

27. April 2025

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### “The Ascension of the Lord”

After the series in which we meditated intensely on the Gospel of John, which ended with the accounts of the Resurrection, it is appropriate to continue with the Acts of the Apostles, which begins with the Ascension. In this new series we will hear and learn how the early Church carried out her mission, so that our zeal to proclaim the message of salvation to people today will never wane.

As I indicated at the beginning of the series on the Gospel of John, if you would prefer to listen to a meditation on the reading or the Gospel of the day, you will find the link at the end of the text.

The Gospel of John ends with these words: *“There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written”* (Jn 21:25). The first verses of the Acts of the Apostles partly explain these words, for it is written that Jesus appeared to His disciples for forty days before He ascended into heaven to instruct them and prepare them for their mission:

#### Acts 1:1-12

*In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” And when he*

*had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away.*

The disciples, in their happiness to serve the Risen Lord, will have deeply assimilated His teachings and Jesus will have passed on to them everything that would be important for them. And yet they were not sufficiently prepared to begin their mission immediately, for something essential was still missing. The Father's promise had yet to be fulfilled, and until it was, they had to remain in Jerusalem. They had yet to be baptised with the Holy Spirit, who would confirm their witness with divine power. From Him they would receive the strength and light to proclaim and understand the Gospel with authority.

The Lord did not answer the question of when He would restore the kingdom to Israel. On the contrary, He made it clear to the disciples: *"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority"*. Also today, this is an important reminder to us to keep our curiosity in check. Sometimes we are tempted to want to know the exact timing of certain events until the Return of Christ. This is where Jesus' answer becomes relevant: the Father knows the time and that is enough. It is up to us to trust Him and to interpret the signs of the times in His light. We should not pretend to define an exact calendar.

The disciples were then able to witness Jesus' return to the Father. On the one hand, they must have felt sad that the Lord was leaving their side. On the other hand, He had told them that He would go and prepare a place for them (Jn 14:2), and they knew it!

Jesus would not leave them orphans (Jn 14:18). Very soon the Father and the Son would send them the Holy Spirit who would remain with them forever. He would remind them of what their Lord had said and done (Jn 14:26) and empower them for the ministry they had been given.

The angels encouraged them: *"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven"*.

And so it will be! Jesus will return at the end of time, but first the Gospel must be taken to the ends of the earth. That is why Jesus chose His disciples. The Holy Spirit will descend upon them to carry on His work. And they will have successors until the Lord returns in His glory at the end of time.

Come, Lord Jesus, Maranatha!

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Meditation on the Gospel of the Day:

<https://en.elijamission.net/not-seeing-and-yet-believing-2/>