

OpenTheo

February 29th: 2 Kings 2 & Luke 24:44-53

February 28, 2020



Alastair Roberts

Elijah is taken up to heaven. Jesus commissions his disciples and ascends to heaven.

Some passages referenced:

1 Kings 19:19-21 (the call of Elisha); Joshua 1-8 (Joshua's itinerary in the initial stage of the conquest); 2 Kings 13:14 ('the chariot of Israel and its horseman'); Exodus 14-15, Joshua 3 (earlier water crossings); Deuteronomy 34:5-6 (the death and burial of Moses); Numbers 27:18-23, Deuteronomy 34:9, Numbers 13:16 (the father-son relationship between Moses and Joshua); Deuteronomy 21:17 (double portion for the firstborn son); 2 Kings 10:14 (Jehu kills forty-two relatives of Ahaziah of Judah).

Genesis 48-50, Deuteronomy 31-34, Joshua 24 (blessing and departure ending books); Isaiah 49:6 (light to the Gentiles); Acts 2:14-41 (Peter develops Jesus' statement at his departure in his Pentecost sermon); 2 Kings 2:12-14 (clothed with the mantle of the departing prophet); 1 Samuel 10:2-7, 16:20-23 (three signs of the kingdom); Luke 19:28-35, 22:7-13, 28-30, 24:49 (signs of and promise of the kingdom); Luke 19:29 (triumphal entry beginning at Bethany); Luke 1:8-10 (prayer at the temple at the hour of incense); Luke 1:35 (the promise of the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary); Luke 2:22-38 (Anna and Simeon); Luke 2:20 (the shepherds return); Acts 1:8 (Jesus' farewell statement in Acts).

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

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon (https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X330?ref_=wl_share).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these

episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

2 Kings 2 Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. And Elijah said to Elisha, Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel. But Elisha said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.

So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, and he answered, Then Elijah said to him, But he said, So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan.

Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, And Elisha said, And he said, Yet if you see me as I am being taken away, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so. And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, and Elisha saw it, and he cried, And he saw him no more.

Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces, and he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.

And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him, and they said to him, Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men. Please let them go and seek your master. It may be that the spirit of the Lord has caught him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.

And he said, You shall not send. But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent there four fifty men, and for three days they sought him but did not find him.

And they came back to him while he was staying at Jericho, and he said to them, Did I not say to you, Do not go? Now the men of the city said to Elisha, Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad and the land is unfruitful. He said, Bring me a new bowl and put salt in it. So they brought it to him.

Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, Thus says the Lord, I have healed this water. From now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it. So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, Go up, you bald head! Go up, you bald head! And he turned around, and when he saw them he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys. From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

2 Kings chapter 2 is a passage that describes the transition from the ministry of Elijah to that of Elisha. Elisha was called back in 1 Kings chapter 19, but we haven't seen anything of him again until this point. The chapter begins by telling us that Elijah is about to be taken up by God into heaven by a whirlwind, and this seems to be widely known.

It seems to be known to Elijah, to Elisha, and to a number of the sons of the prophets. And the account of this chapter begins with a series of three journeys. Elijah asks Elisha on three occasions to stay behind, but yet on each of the three occasions Elisha insists on following him, as he's going to Bethel, as he's going to Jericho, and then to the Jordan.

Sandwiched between these requests from Elijah, Elisha is also asked by the sons of the prophets at Bethel and at Jericho if he is aware that the Lord is going to take his master up from him. And the repeated requests from Elijah and questions from the sons of the prophets raises this sense of anticipation we're arriving at a significant point. The presence of the sons of the prophets here is actually surprising.

They're not characters that we've really seen much to this point, but now suddenly there seem to be a lot more faithful Israelites around. The ministry of Elijah seems to be a very lonely one. He's very much a solitary figure, but when we move into the ministry of Elisha there seem to be a lot more other characters around.

The journey they take is from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho and then to the Jordan River. This is almost doubling back on themselves, as Gilgal is nearer to the Jordan than Bethel is. Each of these places is closely associated with Joshua's conquest of the land, and it's as if Elijah is rewinding the conquest narrative.

And then the narrative will be taken up again and moved forward by Elisha. Elijah's ascension is also Elisha's Pentecost. As he is taken up into heaven, his spirit will be given to Elisha and Elisha will continue his ministry.

Elisha is told that he will receive the firstborn portion of Elijah's spirit, the double portion, if he sees Elijah as he's being taken up. It seems to be that this is some sort of visionary event. There are a number of events within the story of Elijah and Elisha where only those with the eyes to see can see.

We see these things in the Gospel too. Something like the baptism of Christ and the heavens being opened. We shouldn't necessarily expect that that would have been visible to everyone.

Rather it's seen and presented as a visionary event that John the Baptist and Jesus see, whereas not every bystander would have seen that. Elisha's ability to see this, in some sense, is a qualification for his ministry. It sets him apart as someone who has that spiritual perception.

And as Elijah is taken up, he's taken up by the chariots of God. And Elisha proclaims, my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen. And this presumably is a statement about Elijah himself.

It's not just describing what he's seeing. Later on in chapter 13 verse 14 of this book, Elisha himself is described in this way. As Joash, the king of Israel, goes down to him and weeps before him crying, my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen.

Elisha is the chariot of the Lord and Elijah is the chariot of the Lord. There are two water crossings here which remind us, perhaps, of Moses' water crossing leading the people out of Egypt and Joshua's leading the people into the Promised Land. One is going out of the land and the other is going in.

Now, these occur by means of, in the first case, Moses' rod that separates the waters of the Red Sea. Then the entrance through the Jordan into the Promised Land is by means of the feet of the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant. And here it's the mantle of Elijah is the means by which the waters are split.

And perhaps we're supposed to see Elijah as a sort of human rod and also a bearer of God's presence. This might explain the meaning of the reference to Elijah as the chariot of Israel. The chariots of fire are God's own throne chariot by which Elijah is taken up to God's presence, presumably to the Divine Council.

And the chariot could also be compared to the Ark of the Covenant. The Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant are like the horsemen carrying the chariot of Israel as they go into the land and they are led by their ruler. Now, Elijah is here described as a sort of chariot, as one who is connected with this presence of God among his people.

And the way that it's the mantle that is used this time, a garment that's associated with a person, not a rod, not the Ark of the Covenant, but a mantle associated with a person, suggests that there's a more intimate dwelling of God with and in his people, particularly in the character of Elijah and then his successor Elisha. Elijah and Moses have a number of similarities. Both of them have strained deaths or burials.

In Deuteronomy chapter 34, verse 5 and 6 we read, This might make us think of the struggle the 50 men have in finding where Elijah has been deposited by the chariots of

fire. Both Elisha and Joshua take up the reins of leadership on the banks of the Jordan, the far side of the Jordan. And they're both closely associated with the spirit of their master and have a father-son relationship with the one that preceded them.

In Numbers chapter 27, verse 18 following we read, And then in Deuteronomy chapter 34, verse 9 In Numbers chapter 13, verse 16 we see that Moses had renamed Joshua. Formerly he had been called Hosea. So he seems to play a father role in relationship to Joshua.

The double portion is the firstborn son portion, as I've already mentioned. We see this in Deuteronomy chapter 21, verse 17. Moses and Joshua share a single two-stage mission.

The father and the firstborn son. And the same thing is true of Elijah and Elisha. In chapter 19 of 1 Kings Elijah is given a mission and he doesn't actually complete that mission.

The mission is completed by Elisha, his successor. He only performs the first part. Elijah performs 8 miracles and Elisha performs 16.

You can maybe think there's another sense of the double portion. Elisha is a doubling of the ministry of Elijah. If Elijah led Elisha to the far side of the Jordan in order to ascend into heaven, Elisha begins by moving the opposite direction.

It's a re-entry of the land. A replaying of the pattern of Joshua. And that connection between Joshua and Elisha is a very important one.

Elisha begins by healing the waters of Jericho. Waters that had formerly led to death and miscarriage are healed of their former problems. Rather than death, Elisha brings life.

There are a number of former events that this might remind us of and also with which it can be contrasted. The ministry of Joshua begins, among other things, with the destruction of Jericho. And now Jericho, which had formerly been a place of destruction, is made a place of life.

Another thing it might recall are the waters of Marah in the wilderness. After they had crossed the Red Sea, they reached these waters and they're bitter. And they're healed by Moses.

However, although Moses healed waters in the wilderness, now we see Elisha healing waters in the land. Elisha also amplifies Elijah's actions in various ways. We've seen this in the fact that he performs 16 miracles to Elijah's eight.

Elijah raises the widow's son, but Elisha raises the Shunammite's son. Also, by contrast, Elijah begins by pronouncing a lack of water, a drought, and Elisha begins by providing water. We might also see some connections between chapters 1 and 2 of 1 Kings.

In chapter 1, three sets of 50 strong men are sent to seek for Elijah. And in this chapter, 50 strong men seek Elijah for three days. There seems to be some sort of parallel.

I'm not sure what to make of it, but it seems to invite our attention. Perhaps the number 50 is intended to make us think of military arrangements. So in chapter 1, there are three units of military men, 50s, that are sent to seek for Elijah.

And in chapter 2, there are another set of 50 men. There are 50 men mentioned twice. And there it seems that they are people who are, as it were, a military numbering, but now they're sons of the prophets.

Israel went out of Egypt in groups of 50s and entered into the Promised Land in groups of 50s. It's a military numbering. And here we have a new conquest and now a new group of 50 at the beginning of it.

God defeats the armies of the enemy and now raises an army of his own in order to lead that conquest. This might be part of the meaning. The passage ends with a rather troubling incident as 42 boys or young men are killed by bears as a result of Elijah's curse.

Perhaps the first thing to note here is that we shouldn't necessarily presume that these were young children. We see the same word used to refer to Ephraim and Manasseh when they were in their early 20s and the same word used to refer to Joseph when he was 17. So they may have been in their late teens, they may have been in their early 20s.

In chapter 14 of Genesis young men are going out to fight with Abraham. So these should not just be presumed to be young kids. Others have raised the possibility that the word here may be referring to subordinates, young men who are serving under higher officials.

The event occurs at Bethel which is the site of Jeroboam I's golden carved shrine. This may suggest that they're not just kids but maybe they're Levites or assistants who serve at the idolatrous shrine. Elijah's curse is a sort of act of warfare.

He's beginning this Joshua-like conquest of the land and beginning it with attack upon a centre of idolatry. So he's moving on from healing the waters of Jericho, that first site of conquest, moving into the land, he's going to Bethel which is associated with AI and he's retracing the path of the conquest of Joshua as he's doing so. Peter Lightheart has suggested that the mockery of the young men is specifically directed against Elisha because of the taking up of Elijah.

They're saying ascend, ascend to where your master is, you know where you can go Elisha. And saying you baldhead, what's the point of that? Is it just ridiculing his physical appearance or is it saying that Elijah, the man who's associated with her in the previous

chapter and elsewhere, has been taken from over him and as a result he's a baldhead. And so their ridiculing of him may be very targeted at his mission, his calling, God's purpose that's being achieved through Elijah and Elisha.

And as they ridicule Elisha they are suggesting that they have the upper hand now, these people associated with the shrine of Bethel perhaps, that they are the ones that are coming out on top. They may have been scared of Elijah but he's gone and now who cares about Elisha? He's no threat at all and can be lightly ridiculed. They are attacked by two she-bears and there are 42 of them who are killed.

It's an interesting number because in chapter 10 verse 14 of the book Jehu kills 42 relatives of Ahaziah of Judah who come to visit the royal princes and the sons of the queen mother and Elisha's judgement upon the 42 lads seems to foreshadow the judgement upon the Amorite dynasty of Ahab and all related to it both in the north and in the southern kingdom. That parallel between Jehu and Elisha might also draw our minds back to chapter 19 of 1st Kings where their ministries of destroying the opponents of the Lord are directly related to each other. A question to consider.

The ministries of Elijah and Elisha and the relationship between the two provides a very helpful framework within which to consider the ministry of Christ as it relates to the ministry of John the Baptist and also the ministry of Christ as it relates to the ministry of the church. What are some of the ways in which you can see this being played out within the New Testament? Luke chapter 24 verses 44 to 53 verse 44 Luke chapter 24 verses 44 to 53 are found at the very conclusion of the book of Luke. Like the conclusions of the books of Genesis, Deuteronomy and Joshua it ends with departure and a blessing upon those who remain.

These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you. Jesus is still there but he's no longer there in some way. He's moving on and this is on him.

He's on his way out. He's giving this message. He explains how the entire scripture, the law, the prophets and the psalms had to be fulfilled.

Now he speaks here of the psalms instead of the writings which would be one of the three categories that the Old Testament was regularly divided into. Psalms seems to substitute for the writings. He says all of these things have to be fulfilled in his suffering and resurrection from the dead but not just in those things, also in the ministry of the church that follows.

The Old Testament narrative in Christ's teaching crackles with anticipation of Christ and Christ opens our eyes to understand the Old Testament text. Now it's important to recognise that there is an event of illumination that goes on in both directions here. The scriptures enable 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 and illuminated by it. When we read the Old Testament we are better able to understand Christ and as we see Christ we are better able to understand the Old Testament text. It's important to consider the way that Luke uses the scripture.

He's not primarily presenting us with direct prediction and fulfillment but rather with the way that Christ both clarifies and brings to resolution all the themes and truths of the Old Testament. The whole world of the scripture comes into focus in Christ. Once we see Christ it all makes so much sense.

He is David's greater son who must suffer like his father and this is one of the reasons why the Psalms are especially prominent in Luke's understanding and why presumably he speaks of the Psalms instead of the writings. The Psalms present us with the voice of the suffering king and in the Psalms we hear David but we also hear David's son the Christ. Luke also draws heavily upon the background of Isaiah especially chapters 40-66.

The suffering Messiah of the Psalms and of the books of Samuel is also the suffering servant of Isaiah's prophecy. We can also see the ministry to the Gentiles that arises out of the servant's work that is important for Luke's understanding. For instance in Isaiah chapter 49 verse 6 it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel.

I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. This is the sort of background from Isaiah that Christ has in mind when he says thus it is written that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. Christ is the one who raises up the tribes of Israel but also the one whose light will go out to the nations.

The second volume of Luke's writings, the book of Acts is also a book then that fulfills Old Testament prophecy. The ministry of the church is witness to the nations beginning with Jerusalem is an essential part of the picture anticipated by the Old Testament and this is something that Luke makes very clear within his telling of that story. Christ's statement here concerning his work is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and then the ministry of the church is continuing that is essentially the sermon that Peter gives on the day of Pentecost where he unpacks this and uses Old Testament prophecy and statements from the Psalms and other things to fill out the picture but in principle everything is here.

Christ is the one who will send the spirit, the promise of the father. Note the explicit presence of each one of the persons of the Trinity here along with the fact that Christ is the one who is sending the promise of the father which speaks to his authority that he has divine authority. The spirit is power from on high, power for ministry, power for mission.

It's a power that's the power of Christ himself. We've seen from the very beginning of the book that Christ is the one who is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit as Mary is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. In chapter 4 the spirit descends upon him at his baptism and now the church will be baptised too.

It is however important that the disciples stay in Jerusalem until this event takes place. Jerusalem is the staging ground of this great new work of God. It's the place from which the word of the Lord goes out to the nations.

It's the site of the temple from which the living waters flow and the gift of the spirit in the book of Acts very much begins at that point, in that site and location. Jesus is a new Elijah. Throughout the book of Luke, Luke has used a lot of themes from Elijah and Elisha's story to connect with the story of Christ.

Jesus has used it in his teaching, he's spoken about the examples of Elijah and Elisha, he's performed miracles that are similar to those of Elijah and Elisha and in these ways his ministry can be understood through the lens of their ministry. As Jesus ascends into heaven we should think of Elijah's ascension into heaven. Elijah's ascension is Elisha's Pentecost.

As Elijah ascends into heaven his spirit is given to Elisha who continues the ministry of Elijah in the spirit and the power of Elijah. And this is the same thing that we're seeing with Christ. As Christ ascends his spirit will be given so that the church can continue what he has started and bring it to its completion.

The gift of Elijah's spirit was seen in the descending mantle and Jesus here speaks of his disciples being clothed with power from on high. This language is probably there to draw our attention to that Old Testament background. There is something else that I think might be helpful as a background in the Old Testament here and that's found in the first establishment of Saul as the king of Israel.

In 1st Samuel chapter 10 Samuel declares that there will be a series of three signs that will occur to Saul that will be demonstrations that he is to be the true king. Beginning at verse 1 we read, And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. When you depart from me this day you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah and they will say to you the donkeys that you want to seek are found and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you saying what shall I do about my son? Then you shall go on from there father and come to the oak of Tabor.

Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there. One carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread and another carrying a skin of wine and they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread which you shall accept from their hand. After that you shall come to Gibeath Elohim where there is a garrison of the

Philistines and there as soon as you come to the city you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp tambourine flute and lyre before them prophesying.

Then the spirit of the Lord will rush upon you and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. Now when these signs meet you do what your hand finds to do for God is with you. Now the interesting thing in the book of Luke is that there are three occasions towards the end of his ministry where Christ declares to his disciples that they have to do something and as they do something something will befall them.

In chapter 19 verse 29 when he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the mount that is called Olivet he sent two of the disciples saying go into the village in front of you where on entering you will find a colt tied on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you why you are untying it you shall say this the Lord has need of it.

And then later on in chapter 22 verse 10 behold when you have entered the city a man carrying a jar of water will meet you follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house the teacher says to you where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples and he will show you a large upper room furnished prepare it there. At the last supper Jesus says to his disciples you are those who have stayed with me in my trials and I assign to you as my father assigned to me a kingdom that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. So we've had two signs we've had a sign associated with the colt which connects with the donkeys which we read in the story of Saul and we've had a second sign a sign where a man is carrying a water pitcher that leads them to a place where they will eat a meal.

In the story of Saul there are men carrying stuff for a meal three goats three loaves of bread and a skin of wine and this man carrying the water pitcher who leads them to the place where they will celebrate the Passover relates to that but that leaves us with the question is there a third and final sign I believe that there is and it's found in the passage that we've just been studying. In Saul's sign the prophets are descending from the high place with musical instruments and song and prophesying and then the spirit of the lord will rush upon Saul and he will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. I believe that we see this in what Jesus declares concerning the forthcoming event of Pentecost as they tarry in the city of Jerusalem power from on high will come upon them they will become new men and as a result they will bear witness and do things that they would not have been able to do previously.

In the book of 1st Samuel we see the signs that are given to Saul occur again. In chapter 16 verse 20 and Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul and David while he's with Saul plays his

musical instrument so that Saul will be relieved from the spirit that has been troubling him. We're seeing the signs play out again and here in the book of Luke they play out once more the greater David has come and with him come the signs of the kingdom the signs of God's reign about to be established and one of those signs is the sign of Pentecost God is going to make these disciples new men so that they will be able to carry out the work of his kingdom as he intends Christ leads his disciples out of the city to Bethany and there he blesses them.

Bethany was the site where Christ's triumphal entry had originated and as he's blessing them he departs. His blessing might make us think of priestly themes he's the one who's going to intercede for them in heaven and he will bless them as a priest. The story of Luke begins with a priest going into the temple at the hour of incense and it ends with a priest entering heaven itself who's going to bless his people He is taken up into heaven to God's right hand.

This is a point that is incredibly important for Luke something that he underlines within the book of Acts This is the fact of Christ's continuing authority We can think of it as Christ's departure here but it's also Christ's arrival. The ascension is not just a departure it's an arrival and it's a new triumphal entry just as the triumphal entry began at Bethany now there's another triumphal entry beginning at Bethany and here we return to the themes of the beginning of the book. I've already mentioned the beginning of the book with Zechariah going into the temple and the people praying outside.

Now there's a reversal of those themes as the greater high priest enters into heaven itself and the people go and pray at the temple. In Luke chapter 1 verses 8 to 10 we read, now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty according to the custom of the priesthood he was chosen by Lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense and the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense and now at the end we have the one who goes up in the cloud, the cloud of incense as it were into heaven itself and now there's a new assembly at the temple those who are worshipping Jesus returning to Jerusalem with great joy continually in the temple blessing God. There is a symmetry to the book and we see this more clearly as we go through other themes from the beginning.

There's the prophecy of Simeon in the temple Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. These are the themes to which Christ returns in his teaching at the end of the book. We might also think of the story of Anna.

Anna is someone who is worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day and coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who are waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. This is what the disciples do. There's a repeat of

this pattern.

Now think of the way that there is a greater symmetry here. Christ ascends 40 days after his resurrection and here this is 40 days after his birth 40 days after his birth, 40 days after his new birth and the action of Anna in response to the revelation of the glory of Jesus is the action of the disciples in response to the revelation of the glory of the ascended Christ. If he went up to the earthly temple on the 40th day after his birth now he's ascending to the heavenly temple on the 40th day after his resurrection We might also think of the response to the shepherds after they see Christ in the manger and the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen as it had been told to them.

These are all the things that we're seeing repeated again at the end of the book. The book is coming full circle but when we arrive back at the beginning we notice that everything has changed. We're seeing the same themes, we're seeing the temple, we're seeing prayer, we're seeing glorifying God, we're seeing people returning with joy but even though we find ourselves at the same point it's as if everything has changed.

The whole story of Luke has intervened between these points and now we're back at the beginning but we're seeing things with completely new eyes and we're sharing with the joy and the light and the worship and the praising of the disciples This passage then brings to a close the story of the book of Luke but it also sets things up for the book of Acts where this incident is largely repeated again. The story is both closed with the end of Christ's earthly ministry but it's also bursting out into the ministry of the church in the book of Acts as it anticipates what's going to happen next that in fulfilment of the law, the prophets and the Psalms, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in Christ's name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem and now as we finish the book of Luke we're waiting to get into the book of Acts to see how that will be fulfilled A question to consider As Christ descends into heaven the response of the disciples among other things is to worship him. This is a startling statement as it makes very clear that Christ is seen not just as a great human leader, not just as a wise sage and teacher but as one who is God himself.

Where else in the book of Luke does Luke's understanding of Christ as divine come to the surface?