



Session 4 | Acts 1: 9-14 | Ascension and the Upper Room

The book of Acts, written by Dr. Luke, continues from the gospel of Luke, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus has been meeting with the apostles (and some others) for forty days, teaching them “things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (1:3). He instructed the 11 apostles (Judas is no longer with them) to remain in Jerusalem until the “promise of the Father” comes. We identified that promise as the Holy Spirit and it is fulfilled in Acts 2:4. The promised Holy Spirit would provide the apostles with power to teach the gospel of the Kingdom, beginning in Jerusalem, “to the uttermost parts of the earth” (1:8).

Acts 1:9-11 | The Ascension of Jesus Christ

Verse 9—

And when he had spoken these things. That is, the command to remain in Jerusalem, the power they would receive from the Holy Ghost to be witnesses. His work on earth for now was finished. The apostles would be empowered to do “greater works” as Jesus prophesied in John 14:12. He **was taken up**. A different Greek word than we saw in 1:2. This word is **ἐπαίρω** | *epairo*. It is translated often as “lifted up” but it could also be *exalted*. The idea here seems to be lifted up from the earth, but it could also carry the idea that as Jesus was physically lifted up, he was also regally exalted, for **a cloud received him out of their sight**. The word **cloud** is translated as a *rain cloud* in some passages, but it is also representative of the Shekinah glory of God, as in the *pillar of cloud* that led the Israelites through the wilderness in the book of Exodus. Luke uses this same word to describe the Shekinah glory of God in Luke 9:34,35. Therefore, what we could be reading is that Jesus Christ, while physically ascending (Luke 24:51; *carried up into heaven*), was lifted up (*exalted*; Acts 2:33) by a heavenly host of *angels* to the right hand of the Father on high where he now sits awaiting his return to earth to set up his Kingdom (He ascended in order to fulfill all things, Ephesians 4:10, and Psalm 110:1; “*until I make thine enemies a footstool.*”).

Verse 10—

While they look steadfastly. Greek, **ἀτενίζω** / *atenizo*. We can hear our word *attention*. They stayed in one place, looking earnestly, not moving their eyes from the sky. Maybe in awe, or in shock, or both! **Two men stood by them in white apparel.** We have seen two men appear before in Scripture. In Luke 24:4 two men stood by the empty tomb of Jesus. Luke says these men had on *shining garments*. In John’s gospel (20:12) they are identified as *angels*. There seems to be no reason to take the two men in 1:10 as anyone other than angels.

Verse 11—

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee. We see here two things. One, angels speak a language the people to whom they are speaking understand, and second, they are speaking specifically to *ye men of Galilee*. This is a good indication at this time only the apostles are present. **Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?** The apostles were given a command by Jesus. Now they needed to get busy. They must get back to Jerusalem (verse 12 shows us they were on the mount called Olivet, i.e., the mount of olives) and wait for the promise just as Jesus had commanded.

Shall so come in like manner, that is **this same Jesus** not some other Jesus, not an imposter, or the antichrist, but this same Jesus, the one who lived, died, was buried, and rose from the grave. The same Jesus who conquered death and is now **taken up into heaven. Shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.**

A misunderstanding of the return of Jesus is repeated over and over because of verse 12,

Acts 1:12-14 | Return to Jerusalem and the Upper Room

Verse 12—

They returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. Most believe Jesus will return to the same place as he departed, but notice verse 11 does not say that, **he shall so come in like manner**. In other words, just as he *ascended*, he is going to *descend* from heaven. But not necessarily the same place.

While it is not completely germane to our passage, it is interesting to note there are several Old Testament prophecies which indicate where Jesus may return, or *touch down* so to speak, when he returns (Isaiah 34:1-2-; Isaiah 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3; Micah 2:12-13)., suffice it to say, that on the last day, as the armies of the nations are gathered at Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-16; Cf. Revelation 19:11-14), located in the Jezreel Valley of Israel, Jesus Christ will return, not to the mount of Olives, but to Edom, south east of the Dead Sea. He will march up the Jordan valley, destroying the forces of the antichrist as he goes, culminating in the final slaughter at the campaign of Armageddon. After, he will stand on the mount of Olives again (Zechariah 14:3-5).

This same Jesus...shall come in like manner, but he will come as King of kings, and Lord of lords. On that day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Stop gazing and get busy telling the world.

A sabbath day's journey this does not imply it was the Sabbath, but probably ten days before Pentecost (Acts 2:1). Luke including this may indicate that the apostles kept the Law.

Because driving, biking, blading, skateboarding or other device-driven means of transportation are prohibited on Shabbat, we walk rather than commute to synagogue. However, even walking on Shabbat has its limits.

Jewish law sets the maximum walking range from one's city to 2,000 cubits (3,049.5 feet, 0.596 miles (960 meters). [However, this measurement starts 70 2/3 cubits (112.24 ft.) from the city limits.] Practically speaking, this means that you may not walk a straight line more than .598 miles (3161.74 ft.) in any direction in the wilds outside your city limits.

"City limits" are not defined by the map you carry in your glove compartment.

According to *halachah*, unless there is more than 70 2/3 cubits between one house and the next, all contiguous housing is considered to be part of the same city. Therefore, at times it would be permitted to walk even from one city to the next, as long as the whole way is populated. This can be complex, and a rabbi should be consulted before planning a long trek on Shabbat.¹

There is evidence a causeway existed across the Kidron valley², making their journey back to the city a shorter distance and in keeping with Jewish law.

Verse 13—

And when they were come in, that is when the apostles came in to the city from the mount of olives, **they went up into an upper room**. Tradition suggests this was the home of John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12-13)—it is impossible to know who it belonged to.

Where abode.... This probably just means this is where they often met. It was large enough for at least 120 people (vs. 15).

Both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

This list is the same as in Luke 6:14-16, although in a different order, and without the inclusion of Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. Simon, or Peter is mentioned first in both lists which may indicate his leadership of the group.

Verse 14—**These all continued**. The word **continued** is also translated *wait*, in the sense of serving someone. In verse 4 Jesus has commanded them to *wait*, as they **continued** to do so they were **with one accord in prayer and supplication**, that is the apostles were all together praying and supplicating (that is asking). We don't know what they prayed for or asked for specifically but we can speculate they prayed and asked for Christ's return. **With the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren**. We learn there were more in this upper room than just the disciples. Many women followed Jesus. Luke names several of them in his gospel; *Mary called Magdaline, Joanna, Susanna*, Mary the mother of James and many other women (Luke 8:2,3; Luke 23:49; Luke 24:10, See also: Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41; John 19:25). **And with his brethren** that is Jesus's brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55,56).

¹ www.chabad.org

² *The Quest. Carta Jerusalem. Page 64,112. Jerusalem, Israel. 2006.*