



Ascension of the Lord 2005

Acts 1:1-11 Ephesians 1: 17-23 Matthew 28: 16-20

“May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant you wisdom and insight to know the God of Glory.” This prayer which comes to us from the Pauline tradition, marks an important stage in the communities’ understanding of the relationship between God and Jesus. The God of our ancestors Abraham and Sarah, and their descendants is now the God of Jesus. Jesus shows us the face of God in a new and definitive way.

What we have received from Jesus is a treasure which is to be distributed among us. It is not the heritage of one person or group.

This is an important reality for those who call themselves disciples. Jesus is now Christ, the one raised by God, who occupies a position far beyond anyone or anything else. Christ is Lord of the Cosmos. We who believe in his name share in his universal presence through his body, the church.

The story of the great commission as told by Matthew is one way of telling in narrative form, of the communities’ growing awareness of the status of Jesus.

In the book of Daniel (7:13-14) we read, “I saw One, like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the ancient One and was presented before him, he received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.”

It is possible that Matthew saw in this vision from Daniel, a way of expressing how the community now viewed Jesus, as the one who drew the whole world together into a universal kingdom.

As mountains are places of special revelation so the disciples journey to meet Jesus there. If we return to Exodus 19&20 we read that on the morning of the third day, Moses led the people to meet God. When the Lord came down, he called Moses and gave him the commandments. When the people heard the noise, which signified the presence of God, they pulled back in fear. But they were reassured by Moses that God wished only their welfare.

In the light of Exodus and Daniel, we can see that Jesus stands at the God place, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” He sees the fear and hesitation, he responds by approaching them as friend and companion. Jesus has a commission for his followers. “Go make disciples of all the nations,” “Teach them what I have taught you”. He asks all his disciples to continue to teach in his name and in his message, and to form other disciples. This is a far cry

from some methods of evangelisation that have been practised through the centuries.

The ascension story from Acts uses the basic mythic lines of the Bible's great commissioning stories. In Exodus, Moses returns from meeting with God in the cloud, in the ascension story Jesus remains one with God in the cloud.

Both the Ascension narrative and the Commissioning story form a summary of the Good News. The important themes are spelt out.

God as Father and Jesus are one in universal authorship of the universe.

Those who follow Jesus, as disciples, that is those who choose to be part of the mission of Jesus, share in this authorising generative love of the universe. Disciples come from all nations and both genders. All are included in the invitation but the choice is a free one. The church sees itself as a sacrament of the presence of Jesus in the world. The Holy Spirit will guide the church on its journey towards the fulfilment of the kingdom promise.

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