

**Ascension Day
Cycles ABC RCL
Revised**

Acts 1:1-11

Acts is the second volume of a two-volume work, and the Gospel According to Luke is the first volume. Both works are anonymous, and the earliest ascription of the books to Luke, the companion of Paul, derives from the end of the second century CE. The question from Jesus' students, whether he will restore the kingship to Israel, reflects the belief that the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David, would at last fulfill the promises made by God to David in 2 Samuel 7. Jesus' ascent into heaven occurs only in Luke and Acts as well as in verse 19 of what we call the "longer ending" of Mark's Gospel (Mark 16:9-20).

Psalm 47

Based on the discovery of a Babylonian liturgy, some interpreters have suggested that those *hymns* of the Psalter that celebrate God's rule as king of the earth were part of a New Year's ritual in which God was ceremonially enthroned as king over the world. See also Psalms 95:3, 96:10, *etc.* The focus in this psalm is on the Lord's historic victories over Israel's enemies.

or

Psalm 93

Some interpreters have suggested that those *hymns* of the Psalter that contain the phrase "The LORD is King" (Hebrew: *yhwh malax*) were part of a New Year's ritual in which the Lord was ceremonially enthroned as king over the world. See also Psalms 95:3, 96:10, *etc.* The "waters" of verses 4 and 5 are the waters of chaos, out of which the Israelites believed God had created the world. As such, they often represent God's opponent in the creative process. God's eternity (verse 3), might (verse 5), and decrees (verse 6) are infinitely more powerful than the chaos.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Hellenistic letters included a blessing after the initial greetings, and the unknown disciple of Paul, who composed this letter, continues his master's practice of using the blessing to advance his theological argument. The cosmic rule of Christ described in these verses provides a powerful backdrop to the ethical instructions that will follow in the epistle.

Luke 24:44-53

It is in the Gospel, not in Acts, that the author describes the setting of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives as occurring in the town of Bethany. Bethany (modern *El-azzaria*) is on the eastern slope of the mountain on the way to the Dead Sea and was the home town of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. The Byzantines located their Church of the Ascension on the crest of the mountain, and after Jerusalem became Moslem in 638 CE the church became a mosque and it still stands. The story is retold at the beginning of the second volume of the author's work (Acts) and binds the two books together.

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