word preached. For this coming of the Holy Spirit, they must stay where they are, that is, in Jerusalem. When the Holy Spirit comes, they will be clothed with power from on high. It will not be something they are to seek or take upon themselves. They are to wait and they will be 'dressed' in this power by God the Holy Spirit. Of course, this took place as recorded in Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost.

- Q1. What does Jesus tell his hearers they are going to do?
- Q2. Where is this message to be declared?
- Q3. What are they to do now and why?

Monday – Luke 24:36-43 – Jesus appears in their midst.

There is no question about it, the disciples did believe that Jesus had risen from the grave; but when the living Lord suddenly appeared in the middle of the room, they were terrified out of their minds. Luke uses two words, "startled and frightened", to describe their reaction, to show just how struck with fear they actually were.

Jesus sees their shaken state and understands that their hearts are overwhelmed with all kinds of thoughts. Their minds are racing with what this means; all kinds of thoughts are flooding in and out of their heads, none of them making any sense. Jesus speaks to both; to first stop the frenetic mental tsunami that is engulfing them, and then to impose a rational explanation upon them. But he doesn't give them a lecture; they are in no mental state to absorb concepts; no, he points them to what is physical, tangible - his hands and feet. Why his hands and feet? Well, for two reasons.

- First, Luke says that they thought they had seen some form of a spirit. Jesus is going to dispel that immediately by commanding them to touch him. As they do so, which they do, they will feel his flesh and know that he is not a 'spirit'; for as he says, "a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

- The second reason why Jesus tells them to look at his hands and feet is that they bear the marks of where the nails had been driven into his body when he was being nailed to the cross. John tells us that he also showed them his side where the wound was because of the soldier driving the spear in (John 20:20). These feet, hands and side wound establish the personal identity of Jesus. There can be no doubt, given these wounds, that this is the Jesus who died on the cross.

Jesus is showing them here what a resurrected body is. It is the body of the person who has lived and died. Yet, both the person and the body are raised in a glorious new state. Paul would later write to the church in Corinth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, its implication for us, his chosen people, and the resurrection body that we will receive on the date that he returns. (Take a few moments to read 1 Corinthians 15, as it will bring joy to your heart.)

- Q1. How scared were the disciples and those gathered with them when Jesus appeared in the room they were gathered in?
- Q2. Does Jesus see their fear, and what does he do about it?
- Q3. Why does Jesus show them his hands, feet and side, and tell them to touch them?
- Q4. Will all those who believe in the Lord Jesus be resurrected?

Tuesday – Luke 24:36-43 – Jesus asks for food.

It is one thing to be in disbelief. It is quite another to be in disbelief with a heart filled with joy and a mind that is filled with a sense of marvelling. It's as though they have swung from being totally overwhelmed by a sense of absolute and utter terror, to being totally overwhelmed by a sense of absolute and utter ecstatic joy, in a matter of a few moments. In many ways, that's what it's like when one comes to conscious awareness that God has done a saving work in one's life. The moment of overwhelming terror, when an awareness of the sinfulness of the heart and mind engulfs, and then the moment of overwhelming joy, when an awareness of the gift of eternal salvation floods the soul. Both are initiated by the Holy Spirit, and both are the most incredible gift, bar none, that the human soul can experience.

At this zenith moment in the lives of these men and women, what does Jesus say next? "Have you anything here to eat?". While the gift of the presence of Christ is to be ecstatically enjoyed, it is not to be selfishly luxuriated in; it is for a purpose, to be lived out, and what simpler way to demonstrate that than to do something that is basic to life itself - eat. Although we need to be careful here not to fall into speculation about whether the glorified body needs food or not, we do not know, but what we can say is that this is another demonstration of the fact that this is Jesus' own physical body that he has been raised in. There will be occasions when Jesus departs, where doubts and questions will arise about whether it was Jesus that they actually saw, so he is giving them many points of remembrance for such occasions. Seeing him, hearing him speak, touching his flesh, feeding food to him - these things will collectively be hard to forget.

The disciples give Jesus a piece of the broiled fish that they had been dining on. The risen glorified Saviour, his humiliation complete with his death on the cross, is still marked by the humility of character. There is no request to prepare a special meal for the risen, glorified body of Jesus to show that he is superiorly distinct and different. Jesus will have what they have been eating.

- Q1. The fear turns to what for the disciples?
- Q2. What does Jesus ask those present for, and why?
- Q3. What do they give to Jesus, and what does this tell us about him?

Wednesday – Luke 24:44-49 – Jesus shows he is the Messiah from the OT.

Jesus does what he had done with the two men he had walked up to as they were making their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus (verses 25-27). He takes the disciples and followers present to the Scriptures. For what purpose? To show them that what they had seen and observed of him during his life and now are experiencing had, in its entirety, been the outworking of all the prophecies concerning him in the Law of Moses (that is, the first five books of the Bible), the Prophets, and the Psalms. The fact that the Old Testament centred on him and his work is clear to Jesus; and now, as he stands with these people looking upon his glorified form and listening to his every word, Jesus draws from the entire canon of the Old Testament Scriptures to show them that he is the Messiah, the fulfillment of all that was promised. But note, it wasn't just a joining up of the prophetic dots; Jesus, Luke tells us, opens the minds of those present so that they could understand the scriptures. The verb used for the word 'opened' is a present infinitive, which means that this was an opening of their minds, which lead to a continuous and lasting understanding. It wasn't merely a case that they understood it while Jesus was talking to them but then forgot about it later. No, these people would never forget what Jesus is saying to them now, not because he gave them superior powers of remembrance but because their minds were opened to the Scriptures, and every time they would hear the Word of God read, they would understand.

Many people speak of how they would like to have been present at the Sermon on the Mount, or when Jesus was teaching the apostles the Lord's Prayer, or in Bethany when he raised Lazarus from the dead. But would this not have been an occasion to have been in the presence of the Lord which would have topped them all? And yet you and I today, with the regenerating and renewing work of God the Holy Spirit in our lives, and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit in respect of God's Word, are in a better place than the people listening to Jesus on this astonishing life-changing day, because we have access to the whole canon of Scripture, which they didn't have on that day.

- Q1. What does Jesus now do?
- Q2. Why does Jesus take them to the Scriptures?
- Q3. Did Jesus just tell them what the Bible said about him, or did he do more?
- Q4. Are we at a disadvantage or an advantage over the people in the room with Jesus that day?