

# OpenTheo

## Easter Day: Romans 6 & Luke 24:13-43

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### Alastair Roberts

Death, burial, and resurrection in Christ. Christ appears to his disciples.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

Romans chapter 6. We shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

For the death He died, He died to sin, once for all. But the life He lives, He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves

to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law, but under grace.

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law, but under grace? By no means. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations.

For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

But now that you have been set free from sin, and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification, and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6 begins with the question of how we are to respond to the abounding of grace in the place where sin abounded, a point that Paul made at the end of chapter 5. If the blackness of human sin occasions the most dazzling manifestations of divine grace, couldn't an argument be made for continuing in the domain of sin, so that the radical character of God's grace might be even more apparent? If God justifies the ungodly, and the greatness of His grace is most apparent in this, why should we ever leave the domain of sin? In the previous chapter Paul spoke of opposing reigns, the reign of sin in death, and the reign of grace through righteousness leading to eternal life.

God's grace bursts into the realm of sin's power like a blinding light, but its effect is to release us from that realm, and to bring us into another realm, the realm of grace, where it reigns through righteousness. If grace delivers us from the realm of sin, so radically that we are described as having died to it, continuing to act as if we lived in the realm of sin would be to empty grace of meaning, it would be like the freed slave that continued to grovel before his old master. The Christian has experienced a transition from the old realm of sin's reign in death, to the realm of the reign of grace in righteousness, leading to eternal life, and this transition is enacted in baptism.

In baptism we are united to Christ and His death, so that we might also share in His resurrection life, in the present by moral newness of life, by the work of the resurrecting spirit, and in the future as our bodies themselves will be raised to eternal life. Many people get nervous when Paul speaks about baptism in this way. Some have argued that

Paul cannot be speaking about actual water baptism.

His statements suggest salvation by baptism. He must be talking about some inner spiritual baptism. However, for Paul, these things are not detached from each other.

Entrance into the new realm of life in Christ occurs through baptism. How then are we to make sense of this? The first thing to consider here is that baptism is an integral part of the larger movement of turning to Christ. An analogy might help.

When an old king dies, the next in the line of succession immediately accedes to the throne. The throne is never left vacant. However, while the accession to the throne is immediate in some senses, there is a process by which it is proclaimed, formalized, and put into full effect.

The coronation of the new monarch can occur months after the accession. In the case of King Edward VIII, in the UK, there was never a coronation, as he abdicated beforehand. In Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's case, the coronation was 14 months after the accession.

She was the queen months before the coronation, but her coronation was not an afterthought. When people think of Her Majesty the Queen becoming queen, it is probably the coronation that comes to their mind. King Edward VIII's entry into kingship, however, was abortive, not least because there was no coronation ceremony.

The coronation is the ceremonial formalization and glorious manifestation of the new reign, and baptism is not dissimilar. Entrance into the new life of Christ is both instantaneous and a process, a process of which baptism is the great formalization and enactment. Conversion without baptism for Paul would be seen as incomplete, a failure to enter into the full reality of what God has given us in salvation.

Like the coronation of a new monarch, baptism ceremonially enacts the reality of the transition in a way that symbolically manifests the meaning and significance of what is occurring. It brings the transition into its full effect, bringing the baptized person into full and public communion in the Church. A coronation is a public and dramatic manifestation of the reality of what has and is taking place in acceding to the throne, assuring the newly crowned monarch of their full and true possession of the authority and dignity of the throne, and displaying the reality of the glory of the new monarch to both the kingdom and the wider world.

Baptism, again, is much the same. It is a seal of the transition to us, assuring us of its reality, of the firmness of Christ's promises to us, and of the unreserved dedication of our lives to which we are summoned. It also manifests our transition to the Church and the world, calling them to treat us differently from here on out.

Paul speaks of baptism as actually accomplishing something, of bringing us into possession of new life. Is Paul teaching some magical doctrine of baptism? Not at all.

Ceremonies can affect remarkable changes.

Two single people can walk into a church, go through a ceremony, say some words, exchange rings, and come out as a married couple. Now, the two persons could conceivably go through the ceremony and leave the church, go their separate ways and never interact again. Everyone could continue to treat them as if they were still single, and the wedding would be a fairly empty charade.

Although formally their status would have changed, in actual fact, little else had. The efficacy of a wedding ceremony is in large measure found in the fact that the participants live and view themselves in a very different way afterwards. The efficacy of the ceremony is largely prospective.

It anticipates the couple confirming the meaning of the ceremony in living new lives after it, new lives that are lived in terms of what occurred in the ceremony. Although a couple may fail to live out the reality that a wedding ceremony ushers them into, many do fail in this way. A wedding does not bring one into an ambivalent status.

It anticipates a positive response, and the person who fails to live faithfully in the newness of married life empties the wedding of its meaning. Baptism is much the same. Baptism formalises, ceremonially enacts, and seals to us our entrance into the privileges of sons and daughters of God.

Its efficacy is mostly prospective. It anticipates our actual living out of the new lives into which we have been brought. Paul wants the Romans, and us, to look at our baptisms and to live out the meaning of what God has declared concerning us in them.

The expectation is that baptised Christians will be living lives of a markedly different character. The baptised Christian who is going on living as he did before is violating the meaning of his baptism. For Paul, our baptism anticipates and assures us of future resurrection.

In baptism our bodies are marked out as bodies to be raised in glory on the last day. Our baptisms call us to look at our bodies differently. God has claimed our bodies, in all of their weakness, frailty, mortality, unshapeliness, ugliness and indignity, for the glory of his heavenly kingdom.

Our bodies now belong to the realm of grace. Our bodies are to be released from the dominion of death, from the shame of sin that we feel when we are exposed to others' gaze, or experience a sense of violation on account of things that we have done with, or others have done to, our bodies. We have been set free and God wants us to enter into the full experience of that freedom, as his grace reigns in the realm of our bodies, through his saving righteousness, until that great day when we are re-clothed with glorious bodies, like our saviour Jesus Christ, and God's deliverance is consummated in

our enjoyment of life eternal.

This transition, however, is one that only occurs through union with Christ. We are delivered as our bodies are united with his body, as his death becomes our death, as our old man is crucified with him and laid to rest in his tomb. As Christians we exist as people between death and life, people caught in the tension between Christ's death and his resurrection.

Our lives play out in this realm. Our release from sin through union with Christ has been proclaimed in baptism, and now we live in anticipation of its full realisation on the last day. Christ no longer lives in the realm of the dominion of death, he's overcome it.

If we are united with Christ and his death, a reality ceremonially enacted and sealed to us in baptism, we need to think about ourselves very differently. We are simultaneously dead and alive. While we still have one foot in the realm of death, and have mortal bodies, yet we already experience the new life of the resurrecting spirit within us.

Recalling the fact of our baptisms, by faith we are to reckon what they declare to be true of us. Henceforth we are to consider ourselves very differently. Considering ourselves dead to sin and alive to God involves no longer habitually living in terms of the reign of sin as puppets of our passions.

Being set free is of little meaning if we still continue to turn up for work for our old master every day. Likewise, the new life of grace is something that we are called to live out. You can't have new life unless you are actively living it.

For Paul, this living out of new life is focused on the realm of the body. We must cease offering our bodily members as instruments for unrighteousness, and must instead present ourselves to God as those raised to new life, with our members as instruments of righteousness. There are sacrificial overtones that we might recognise here.

In Romans 12, Paul urges the Roman Christians to present their bodies as a living sacrifice. This sacrificial presentation of the body, powerfully symbolically enacted in baptism, is confirmed in lives of Christian obedience. The sacrificial paradigm that Paul employs in Romans 12 is not so explicit, but it is no less present in this chapter.

We are called to present our members, to offer our bodies like sacrifices to God. And the grounds for this exhortation are found in our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. The sacrificial overtones in Paul's statement are to be seen not only in his use of the term present, but also in the notion of presenting members, sacrifices were offered to God in a dismembered form.

This is also priestly in character. Priestly initiation involved the symbolic devotion of limbs and organs to God's service, with the blood placed upon particular parts of the body. By speaking of the presentation of our members, our limbs and organs, to God,

Paul accords a greater prominence to the body.

What we present to God is not just our actions, not just our agency, not even yet ourselves as agents, but our limbs and organs themselves, in their givenness and objectivity. All of this presents a sacrificial model for Christian obedience. In Christian obedience we confirm in practice the offering of our bodies which occurred in baptism.

Paul's grounding of Christian obedience in the limbs and organs of the body also creates an extremely tight connection between person and action. By acting righteously I am presenting my limbs and organs to God, a membering of the sacrifice of my whole self. John Berkeley draws attention to a further importance of the body within Paul's account of ethics in Romans, highlighting the way that Paul locates the operation of sin and its defeat within the body.

He writes, the miraculous Christ-life that draws their embodied selves towards the vivification or redemption of the body. Some scholars have spoken about the notion of a habitus. A habitus is our basic embodied orientation towards life, our dispositions, perceptions, sensibilities, our ordering structures, our tastes, our styles, our bodily skills and our habits.

Our habitus is what we have learned by body, those things that have become second nature to us. Paul, John Berkeley suggests, had a sense of this when he spoke of the body of sin. He writes, he seems to have a sense that the body has been commandeered by sin, such that its dispositions, emotions, speech patterns, and habitual gestures are bound to systems of honour, self-aggrandisement and licence that are fundamentally at odds with the will of God.

The Christian life of obedience that Paul expresses is a life that begins with and in the body. The bodily habitus of sin has to be unworked, and a new righteous bodily habitus instilled in its place. And baptism is the place where this training of our bodies most clearly begins.

Berkeley writes again, one could hardly imagine a more effective demonstration of this rescue than the physical rite of baptism, which Paul interprets as a transition from death to life, performed on and with the body. Henceforth, believers give themselves over to this new life as alive from the dead, inasmuch as they present their organs as weapons of righteousness to God. In other words, they are committed to instantiate a new embodied habitus.

This training of the body is almost invariably a social matter. Our bodies are trained as they are incorporated into a larger social body. No one is born as a native of such a community, nor can we simply choose to be natives.

We must all be formed into natives through the inculcation of a particular habitus. This is

a slow process where we take on the character of new people. Baptism is a first step in the process of forming the habitus of the Christian faith within us.

At the point of baptism, our bodies are written into the larger social body, incorporated into it. This formation of the individual body through the social body is alluded to in Romans 12 verse 1, which speaks of presenting bodies, plural, as a living sacrifice, singular. Our individual bodies are rendered sacrificial as they are made part of the many-membered body of Christ.

It is a matter of great significance that baptism brings us into the social body of the visible church. The movement of the body into the life of the church, a movement whose first major step occurs in baptism, is an essential part of Christian training and the process of conformity to the likeness of Christ. Without baptism's process of incorporating us into the body of Christ and the bodily training that follows it in the visible church, the pedagogical process of conforming us to Christ would be extremely limited and the most fundamental part of ourselves would not have been offered to God.

In baptism, our limbs and organs are set apart for God's service. This divine claim upon our bodies is a founding principle of Christian ethics. It is one of the chief reasons why Christian obedience should be properly understood as sacrificial.

Baptism manifests and initiates a reorientation of the body and its members. It incorporates us into a new social body. Indeed, it is a practice that forms the social body itself, the body of the church.

And it does so in order that we might, through its co-option and training of our bodies, in liturgy and rituals, in practices and forms and in relations, that we might begin to think, to desire, to perceive, to be disposed and to relate differently, that we might learn to live as natives of the body of Christ. Baptism then not only expresses the sacrificial principle that grounds Christian imperatives, it also begins to instill in us the sacrificial habitus by which we will fulfil them. Sin's dominion over us, a dominion that imposes understanding, is strengthened by the law, has ceased.

We now live in the realm of grace. However, our release from the realm of sin and death has to be lived out as we present ourselves as servants to a very different master. The story of the Exodus, for instance, a story that had its great transition in the crossing of the Red Sea, was a story of moving from the oppressive service of Pharaoh to the dignifying and glorifying service of the Lord.

We must make a similar movement. We make a mockery of our release if we carry on living our old way of life. For Paul, slavery and freedom are paradoxically interrelated.

Freedom from sin is discovered in obedience from the heart to the teaching that we have been placed under, and in becoming slaves to righteousness. This is a willing slavery to

God. We often think of freedom as living without a master, and living without any law or standard.

For Paul, true freedom is obedience from the heart to a new, good master, who liberates us from the cruelty of other masters, not least the mastery of our own passions. Freedom, for instance, can be found in authorisation. The Israelites enjoyed a much higher status when they were made servants of God, a kingdom of priests, not just allowed to fend for themselves in the wilderness.

They came under the more direct rule of God, but that rule was one that authorised them and gave them authority, not just one that placed them under authority. Likewise, there is freedom to be found through obedience to a standard. The person who learns the standards and the principles of a musical instrument to the point that they can play as a virtuoso is far freer with that instrument than the person who observes no standards or principles, and ignorantly treats the instrument as if no training were required to play it.

The point of obedience from the heart is important. The law is written on the hearts of the people of God in the New Covenant. No longer is the law just an external master, something that we resist and rebel against.

Rather, it should be something that we willingly obey from the heart, something in which we find true freedom. The old slavery that we were in was one that escalated. We might recall the progressive stages of giving people up in Romans chapter 1. It was a movement into greater levels of impurity and lawlessness, leading to more dreadful degrees of dishonour and bondage.

However, as we present ourselves to a new master, the vicious cycle is replaced by a virtuous one. As we present our members as slaves to righteousness, it leads to sanctification, to our being set apart for God's presence and service. The old slavery seemed to promise a sort of liberty.

It declared that we were free from the demands of righteousness and God. However, the true nature of that supposed freedom was disclosed through its progressive outworking. It yielded the fruit of shame.

It led to bitter consequences in our lives as we reaped its fruit. It led to bondage to our passions. It led to the breakdown of our relationships.

And ultimately, its outcome was death. However, while we are replacing one form of slavery with another and becoming slaves of God rather than slaves of sin, the two forms of slavery could not be more different. And the difference is ultimately revealed in the radically different outcomes that they have.

Slavery to God ultimately leads to the honour and the glory of being set apart for God, in



contrast to the old shame and the tyranny of our old master. Slavery to God, instead of yielding death, ultimately leads to eternal life. And Paul returns to the conclusion of chapter 5 in the final verse, wrapping up the entire argument of the chapter.

There are two contrasting ways, the way of sin and the way of grace. Sin pays wages. The natural outworking of sin is death.

However, grace operates in a very different way. It isn't wages, but a free gift, a superabundant gift, nothing short of eternal life itself, and it's given to us in and through the Messiah, Jesus our Lord. If we receive this gift, let us live in it.

A question to consider, what are some practical ways in which we can more fully express the corporeality of our presenting our bodily members to God in Christian service? Luke chapter 24, verses 13 to 43. That very day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognising him.

And he said to them, What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk? And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days? And he said to them, What things? And they said to him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.

Some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. And he said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things, and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going.

He acted as if he were going further, but they urged him strongly, saying, Stay with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace to you. But they were startled and frightened, and thought they saw a spirit.

And he said to them, Why are you troubled? Or why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, Have you anything here to eat? They gave him a piece of broil fish, and he took it and ate before them. In Luke chapter 24 we encounter two people travelling from Jerusalem, returning from the feast, having lost Jesus three days ago, not realising that Jesus had to be about his father's business.

Of course, we've heard a version of this story before, back in chapter 2 verses 41 to 50. Jesus feigns complete ignorance of the events that have just occurred. As this prompts them to share the events, he will reveal that they are the ones who are unaware of what has happened.

The restraining of their eyes is associated with their slowness to believe, much as the restraining of Zacharias mouth. Jesus declares himself in all of the scriptures, from the Pentateuch to the Prophets, and they still don't recognise him. Jesus finally reveals himself in the act of taking, blessing, breaking and distributing the bread, in the ritual of the supper.

The story of the road to Emmaus takes a liturgical shape then. The word is opened up, and then Christ is recognised in the sacrament. The pattern here is the pattern of Christian worship.

Christ draws near to us on the first day of the week, he opens the scripture to us, he makes himself known in the breaking of bread, and then sends us forth with joyful tidings. The moment that their eyes are opened to him, he disappears from their sight. The eyes of the disciples open upon his absence, but now it's an absence filled with life, hope and promise.

Their hearts burned within them upon the road, and the fire in their hearts might be in anticipation of the fire of Pentecost. The opening of the eyes of the disciples is

reminiscent of the opening of the eyes of Adam and Eve at the fall, but on this occasion it's blessed. There is a three-fold opening in this chapter, the opening of the tomb, the opening of the scriptures and the opening of the eyes, and all of these are related.

Before the risen Christ revealed himself, the scriptures were a closed letter, and the perception of the disciples was limited. As Christ opened the tomb, he also opened closed eyes to perceive his presence and his purpose throughout the events that had occurred. He opened the Old Testament scriptures, revealing his presence on every page.

The resurrection transforms our reading of the Old Testament. Luke has been enacting this fact throughout his gospel. Texts whose meaning appeared closed are suddenly opened up to reveal a greater person within them.

As our eyes are opened to see the risen Christ, we suddenly recognize the identity of the one who has been travelling and speaking to us all along in the words of the Old Testament, words concerning himself. Jesus, the Lord, is the mysterious traveller who has been with Israel all the way throughout its journey. He is the one who appeared in the burning bush.

He is the one who appeared to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre. He is the one who appeared to Moses on the mountain. He is the one who appeared to Isaiah in the temple vision.

As Christ opens up the scriptures, the story of the Exodus is seen to be about him. The story of the creation is seen to be about him. The story of David is seen to be about him.

The whole of the Old Testament is Christian scripture. The story of Emmaus follows a pattern seen in two other Lukan stories, the story of Saul the persecutor on the road to Damascus and the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. In both of these stories we have the movement of a journey.

We have the opening of understanding in an encounter with Christ. And then we have a movement to the celebration of a sacrament, in those cases baptism. Jesus' body is glorified and it's not like a normal body.

It can move from place to place. It can evade recognition. It masters both space and other people's perception.

But it's still very much a body. It can be handled and it can eat. Much of the Gospel of Luke has been about meals, about eating practices, about dinner companions, about who belongs at the table.

And it's thoroughly appropriate that the fact of the resurrection should be made known through a food ritual and through an act of eating. Following 1 Corinthians 11 our

understanding of the Lord's Supper is often focused narrowly upon the context of the Last Supper and the relationship with Jesus' death. However, the Lord's Supper is also based on the events in which the risen Christ revealed himself to his disciples in the very breaking of bread that we celebrate.

As we celebrate the Supper we are enjoying the reality of the joyful resurrection meals as we perform the breaking bread ritual through which Jesus made known his presence to his disciples. The fact that Jesus eats fish when he appears to his disciples demonstrates his resurrection body but it also might have some symbolic import. Animals symbolise people.

God only ate five animals for most of the Old Testament. Cattle, sheep, goats, turtle doves and pigeons. Perhaps we could see some symbol of the inclusion of Gentiles here, although I wouldn't put much weight on it.

Jesus declares to his disciples, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you. He's there but he's no longer there in the same way. He is about to depart and speaks as if that departure had already been accomplished.

He explains how the entire scriptures, the law, the prophets and the Psalms, or the writings, had to be fulfilled in his suffering and resurrection from the dead. But it's not just in Christ's death and resurrection that these things are fulfilled. They're also fulfilled in the ministry of the church that follows.

The Old Testament narrative crackles with anticipation of Christ and Christ opens our eyes to understand the Old Testament text. There is an event of illumination going in both directions. The scripture enables us truly to see the Christ and the Christ enables us truly to see the scriptures.

Christ brings light to the entire preceding narrative while also being in direct continuity with it. Jesus is the key to understanding the Old Testament. However, the Old Testament is also the key to understanding Jesus.

Jesus is like the match and the Old Testament is like the striking surface. Bring the two together and light and fire results. Without the Old Testament we would not truly recognize Jesus.

And without Jesus we cannot truly recognize the meaning of the Old Testament. We should consider the way that Luke is using the scripture. He isn't primarily presenting us with direct prediction and fulfillment but rather with the way that Christ both clarifies and brings to resolution the themes of the Old Testament.

The whole world of the scripture comes into focus in Christ. Once we see Christ the rest makes new sense. He is David's greater son who must suffer like his father.

This is one of the reasons why the Psalms are especially prominent in Luke's understanding. The Psalms present us with the voice of the suffering Davidic king. Luke is also drawing heavily upon the background of Isaiah, especially chapters 40-66.

The suffering Messiah of the Psalms is also the suffering servant of Isaiah's prophecy. He is also the spirit anointed one who brings the acceptable year of the Lord and brings ministry to the Gentiles. The church and its ministry also figure into the picture.

Its witness to all nations beginning with Jerusalem is an essential part of the picture anticipated by the Old Testament. The second volume of Luke's writings, the Book of Acts, is also a book that fulfills Old Testament prophecy. Such themes of fulfillment are very important in the ministry of the early church not least in places like Peter's sermon in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost.

Christ is the one who will send the Spirit, the promise of the Father. We should note the explicit presence of all of the persons of the Trinity here. The Spirit is the one sent.

The Spirit is the promise of the Father and the Spirit is sent by the Son. The Spirit is power from on high, power for ministry and mission. It is the power that is the power of Christ himself.

They are instructed that they must wait in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the place from which the word of the Lord will go out. We could perhaps think of Jesus as a new Elijah here.

His ascension and their being clothed with power from on high are two sides of the same coin. Just as Elijah's ascension was Elisha's Pentecost, so it is for Jesus and his disciples. This might also be the third of three instructions that Jesus gives to his disciples towards the end of his ministry.

The first being to find the cult that's tied up and to bring it to Jesus for his triumphal entry. The second to find the man carrying the water picture in the town. And then this as the third, to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes upon them from on high.

These might be related to the three signs that are given to Saul at the beginning of the kingdom. A message concerning his father's donkeys that they have been found. Encountering men bearing goats, bread and wine.

And then meeting with prophets coming down from the high place at which time the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon him and he will become a new man. This is what happens with the disciples. As the story of the signs given to Saul were at the beginning of the first kingdom of Israel, these signs are the beginning of a new kingdom.

And just as Saul was prepared by the Spirit coming upon him, so they will be prepared for rule as the Spirit comes upon them. A question to consider. Can you think of some examples in the Gospel of Luke where Luke exemplifies the form of reading Scripture

that Jesus here teaches?