

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (Acts 1:9)

God of all power and might, you were lifted up before your disciples, into the clouds of heaven, to be seated at the right hand of the Father. Even as we acknowledge your glory on high, turn our eyes back to the mission you have set before us in this world, that we may be your witnesses to all the world. We pray in the name of Christ, our exalted Lord. Amen.

Introduction

After rising from the dead, Jesus told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem, where they would receive the promised Holy Spirit. Then in their sight, he was lifted up before them in a cloud and ascended into heaven to be at the right hand of the Father.

Read: Acts 1:1-11

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The full name of the Book of Acts is “The Acts of the Apostles.” In this book, the Gospel-writer Luke goes on to describe what the followers of Jesus did after the Lord’s death, resurrection and ascension. But this book could also be called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit,” because it was only through the power of God’s own Spirit that the people of the early Church were able to perform the many miraculous signs and wonders that were accomplished among them.

Not long after Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit came to rest upon the followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. That day, believers who had been merely *disciples* (followers; those who learn) were remade by God into *apostles* (those who are sent out). The presence and power of the Holy Spirit overcame their fears and doubts and sent them out to bring the promise of the Gospel to all nations!

Discussion Questions

1. Some people confuse the ascension of Jesus with the resurrection of Jesus — two different, distinct events. What happened when Jesus was resurrected? Was this before or after his ascension?
2. According to Acts 1:3, over how long a period of time did the risen Jesus reveal himself to the apostles? Compare with 1 Corinthians 15:1-9. Who does Paul say that Jesus appeared to during this time?
3. In Acts 1:4, Jesus told his disciples to stay in the city and “wait for the promise of the Father.” What had God promised to do? When and how would this promise be fulfilled?
4. From what you read in Acts 1:6, what do you think the disciples assumed was about to happen?
5. According to verse 7, does God always let us in on the details of his plans? Why or why not? How does this require us to believe and trust in God?
6. Who do you think the “two men” in this story were? What promise did they give to Jesus’ followers? Why is that important for us to know?
7. Read Hebrews 1:1-4. In everyday terms, when we talk about authority, power, or rank, what does it mean to “move up”? What does Jesus’ ascension tell us about his power and authority?
8. Read the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. In what way is “the right hand of the Father” less of a location and more of a position? How does this relate to what will happen when Jesus returns in judgment?