

## Feast of the Ascension of Christ

returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. [© NRSV]

### Saint Mark 16: 9-15, 19-20

# \_\_# Jesus rose Early on the first day of the week. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. \* \_\_\* And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it. [© NRSV]

## Easter Season Blessing

May almighty God, who has redeemed us and made us his children through the resurrection of his Son our Lord, bestow upon you the riches of his blessing. *AMEN.*

May God, who through the water of baptism has raised us from sin into newness of life, make you holy and worthy to be united with Christ for ever. *AMEN.*

May God, who has brought us out of bondage to sin into true and lasting freedom in the Redeemer, bring you to your eternal inheritance. *AMEN.*

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. *AMEN.*

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The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

Unknown sculptor, date unknown

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### Gospel Commentary: St. Luke 24: 44-53

Saint Luke recorded two accounts of the Ascension. Today we hear both, the one from his Gospel, and the version found in Luke's other work, *The Acts of the Apostles*. This longer form is today's first lesson. Luke's short tale in his Gospel (printed below) seems but a précis of his account in *Acts*.

The Ascension is also reported in I Timothy, Ephesians, Hebrews, I Peter and Revelation and is implied by Paul's vision of the Christ and his subsequent conversion when, in response to the Jerusalem hierarchy's order, he traveled to Damascus, to put down Christianity.

It is puzzling that the Ascension story is omitted by Matthew and John. To most of us the fact that there is a human in Heavenly Glory who is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity seems to be vital to the story of our redemption. There are theories as to "why" <sup>1</sup> two Gospels omit the Ascension, but no concrete facts.

Mark's version of the Ascension has unique textual problems. There are about 4,700 surviving Greek New Testament manuscripts. Some old manuscripts include the Gospel passage from Mark as printed on page 4, but it was not original to the Gospel. Scholars say that the style, grammar and vocabulary are not those of Mark. Some possible explanations:

- (1) Some contend that the earliest copies, (perhaps the autograph manuscript itself!) had lost its last page so different hands tried to summarize what Mark's conclusion might have been.
- (2) An alternate explanation is that Mark ended with the women leaving the tomb. The ancients felt Mark's conclusion was weak

<sup>1</sup> One possible reason: The Church already had Ascension records in two Gospels and a large number of Epistles. It was not necessary to repeat everything. We must never forget that the Gospels are not biographies (and even biographers leave out vital information). John's Gospel tells us , (John: 20 <sup>30-31</sup>) why the Gospels were written: *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*

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and added a stronger one, borrowing from the other writers.  
(3) Or perhaps some combination of both (1) and (2).

Mark's Gospel (see page 4) dates from ± 65. The several additions were added in the second century. Perhaps they were compiled from the Ascension reports found in Luke and other writers, perhaps not. One brief, frequently found addition was inserted after verse 8, (the omission is noted by # \_\_\_#) and another, a longer one, after verse 14 where \* \_\_\_ \* appears in the text. Recent Bible translations often include one or more of these passages, printing them separately or in a footnote. Addition # \_\_\_# records that the women returned from the tomb to report to Peter and then recounts the beginnings of Christian Missions.

Addition \* \_\_\_ \* is from the *Codex Washingtonianus* (late 4th, early 5th century) is called the *Freer logion*, (*meaning: Freer word*). It was known to ancient scholars like St. Jerome (died 420) but is now confined to one manuscript known by the code name, *W*. It is preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian. *W* speaks of Divine Judgment.

### Today's Gospel Saint Luke 24: 44-53 [Year ABC, Ascension]

✠ THEN JESUS SAID TO THEM, "THESE ARE MY WORDS THAT I SPOKE to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and