
ASCENSION DAY -
40 DAYS WITH THE
RISEN CHRIST



40 days after Easter comes Ascension Day. These are the 40 days during which the Risen Christ appeared again and again to His disciples, following His death and resurrection.

The Gospels give us little of Christ's teachings and deeds during those 40 days. Jesus was seen by numerous of His disciples: on the road to

Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee, in houses, etc. He strengthened, encouraged and taught the secrets of the Kingdom to His Apostles, at last opening their eyes to all that the Scriptures had promised about the Messiah. Jesus also told them that as the Father had sent Him, He was now going to send them - to all corners of the earth, as His witnesses. Surely the most tender, moving 'farewell' in history took place on Ascension Day. Luke records the story with great poignancy: "When Jesus had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands - and blessed them." As Christmas began the story of Jesus' life on earth, so Ascension Day completes it, with His return to His Father in

heaven. Jesus' last act on earth was to bless His disciples. He and they had a bond as close as could be: they had just lived through three tumultuous years of public ministry and miracles – persecution and death – and resurrection! Just as we part from our nearest and dearest by still looking at them with love and memories in our eyes, so exactly did Jesus: 'While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.' He was not forsaking them, but merely going on ahead to a kingdom which would also be theirs one day: 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God..'

The disciples were surely the most favoured folk in history. Imagine being one of the last few people on earth to be face to face with Jesus, and have Him look on you with love. No wonder then that Luke goes on: 'they worshipped Him - and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.' No wonder they praised God! They knew they would see Jesus again one day! 'I am going to prepare a place for you... I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' In the meantime, Jesus had work for them to do: to take the Gospel to every nation on earth.