

- *An interim period*

After being raised from the dead, Jesus did not go immediately and finally to heaven. There was a very important period of forty days during which He would often appear to His disciples.

1. *Confirmed the reality of His resurrection*

1. It was a time when – as we have seen – **Jesus confirmed the reality of His resurrection.**

2. *Gave teaching about interpreting the Old Testament*

2. It was a time when Jesus **gave them teaching about interpreting the Old Testament.** We know from Luke 24:44–46 that this was a major point in Jesus' teaching during this period. He opened their minds. This must involve two things. He pointed to the text and showed how it referred to Him. But it is also likely that this 'opening of their minds' included an empowering by the Spirit (we remember John 20:22) which gave them a deeper ability to perceive what is in the Scriptures.

- *Minds – opened and empowered by the Spirit*

3. *Commission to take the gospel to all nations*

3. Jesus **commissioned them to take the gospel to all nations.** Luke 24:47–48 tells us that they were told to preach repentance and forgiveness to all nations. They would give testimony concerning the literal historical events that had happened in Galilee and in Jerusalem. Luke tells us Jesus stayed with the disciples '*until the day (after giving commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen) when he was taken to God*'<sup>1</sup>. When He was fulfilling His earthly ministry, Jesus gave commands 'through the Holy Spirit'<sup>1</sup> and via the apostles<sup>1</sup>. Soon He will be continuing to give them commands and lead them, only His ruling the church will take place from heaven. During His three-year ministry He spoke by the Holy Spirit. During the forty days after the resurrection He spoke to them by the Holy Spirit. And after He has ascended He will continue to speak to them by the Holy Spirit. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit will be one of the major themes of the Book of Acts.

- *In the power of the Holy Spirit*

- *A major theme in the Book of Acts*

<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:2

4. *Teaching about the Holy Spirit*

4. Jesus **told them about the new experience of the Spirit that they were about to receive**<sup>1</sup>. They were to stay in Jerusalem until they knew the experience of the Spirit in a deeper way. The forty days was a time when 'the promise of the Father' was held out to His disciples. What is this gift of the Spirit which is deeper than anything known before? There is a giving of the Spirit which is about to come upon them. It is not their conversion or their being brought to faith. The Spirit had already brought them to faith. Judging from Luke 24:49, it is spiritual power which enables bold witness. Judging from Acts 1:8, it is power to witness boldly for Jesus. Judging from Acts 2 it is an abundant sense of the presence of God which leads to overflowing praise and worship.

- *Promised by the Father*

- *Spiritual power for witness*

<sup>1</sup> 24:49

5. *Then He ascends into heaven*

5. **After Jesus has spent forty days with them He ascends into heaven.** The forty days have been an interim period when the glorified Jesus has been with them. They will never be able to doubt the glory of Jesus, because they had forty days witnessing His resurrection, forty days of preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

- *The disciples prepared*

**The great dividing line in history**

- Heavenly enthronement
- The King of the universe – the man Jesus Christ
- Luke before
- Acts after

**The great dividing line in history is the ascension of Jesus.** Luke writes in Acts 1:2 about *'the day... when he was taken to God'* (the Greek says 'when he was received'; the idea is 'when He was taken to God'). The resurrection-and-ascension of Jesus Christ was the heavenly enthronement of the man Jesus Christ. The Son of God, who had become a man, was appointed the King of the universe. Luke's Gospel consists of what happened **before** this crucial event of world history. The Book of Acts starts telling the story of what happened **after** this crucial event of world history. The story is not finished yet! The great centrepiece is the resurrection-and-ascension of Jesus. In the ascension, for the first time in the history of the world, a man took over the task of ruling the world. The Son of God was the Son of God before He was born. But He was not a man before He was born. And the man, Jesus Christ, was not King of the universe until the day in history when God *'gave him the name which is above every name'*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Philipians 2:9

**Jesus moves His headquarters from earth to heaven**

- Jesus will rule His church by pouring the Holy Spirit on the disciples
- He ever lives to make intercession for His church
- He leaves them
  - Rejoicing
  - Prepared
  - Expecting the Holy Spirit

**Jesus moves His headquarters from earth to heaven.** The disciples observe Jesus quite literally ascending into heaven. He ascends into the sky and then disappears from view<sup>1</sup>. From now on Jesus will not lead His church by His physical presence with His disciples. Rather He will rule His church from heaven. Jesus will rule His church by pouring the Holy Spirit on the disciples. They will do the work; His power will come upon them from heaven.

<sup>1</sup> 24:50-51; Acts 1:9

Jesus lifts up His hands to pray for them. He leaves the world physically while He is in the position of one praying for blessing. He is in that position still, for He ever lives to make intercession for His church. The disciples worship Him. The resurrection-ascension is the point where they begin worshipping Jesus as God in the flesh.

Jesus leaves His church physically in order to reign and rule over His church in a new way. As He leaves them, He leaves them as a rejoicing and praising people. This is how Jesus wants things to be among His people. Jesus has thoroughly prepared them. They go back to Jerusalem, and begin praising and worshipping God, expecting at any moment the power of the Holy Spirit to fall upon them, as Jesus promised. Soon the promise of the Spirit will come and, by the Spirit, Jesus will continue to lead His church.



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