**The Ascension (Acts 1:1-11)**

 The Lord’s Ascension is an invitation to do the work of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

 Greetings to you dearly beloved, as we bring to you today the event and meaning of Jesus’ Ascension to heaven. Yes, in Armenian history, the occasion of Jesus’ Ascension has been a beloved holiday – but instead of focusing on the holiday’s worldly cultural traditions, it is an appropriate time to study again the spiritual foundation and purpose of the event itself. For example, today’s church history would not be what it is if Jesus had not ascended to heaven to His Father’s side to take his rightful place of power and authority. Therefore, today our primary subject is the task of understanding the meaning and purpose of Jesus’ Ascension as 21st century Armenian followers of Christ. Again, I believe that the Lord is saying to us that His Ascension is an invitation to do His work of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit. Let us talk about the event first…

 Jesus’ Ascension reminds us that Jesus is the head of the Church and that He leads us together with the Holy Spirit to do the work of the Gospel. The Evangelist Luke begins the book of Acts with a reminder to his friend Theophilus. He had already written everything concerning what Jesus had done in his previous work (the Gospel of Luke) up until the Ascension event. If we look at that context for a moment, we see that the work of the Apostles was founded on the proofs of Jesus’ Resurrection, after which He left them and ordered them to wait for the Lord’s Spirit to come upon them. But the disciples, making their shortsightedness obvious, were only interested in a physical, literal kingdom. They had that idea because as an ethnic group, the Hebrew people had been dreaming of a return of the Davidic and Solomonic kingdom. The Apostles were simply expressing their nationalistic aspirations at that moment when they asked Jesus about the restoration of the Kingdom. Jesus, however, brought their attention back to what God was going to do with them in the very near future. The Father Himself knew just how He would bring forth or express the Old Testament promises to His people. But for them, it was more important that the Holy Spirit was going to come and rest on them, since they were going to need strength for the task ahead. With that power, which would only come after Jesus had ascended, they would spread the Good News of Jesus to all the known world at that time. And the latter statement became Jesus’ last words before His Ascension. Jesus’ last will on the occasion of the Ascension was the Gospel mission. The Ascension happened to prepare the work of the Gospel ministry and to implement it. Of course, the apostles were dumbfounded at the event that had just transpired – so much so that angels were compelled to shock them out of their daze. Getting back to the event of the Ascension, it also showed the Lord’s origin, and from where He would return to earth one day. Therefore, Ascension is connected to the Gospel Ministry, to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and also the Second Coming of Christ.

 The Ascension event is like the president of a company who gathers his workers at the beginning of the day and gives them the whole day’s program, the tools and the necessary paperwork and permissions to facilitate their accomplishing of the tasks assigned to each of them. At the end of the day, however, there is going to be a second gathering at which He will do an accounting of what each person has done.

 Bringing it to today, the Lord made the Ascension event not only the beginning of the Apostles’ faith-journey, but ours as well. Jesus reigns as king today from heaven, so that we can be His witnesses through the Holy Spirit everywhere. The Apostles were supposed to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit to come down upon them. Today, you and I do not have different operating instructions. We are to pray that the Holy Spirit come down upon us as well, so that whether it’s by speaking, praying, or any other kind of service, we may advance the Lord’s influence throughout this world. Therefore, as we think about Ascension, let us remember that the Lord went up so that the Spirit may come down and facilitate our fulfilling the Lord’s mandate on us without having to go and meet Jesus physically in the Middle East.

 In review: The Ascension happened so that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit. It took place so that we could accomplish Jesus’ work without being tied down to His physical presence. It happened so that we remember that the Lord reigns from heaven and that He will one day return to earth from there.

 May the Ascension of the Lord be an opportunity for us to ask for the Holy Spirit every day, being ready to wait for and accept His power. May His Ascension propel us to the Gospel Ministry until He returns.

 Jesus’ Ascension reminds us that Jesus is the head of the Church and that He leads us together with the Holy Spirit to do the work of the Gospel. The Lord’s Ascension is an invitation to do the work of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. The Lord bless you, Amen.