

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

Luke 24:44-53

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Years A, B, & C - Ascension, Text: Luke 24:44-53
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Luke reports Jesus' ascension in two of his writings — in Luke 24:44–53 and in Acts 1:1–11. In Acts 1:1–11, He ascends 40 days after His resurrection. In Luke, Jesus appears to ascend on the evening of His day of resurrection, unless one assumes there is an unmentioned time jump between Luke 24:49 and 24:50.

It is possible that the focus in the Acts narrative is that Jesus remains among His disciples for 40 days after His resurrection, even as God dwelt among His people in the wilderness for 40 years after the Exodus from Egypt. During this 40-day period, Jesus equips them to perpetuate His ministry after He withdraws His visible presence from their midst.

When Jesus ascended, He did not withdraw His presence; He transformed it. He remains among His brothers and sisters as the God-Man — although invisibly. His brothers and sisters live out life before His eyes and seek to make His presence visible in the way they reflect His servant lifestyle. We see the source and extent of the apostles' power as well as the basic truths that they are to preach and teach.

Verses 24:44–45: The salvation achieved by Jesus the Servant Messiah fulfills, but transforms, all Old Testament expectations. To understand and appreciate what Jesus taught and accomplished, we must become familiar with the Old Testament narrative and the hopes that surface within it.

In instructing His disciples, Jesus made use of a large study guide: the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Law: Genesis–Deuteronomy; Prophets: Joshua–2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea–Malachi; Psalms). The Hebrew books referred to as the Writings (Psalms was one of these) were accepted into the Jewish canon (collection of approved writings) during the years following AD 70.

Verses 24:46–47: Jesus instructs His disciples concerning His death and resurrection. They in turn are to proclaim Jesus' message of the forgiveness of sins and

salvation, not just to the genetic descendants of Abraham, but to all nations. By the time we reach the final chapter of Acts, Paul is proclaiming God's Good News at the ends of the earth (as many in Judea would have understood that term) in Rome!

Verse 24:48: The disciples had been witnesses of the things that took place in Jesus' life and ministry. That gave their message validity and authority. They would proclaim what they had seen and heard — not a concocted story!

Verse 24:49: In his Gospel, Luke says nothing about the disciples returning to Galilee. They are to remain in Jerusalem until Jesus sends to them what His Father had promised: the Holy Spirit. The life of Jesus' community (the Church) will begin with the events of Pentecost — ten days after Jesus' ascension (according to Luke's time frame in Acts 1–2).

In His discourses in John 13–17, Jesus teaches that the Holy Spirit will take what is His and reveal it to His disciples (and eventually to us). Behind this thought is the concept of *methurgeman* (an Aramaic term). When the exiles began returning from Babylon to Judah and Jerusalem in 538 BC, they spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew. However, in synagogues, rabbis had to read the scriptures and preach in Hebrew. So, an interpreter (*methurgeman*) stood beside the rabbi and translated into Aramaic what the rabbi read and said in Hebrew. So too the Holy Spirit takes Jesus' words and explains them to us. It is so important that Jesus' followers read the Holy Scriptures regularly; they alone reveal the message of Jesus that the Holy Spirit wishes to explain to us.

Verses 24:50–53: It would seem from this narrative that Jesus' ascension occurred on Easter Sunday evening. Or, these verses may represent a jump-forward in time. The statement “was carried up into heaven” reflects Old Testament concepts of the sweet savor of sacrifice ascending toward heaven.

The ascension marked the end of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. The apostles felt great joy because Jesus was more intimately present and more personally understood through the presence of His Spirit, which He sent among them. The narrative outlined in the third Gospel begins and ends in the Jerusalem Temple. The little group of poor and lowly ones who in the beginning expected the Savior of Israel (Luke 1–2) live on in the risen Jesus' people of faith.