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Jehu wipes out the worship of Baal. The ascension.

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

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Transcript

2 Kings 10. Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of the city, to the elders, and to the guardians of the sons of Ahab, saying, 2 Kings 10.

Now then, as soon as this letter comes to you, seeing your master's sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, fortified cities also, and weapons, select the best and fittest of your master's sons, and set them on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house. 2 Kings 10. But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, the two kings could not stand before him.

How then can we stand? So he who was over the palace, and he who was over the city, together with the elders and the guardians, sent to Jehu, saying, We are your servants, and we will do all that you tell us. We will not make anyone king. Do whatever is good in your eyes.

2 Kings 10. Then he wrote to them a second letter, saying, If you are on my side, and if you are ready to obey me, take the heads of your master's sons, and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow at this time. Now the king's sons, seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, who were bringing them up.

2 Kings 10. And as soon as the letter came to them, they took the king's sons, and slaughtered them, seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to him at Jezreel. When the messenger came and told him, They have brought the heads of the king's sons, he said, Lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until the morning.

Then in the morning, when he went out, he stood and said to all the people, You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him. But who struck down all these? 3 Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the Lord which the Lord spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the Lord has done what he said by his servant Elijah.

4 So Jehu struck down all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, all his great men and his close friends and his priests, until he left him none remaining. Then he set out and went to Samaria. On the way, when he was at Beth-ikad of the shepherds, Jehu met the relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah, and he said, Who are you? 5 And they answered, We are the relatives of Ahaziah, and we came down to visit the royal princes and the sons of the queen mother.

He said, Take them alive. And they took them alive and slaughtered them at the pit of Beth-ikad, forty-two persons, and he spared none of them. 6 And when he departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him.

And he greeted him and said to him, Is your heart true to my heart as mine is to yours? And Jehonadab answered, It is. 7 Jehu said, If it is, give me your hand. So he gave him his hand, and Jehu took him up with him into the chariot.

And he said, Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord. So he had him ride in his chariot. 8 And when he came to Samaria, he struck down all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, till he had wiped them out, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke to Elijah.

9 Then Jehu assembled all the people and said to them, Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu will serve him much. Now therefore call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his worshippers and all his priests. Let none be missing, for I have a great sacrifice to offer to Baal.

Whoever is missing shall not live. 10 But Jehu did it with cunning, in order to destroy the worshippers of Baal. And Jehu ordered, Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal.

So they proclaimed it. 11 And Jehu sent throughout all Israel. And all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come.

And they entered the house of Baal. And the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other. 12 He said to him who was in charge of the wardrobe, Bring out the vestments for all the worshippers of Baal.

So he brought out the vestments for them. 13 Then Jehu went into the house of Baal with Jehonadab the son of Rechab. And he said to the worshippers of Baal, Search, and see that there is no servant of the Lord here among you, but only the worshippers of Baal.

14 Then they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. 15 Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside and said, The man who allows any of those whom I give into your hands to escape shall forfeit his life. 16 So as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guard and to the officers, Go in and strike them down.

Let not a man escape. 17 So when they put them to the sword, the guard and the officers cast them out and went into the inner room of the house of Baal. 18 And they brought out the pillar that was in the house of Baal and burned it.

And they demolished the pillar of Baal and demolished the house of Baal and made it a latrine to this day. 19 Thus Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel. But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin, that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan.

20 And the Lord said to Jehu, Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. 21 But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin.

22 In those days the Lord began to cut off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel, from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Moroa which is by the valley of the Anan, that is, Gilead and Bashan. 23 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 24 So Jehu slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria.

And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his place. The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years. Jerome Walsh observes the way that 2 Kings chapter 10 is part of a larger cyclical pattern of violence and death running from chapters 9 to 11, as the sins of Ahab and all associated with him come crashing down on their heads.

The first cycle begins with the death of Jerome of Israel in chapter 9 verses 14-26, followed by the death of Ahaziah of Judah in chapter 9 verses 27-29, followed by the

death of Jezebel in chapter 9 verses 30-37. The second cycle begins with the death of the 70 sons of Ahab in chapter 10 verses 1-11, followed by the death of the 42 relatives of Ahaziah in chapter 10 verses 12-17, followed by the death of the worshippers of Baal in chapter 10 verses 18-28. The final cycle begins with the death of Jehu in chapter 10 verses 29-36, followed by the death of the seed of Ahaziah in chapter 11 verses 1-3, with the death of Athaliah concluding the sequence in chapter 11 verses 4-20.

The sequence associates the deaths of Jerome and Jehu, kings of Israel, with the deaths of the 70 sons of Ahab, the greatest of the Omri dynasty. It associates the death of Ahaziah of Judah with the death of his 42 relatives and the death of his seed. Finally, it associates the deaths of Jezebel, the worshippers of Baal, and Athaliah.

Ahab has 70 sons, a number representing the full number of the nations in Genesis chapter 10, and it's also the number of the Jewish elders. Killing 70 sons suggests a comprehensive judgement. It might also remind us of the story of Gideon, or Jeroboam, in Judges chapter 9 verses 1-5.

It is better for you that all 70 of the sons of Jeroboam rule over you, or that one rule over you. Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. And his mother's relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem, and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, He is our brother.

And they gave him 70 pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-bereth, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows who followed him. And he went to his father's house at Ophrah, and killed his brothers, the sons of Jeroboam, 70 men, on one stone. But Jotham, the youngest son of Jeroboam, was left, for he hid himself.

This event might also come to mind at the beginning of the next chapter, as Athaliah kills off the royal household of Judah, save for one son who hides himself. Jehu has to deal with potential rivals. As Ahab has so many sons, Jehu needs to ensure that none are set up as a rallying figure for Omride's supporters against him.

He begins by laying down the gauntlet, challenging the men of Samaria to appoint one of Ahab's sons as king and fight for him as king. He is probably gambling on them not daring to do so. They respond by presenting themselves as his servants, declaring that they will appoint no rival to him.

He then instructs them to take the heads of their master's sons and bring them to him in Jezreel as a proof that they are on his side. The instruction is an intentionally ambiguous one, as commentators generally observe. It could refer to the heads of Ahab's sons, meaning those set over them as guardians, or it could mean their literal heads.

The men of Samaria go with the latter meaning and decapitate them, bringing their heads in baskets to Jezreel. Jehu allays any fear that the men of Samaria might have

concerning reprisals from him. He openly acknowledges his role in the conspiracy and his responsibility for killing Joram.

But he presents the killing of the sons of Ahab as if it were not his responsibility, taking advantage of the plausible deniability that his ambiguous statement had given him. In killing the sons of Ahab, they are made complicit in Jehu's coup. That Jehu intended their death is quite apparent, and it's suggested by the statement that he makes following concerning the fulfilment of the word of the Lord through Elijah.

He then proceeds to kill anyone else associated with Ahab in Jezreel, his officials, his friends, and his priests. As Judah had become so tangled up with Ahab's house and its sins, they too will suffer at the hand of Jehu. Just as Ahaziah of Judah was in the kingdom of Israel and was killed there by Jehu and his men, so relatives of Ahaziah are now visiting.

They seem to be entirely unaware of what has happened. They don't know that Ahaziah is dead. They don't know about Jehu's coup, the death of Jezebel, and the fact that Jezreel has been taken over.

They are going to visit the great lady in the court, presumably Jezebel. Jezebel is the grandmother of Ahaziah, the king of Judah, and so they intend to meet with relatives. Jehu instructs his men to take them alive, and they take them alive so that they can slaughter them together at a pit.

42 people are killed in this massacre, which likely reminds us of the 42 that are killed back in chapter 2, verse 23 to 25. This suggests a parallel between Jehu and Elisha that has already been drawn back in chapter 19 of 1 Kings. On his way to Samaria, Jehu meets Jehonadab, the son of Recap, coming out to meet him.

He takes him with him as a witness to what he is about to do. He is going to show him his zeal for the Lord. When we think of zeal for the Lord, we can think of Moses, of Phinehas, or of Elijah earlier on in the Book of the Kings.

Jehu will be another example of what zeal for the Lord can look like. When Jehu arrives in Samaria, he kills any of the surviving persons of the house of Ahab. He then gathers all of the people and speaks concerning this great celebration that he is about to have.

As the new king, he bears a particular responsibility for upholding the religious cult of the nation. And so, from the very outset, he declares his great loyalty to Baal. He is going to be even more of a servant of Baal than Ahab.

And so he wants all the prophets, all the worshippers, and all the priests of Baal to gather together. He is going to have a great sacrificial event. Any servants or worshippers of Baal that do not attend are going to be killed, so there is a great incentive to turn up.

All of the worshippers and priests and prophets are gathered together, and then a solemn assembly is called for Baal and proclaimed. Then he calls further afield. He brings all the people throughout all Israel, all the worshippers of Baal.

There is no one left who does not come. In addition to all the priests and the prophets and the worshippers of Samaria, all the worshippers of Baal throughout the land are now gathered. Then he gets the person who is in charge of the wardrobe and brings out the vestments for all of the worshippers of Baal.

So they are all going to be dressed in distinct garments that mark them out as his worshippers. Having brought them all into the house, he then gets them to search to ensure that there is no servant of the Lord among them. Once that has been done, they go in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Jehu in his cunning has gathered all these people together, marked them out, and now he instructs the eighty men that he had stationed outside to go in and slay them all. When all of the prophets, the priests and the worshippers have been killed, his men remove the pillar of Baal, which they then burn. They demolish the pillar of Baal, and they demolish the house of Baal.

The house of Baal is reduced to a latrine, much as the body of Jezebel was reduced to dung. By this act, Jehu effectively wipes out official Baal worship within the land of Israel. Jehu's action might also remind us of the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal that were gathered together at Carmel for a sacrifice and then killed because of their idolatrous worship of Baal.

For all of his zeal and his opposition to the worship of Baal, Jehu continues in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat in worshipping the golden calves at Dan and at Bethel. However, of all the kings of Israel, Jehu is the one that stands out. He is the one king that really makes a stand against the evil of Baal worship.

He is the one king that to some degree turns the spiritual tide in the north, and the law commends him for this. On account of his faithfulness and the way that he has deceived and overcome the servants of Baal and the house of Ahab, he is going to be blessed with a dynasty. In contrast with his predecessors on the throne of Israel, the Lord will establish his house for four generations.

However, on account of his failure to turn away from the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the Lord begins to chip away at the edges of Israel. Hazael of Syria in particular ravages the transjordan. Hazael had been anointed by the Lord to judge his people Israel, and if Jehu would not judge them effectively from within, Hazael would have to judge them from without, a far more painful judgment.

A question to consider. Comparing and contrasting the zeal of Jehu with the zeal of

figures like Elijah, Moses, and Phinehas, what differences can we see? What are some of the limitations of the form of zeal that Jehu represents? Acts chapter 1 verses 1 to 14. 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, you heard from me. For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the zealot, and Judas the son of James. All these, with one accord, were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers. The book of Acts begins in a transitional place.

Jesus is about to leave and Pentecost is about to occur, but yet there are 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension, and after that, 10 more days until Pentecost. Such a situation might remind us of the beginning of the book of first Kings. The Davidic king is about to leave and his appointed successor and his regime are being established.

Luke introduces the book with a dedication to Theophilus, the same person to whom he had dedicated the third gospel. As almost all scholars recognize, there is a very close relationship between the book of Acts and the book of Luke. They are two books by the same hand, and beyond that fact, they have deep thematic unity and structural relationships.

Rebecca DeNova remarks upon their structural similarities. The baptism of Jesus with water in Luke chapter 3 is paralleled by the community's baptism with the spirit in Acts chapter 2. Jesus' message is rejected in Nazareth in Luke chapter 4, and the community's message is rejected in Jerusalem in Acts chapters 3 to 5. Herod Antipas intends to kill Jesus in Luke chapter 13, while Herod Agrippa attempts to kill Peter in Acts

chapter 12. Luke chapters 14 to 18 contains the gospel to the outcasts, and Acts chapters 13 to 20 contains a gospel that includes Gentiles.

Chapters 9 to 19 of the gospel contain Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, and Acts chapters 19 to 21 contains Paul's journey to Jerusalem. Both Jesus and Paul suffer a passion and four trials, Luke chapters 20 to 23 and Acts chapters 21 to 26 respectively. The death of Jesus in Luke chapter 23 is paralleled in Acts chapter 27 with Paul's death at sea.

In Luke chapter 24, Jesus is resurrected, and Paul is resurrected in Acts chapter 28. Beyond this, we should also note similarities in the emphasis upon the temple at the beginning of the story, the emphasis upon the spirit, and then also themes of birth. The first volume was about all that Jesus began to do and teach.

Many have seen in this statement a suggestion of the fact that this following volume, the volume of Acts, concerns Jesus' continued work, that Jesus is working through his spirit in the ministry of the disciples that he has chosen. We might see similarities between this and the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, where Elisha is the one who completes the unfinished ministry of Elijah, and as in the stories of Elijah and Elisha, there will be an ascension followed by a Pentecost, a gift of the spirit, here and in the succeeding chapter. Before Jesus is taken up, he gives commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

He gives them directions for what they ought to do. The apostles are his chosen messengers. They have been set apart as his special emissaries, the ones who represent him in a very particular way.

They will be the foundation of the church, with Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone. Their role is that of communicating his instructions and directives, and also bearing witness to what he has done, bearing witness most of all to the resurrection. And for that end, he presented himself alive to them after his death and resurrection on multiple occasions and with many proofs.

We have appearances to single individuals. We have appearances to a couple of people on the road to Emmaus. We have sustained lengthy appearances and short appearances.

We have appearances in Galilee next to the sea, and we have appearances in Jerusalem. We have appearances to men. We have appearances to women.

We have at least one appearance to over 500 people at a single time, as Paul notes in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. If the apostle Thomas accepted Jesus' invitation in the book of John, then the apostles touched Jesus' very wounds that proved that it was he who had come back from the dead. Jesus walks with them.

He talks with them. He cooks for them. He eats with them.

They see him indoors. They see him outdoors. They see him in daylight.

They see him at night. He is seen by members of his family and by some of his closest acquaintances, and then also by others that had slightly less familiarity with him. The sheer range of resurrection appearances and the many ways in which Jesus demonstrates that it is indeed he who has come back from the dead all serve to ground the faith of the disciples and secure their witness to the resurrection.

He appears to them over a 40-day period. When we think of a 40-day period, we might think of certain parts of the flood narrative, or we might think of the story of Moses going up Mount Sinai, or Elijah going to Mount Horeb, or we might think of the time that Israel spent in the wilderness for 40 years. Jesus had spent 40 days in the wilderness at the beginning of the book of Luke.

But I think there's a different 40-day period that relates more directly to this, which is the 40 days after the birth of Jesus and before his presentation in the temple. According to the law of Leviticus chapter 12, after the birth of a male child, a woman would bring a sacrifice of a lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtle dove as a sin offering to the tabernacle or the temple. Within Luke's gospel, we see a number of symmetries between the beginning of Jesus' life and his death.

Jesus is born with a Mary and Joseph. After his death, there are a number of Marys and also Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

Jesus is wrapped in linen garments and laid in a tomb. When Jesus rises, he will be the firstborn from the dead. This is a new birth event, and here I think we see an extension of that parallel.

Luke is the only one of the gospels to record the events of the presentation in the temple, and there there is a lot of emphasis upon the work of the Spirit. There is a prophetic declaration by a man called Simeon. There is a woman called Anna who's been constantly praying in the temple, and here I think we see parallels.

Jesus, the firstborn son from the womb of the grave, is going to go into the heavenly temple and his mother and his disciples will go to the earthly temple and continue in prayer. Perhaps we are even to associate Christ with the ascending sacrifice of the burnt offering of the lamb and to associate the Spirit that descends on the day of Pentecost with the dove of the sin offering that applies his blood to us. Beyond giving them directives for their future mission and giving them many manifestations and proofs that he was indeed raised from the dead, and not just some appearance but a living body, Jesus also gave his disciples much teaching concerning the kingdom of God.

While he had taught them extensively within the gospels, particularly in the form of parables concerning the kingdom of God, now they are prepared to hear much more.

They have seen the resurrected Christ, they have some idea of what the cross meant, and now they are prepared to hear about the next stage, the mission that they will undertake, and what role that will have to play in God's purpose. It might seem strange after all the events of the death and resurrection that Christ is leaving the scene.

However, to think this would be to miss the significance of the ascension. Patrick Schreiner in his book *The Ascension of Christ* observed the way that the ascension is the culmination and completion of Jesus' ministry in each of its key aspects, its priestly aspect, its kingly aspect, and its prophetic aspect. In the priestly aspect of Christ's work, he observes that while Christ sacrificed himself and offered his blood on earth, he interceded for his people on earth and gave them his peace and blessing, in heaven he presents his blood, opening up the way for his people to enter into the heavenly sanctuary.

In heaven he constantly intercedes for us, and from heaven he bestows his spirit which blesses his people and gives them peace and confidence to draw near to God. All of these points are central in the book of Hebrews. He discusses the kingly aspect too.

On earth Jesus is designated as king, he conquers the forces of darkness, and he lays the foundation for his church. But at his ascension he is installed as king, he is enthroned over all spiritual beings, and he becomes the head of the church. Finally, as the ascended prophet, Jesus was filled with the spirit while on earth, but as he's ascended he pours out his spirit and he empowers many witnesses to go forth.

Jesus on earth was the one who spoke the word of God, but after his ascension he continues to declare his word of his gospel to the world through his messengers, through his apostles that he has appointed by the spirit. Again as a prophet Jesus performs signs and wonders, but then as he becomes the head of the church as he ascends into heaven, he now performs signs and wonders through his bride the church. The ascension then is not a strange epilogue to the story of Christ, it's the completion of the story, the point where it reaches its intended goal.

This fact is borne out by studying the New Testament epistles where again and again we see references to the ascension and its meaning and its significance. Although he had appeared to them after his resurrection in Galilee, on a mountain where he had delivered the great commission and next to the sea of Tiberias or Galilee where they were fishing, he now instructs them to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the promise of the father, the Holy Spirit. The gift of the spirit had already been foretold, not least in the ministry of John the Baptist, who baptized with water but spoke about the one who had baptized with the Holy Spirit, the one who was his successor.

John the Baptist has spoken about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire and yet none of these things seem to occur in the ministry of Christ on earth. It was not until after his ascension that those things could take place. One key question rises in the minds of the

apostles at this time though.

Is this the time when the Lord will restore the kingdom to Israel? This was something that was long anticipated, mentioned throughout the works of the prophets and now they're wondering, is it going to take place? Jesus does not deny that such an event is going to take place. Israel is going to have the kingdom restored to it. However, it is not for them to know the times or the seasons.

It will happen in the father's good time. Much of the book of Acts that follows will be wrestling with this question. How is Israel going to respond to the message of the Messiah? How is this kingdom going to play out? Jesus does not answer their questions about the timing of the restoration of the kingdom.

What he gives them is a mission and the power to perform that mission. They are first going to be anointed with the Holy Spirit and when they have the Holy Spirit upon them they will be his witnesses bearing his spirit and his message as they go to Jerusalem first, then all Judea, which probably refers to the entirety of Jewish Palestine, then to Samaria and then to the ends of the earth. The book of Acts roughly seems to follow this pattern.

It begins in the city of Jerusalem and it ends in the city of Rome. After he says these things to them he's taken up and a cloud removes him from their sight. How we relate such an event to a modern cosmology has raised many questions.

There is no reason why the ascension of Christ, however, need demand the idea that Jesus is physically located above us. The ascension of Christ is not just the ascension to a physically higher location. It is an ascension to a spiritually higher realm.

It is perceived in our realm as a physical ascension into the sky but the ascension is also a passing into a greater realm, a movement into heaven and God's special presence. A similar event of course is seen in 2 Kings chapter 2 where Elijah is caught up in the whirlwind. Again we might think of this as a cloud.

We've seen clouds earlier in the work of Luke both in the event of the transfiguration and also in the Olivet discourse as Jesus speaks about coming on the cloud. That of course looks back to the book of Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 to 14. I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples nations and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. Jesus coming on the cloud is the son of man ascending to God's very presence entering into his rule. Gazing into heaven they see him taken from them.

We should probably recognize some visionary aspect to what they're seeing here. It might be similar to the event of Jesus' baptism as the spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove and the heavens are opened. That is seen by Christ and it's seen by John the Baptist but there is no reason to believe that it was seen by anyone else present.

The same thing seems to be true of the ascension of Elijah. Elijah says if Elisha sees him ascend he will have the double portion of his spirit. As the ascension is not just a physical ascension but is a spiritual transition or translation between realms it is not surprising that it should be seen only by those whose eyes are spiritually opened to perceive not just regular terrestrial phenomena but also spiritual ones.

As they are gazing into heaven two men appear in white robes. These might remind us of the angels at the time of the resurrection. The two men in dazzling apparel who appear to the women and instruct them not to look for the living among the dead.

As the two men instructed the women there the two men instruct the apostles here giving them a further sense of how this fits into the larger picture. Jesus was taken up from them into heaven and he's going to return in the same way as they saw him go up. What this return will involve is not entirely clear.

Perhaps our minds might be drawn to Zechariah 14 verse 4. On that day his feet shall stand on the mount of olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east and the mount of olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley so that one half of the mount shall move northward and the other half southward and you shall flee to the valley of my mountains for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azel and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with him on that day there shall be no light cold or frost and there shall be a unique day which is known to the Lord neither day nor night but at evening time there shall be light on that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea it shall continue in summer as in winter and the Lord will be king over all the earth on that day the Lord will be one and his name one after the ascension the 12 apostles returned to Jerusalem the ascension occurred on the mount of olives in the final week of Jesus's life the mount of olives and the temple mount are set over against each other this quite possibly was in the light of that prophecy from Zechariah it seems appropriate that the Lord ascended from the mount of olives and now they will return to Jerusalem which will be the staging ground for the first phase of the mission that they have to undertake entering Jerusalem again they go to an upper room where they have been staying they are probably not living there certainly not the full number of them but they are based there as they spend their time in prayer and conversation in preparation for the day of Pentecost a room that would have accommodated 120 people would have been uncommonly large within the city of Jerusalem here in the 10 days the deep breath before the spirit descends upon them and plunges them into their mission the apostles

are listed for us once again after the apostasy and the betrayal of Judas the 12 are only 11 they will have to restore their full number in the verses that follow here they are listed in a very similar order to that which we find elsewhere in the gospels Peter begins the list as usual and is succeeded by the other two of the core three disciples James and John Andrew Peter's brother heads up the remaining eight in Luke chapter 6 verses 12 to 16 he had been listed second before James and John and alongside his brother Peter however now that Peter James and John have become a special group in their own right he will take up the fourth position the apostles are unified in the act of continued prayer in which they are joined by the women and Mary the mother of Jesus the women here are probably not just their wives but are probably the core women among the disciples of Christ who had followed him from the beginning Luke had mentioned these prominent women in Luke chapter 8 verses 1 to 3 among these women were found the first witnesses to the resurrection the presence of Mary the mother of Jesus at this point is also noteworthy Mary had experienced her own sort of Pentecost back in Luke chapter 1 as the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her as Christ was conceived in her womb she will be personally present for this second great Pentecost also and while Jesus' brothers had doubted his mission earlier on in the Gospels here they are present with the disciples in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 7 we read that Jesus appeared to James presumably his brother and seemingly alone the scene is slowly being set for the events of chapter 2 as the Spirit will descend upon the church fulfilling the purpose of the ascension a question to consider how do the post-resurrection appearances of Christ differ from other sorts of miraculous appearances how do they differ from the post-ascension appearances of Christ to figures such as Stephen in chapter 7 and Saul on the road to Damascus