

Lectionary Guide for Acts 1:1-11 and Luke 24:44-53

Acts 1:1-11

Luke says that the first book (the Gospel of Luke) will summarize what Jesus “did and taught” from the beginning until he was “taken up to heaven.” This the second book will explain how Jesus gave instructions to the Holy Spirit to aid the disciples. Jesus said, the disciples were to wait for the promise of God in Jerusalem. As John had baptized with water, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. They asked, *is this the time that God will restore Israel?* Jesus answered, *it is not for you to know the times or periods that God establishes.* Rather, you will be my ‘witnesses.’ With that, Jesus was “lifted up” by a cloud. Suddenly, two messengers in white appeared saying, *why do you stand looking up to heaven? Jesus will come the same way you saw him taken up.*

Five Questions

1. The Book of Acts 1 appears to begin like any other book. However, we know that it actually follows the Gospel of Luke, which is volume 1, so acts like a volume 2. Maybe this explains why Luke has to first summarize volume 1 before turning to the opening of Acts. Is this literary summation helpful to us who are the readers/hearers before we continue?
2. Do we find Luke’s rather unsentimental and austere description of Jesus’ Ascension (on the final Sunday of the Easter season and after 40 days of instruction) helpful to us personally... spiritually ...liturgically?
3. Have we ever thought about the difference between being baptized with water (as did John the Baptist) or with the Holy Spirit (in the new age when Baptisms may be offered to Jews as well as Gentiles)?
4. The disciples ask Jesus, “*Lord, is this the time when you will restore...Israel?*” Jesus responds clearly, “*it is not for you to know the times.*” Some commentators (E. Haenchen) interpret this as Jesus’ irrefutable renunciation of the End-of-the-Age. Are any of us we waiting for the End Time, actively or passively? Do we know of others who are?
5. Luke makes clear that after Jesus’ (above) statement, we are also to become witnesses (evangelists) to wait for God to act, even outside of Israel. Do we live as if we are waiting for something to happen (the Final Coming), and/or do we live as

if God has already come to us, is active in our lives and will continue to be so? Reflect on some examples.

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Luke 24:44-53

Jesus through Luke affirmed that everything that was written about him in the Torah, prophets and psalms must (will) be fulfilled. He added that his death and resurrection on the third day would (should) be proclaimed in his name in Jerusalem and throughout the nations. Addressing his disciples Jesus said, “*You are witnesses to these things.*” (v. 48) After this, he led them out to Bethany, blessed them then was “carried up into heaven.” The disciples worshipped him, returning to Jerusalem with great joy.

Five Questions

1. Did we notice that this passage makes references to Moses, who blessed his people before departing, and Elijah, who was taken up in a cloud. Clearly, Jesus’ Ascension/departure stands in a long-held Biblical tradition for the transference of religious leadership to a next generation. In our own experience, do we think much about this transitioning of life, and wealth (intellectual/spiritual and physical)? Why or why not?
2. Here we can see that Jesus’ authority being given to his disciples, imperfect as they were. In looking back at our stories from the Easter season, who was a favorite disciple of yours? Why? What qualities did the person hold? (Don’t forget that Luke often included women in his narratives.)
3. Jesus emphasizes that despite his death, his message of repentance and forgiveness continues with the disciples. It will continue in Jerusalem and beyond to other nations. Reflect on repentance and forgiveness in our own lives. For each of us, is it finished once and for all, or is it ongoing? Does this extend to others within and outside of the church?
4. Since the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were written by the same source, we can see many similarities. One is summing up the experience of Israel and another is anticipating that of the “witnesses” (us) Do we today understand ourselves as ongoing witnesses to Jesus life, death and resurrection? Give examples.
5. Luke’s Ascension transitions Jesus’ disciples/witnesses from his own ministry to theirs (ours). For example, Jesus leads them out to Bethany, which was the same site

that he began his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and directs them to return to Jerusalem to begin their mission. What is one “mission” of our local church that is important to you? Why? Describe it. How can we strengthen it for others to embrace as we move into the season of Pentecost?

Bless you and yours this last Sunday of the Easter season.

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