



# THE LORD'S DAY

## Feast of The Ascension

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly page as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at the Catholic Mass for each Sunday of the Year.

The reading guides were written by Fr John Daley (RIP) who served as a Catholic priest in various parishes around the UK and world for 53 years.

Fr John co-founded Watermead in 1992 as a voice for people who wished to share understanding of living their faith through their God-given gifts and talents.

'The Lord's Day' incorporates some of those voices in this presentation and also through its many publications ~ books, resources, cards, music, etc.

Further information on what we produce, our story and the mission of our Christian apostolate can be found by visiting [www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk](http://www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk)

### First Reading

Acts 1 : 1-11

Luke probably wrote his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles as one document, dedicating it to Theophilus (a name which means "one loved by God"), who may have been a wealthy patron paying for the research and writing of the book, though it is more likely that the name means "Dear Reader" and is addressed to all of us - we are "friends of God".

The Early Church separated the books and the greeting to Theophilus is given at the opening of both Gospel and Acts.

Jesus and the disciples are gathered on the Mount of Olives (vv.12-14), together for the last time. They have seen Jesus constantly since the Resurrection during a mystical time of forty days (recalling Moses on Mount Sinai, Elijah walking to the Holy Mountain, Jesus preparing for his ministry, etc.) in which time Jesus has instructed them about the Kingdom of God and prepared them for their ministry under the guidance of the promised Holy Spirit.

The Gospel is to begin in Jerusalem, spread throughout Judaea and Samaria - and even to the whole world. Yet we remember Peter's conversation with Cornelius, the Roman centurion, in which he admits he had not understood Jesus' message to be for the world, but only for Israel. The Church had learned and Luke includes this later understanding in Jesus' words here.

The cloud that takes Jesus from their sight is another mystical symbol (like 40): it is the divine presence - recalling Moses on Mount Sinai, the dedication of Solomon's Temple, Jesus' baptism, etc. The two angels remind us of the morning of Jesus' resurrection and their words to the women "Why are you here?"

This week I shall . . .  
Remember loved ones with God.

### Questions of Faith

**Eternity in time.** Paul urges the Ephesians to look within the everyday to the eternal day . . .

### Second Reading

Ephesians 1 : 17-23

This letter was written to emphasise the unity of Jew and Gentile in the Christian community. Salvation has come to the whole world through Christ, and Paul's prayer and service to the Lord is to preach that universal salvation. All that has been and is good in life is to be brought to the Christian community, and the grace of the Church becomes the richness of home and family life.

The letter seems to be written from prison (3:13, 4:1, 6:20) which allows a perspective that puts the ordinary of everyday life in the shadow: essentials of life are seen more brightly - love and praise of God and the salvation brought by Christ Jesus.

Because Paul is a prisoner for the sake of the Gospel he has the right to ask even more than he normally would! He is testing their love, lovingly.

The opening of the letter (vv.3-14) is a glorious hymn praising God's divine providence fulfilled through Christ and the Holy Spirit. It leads to today's reading and to Paul's turning from God (prayer) to the community (love) to involve them in his thought and to share his awareness of God's love. It is the perfect pastoral plan, reflecting Jesus' way in the Gospel: from prayer to ministry and from ministry to prayer.

### ASCENSION

Jesus' final one;  
Paul invites vision beyond sight;  
One truth, different stories.

### Wisdom from the Saints



"The Ascension liberates Jesus from all restrictions of time and space"

William Temple

### Gospel Reading

Matthew 28 :16-20

Mark 16 : 15-20 Luke 24 :46-53

There are three accounts of Jesus' ascension: the best known is in the Acts of the Apostles, from the Mount of Olives forty days after the resurrection (today's first reading). In Mark's Gospel (16:19), however, it takes place from the Upper Room on the evening of the day of Resurrection, whilst in Luke (24:50-51) it takes place near Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem but still on that same Resurrection evening. We puzzle particularly why Luke should have two such different accounts - Bethany and the Mount of Olives, Resurrection day and forty days later.

Are we looking at a number of ascensions, the final one being in today's first reading? What a glorious possibility! Not simply a mystery of "Ascension" but a series of ascensions as Jesus leaves the apostles to return to the Father after each meeting with them. Such a thought helps us appreciate the reading in Matthew's Gospel more clearly: a meeting on a Galilean hillside was a strange message the women were asked to take to the apostles on the morning of the Resurrection (and which Jesus repeats when the women meet him). Why such a message when Jesus meets the disciples later that same day?

The Matthew account (28:16-20) is a perfect conclusion to the Gospel. The Church came to see the message of Jesus was a universal one and not simply for Israel, so dares to express that understanding in the Gospel when it was written about AD 75-80. Mark's ending (16:9-20) is very different - a seemingly rushed ending of rebuke, mission and reassurance. Who wrote it? But Luke's account is full of joy and is beautiful - yet why does he give us two such different Ascension accounts in his Gospel and the Acts?

### People of God

The little girl said: "It's obvious. Jesus ascended to his Father after each meeting with the apostles. We just celebrate the final one."