

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

(Acts 1:3-11)

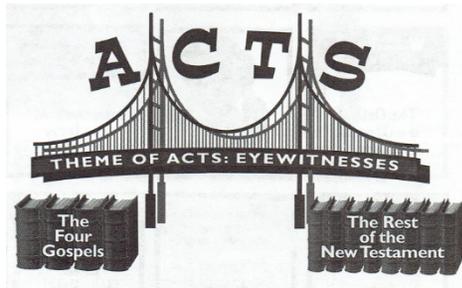
Introduction

Today we are going to begin a new journey in our class. We are going to be traveling through the book of the Acts.

The word “Acts” means “deeds”, the things that people do. (You can “act out” or “act funny” or “act nice”.) The full title of the book of Acts is *The Acts of the Apostles* because this book is all about the things the apostles did to spread the Good News about Jesus.

Acts is like a bridge that connects the four Gospels with the rest of the New Testament.

The four Gospels tell us all about Jesus’ life on earth. The rest of the New Testament tells us how to live our lives in a way that pleases God. Acts tells us about how Jesus’ followers spread out from Jerusalem into the ends of the world telling people about Jesus.



One of the last things Jesus told His disciples is found at:

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (20) Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

We call this Jesus’ *Great Commission*. Acts tells us how the Apostles went out into the world making disciples and baptizing people and teaching them how to live their lives in a way that pleases God.

Acts was written by a man by the name of Luke. Luke also wrote one of the gospels. At one time the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were joined together as one book with two parts.

Luke wanted to record what the first followers of Jesus accomplished as they went into the world telling people about what Jesus did on the cross for them.

Opening Prayer

Father, this morning as we learn more about Your return to heaven, we will be excited to learn that You have promised to return. It is a thrill to think that Jesus is coming back to get us. I can’t wait to see Heaven! I know it must be such a wonderful place. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when He returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from Him in shame. (1 John 2:28 NLT)

Lesson

Jesus’ disciples spent three years following Him. They heard Him teach about God’s Kingdom and were with Him when He performed many miracles. When they saw Jesus nailed to a cross and die and watched them place His body in a sealed tomb, they believed He was dead and gone forever.

Jesus had told them very clearly before He was crucified that He was going to suffer and would rise again.

Mark 8:31

*Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man **must suffer** many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would **be killed**, but three days later he would **rise from the dead**.*

Even though the disciples had been told by Jesus what to expect, they were frightened and overwhelmed with grief when the things He had told them were happening. It would not have been easy for them to watch the innocent Son of God treated like a criminal and tortured and nailed to a cross.

But three days after Jesus was buried, their beloved Friend, the Lord Jesus, rose from the dead! There could be no doubt that He was alive!

And for the next 40 days, before He went back up to heaven, Jesus appeared at different times to His disciples.

Acts 1:3

*During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he **talked to them about the Kingdom of God.***

How did Jesus prove to His disciples that He was really alive? Who are some people that Jesus appeared to in His resurrected body? (2 men on their way to Emmaus, Thomas, Peter.)

For forty days, the disciples talked with Him and ate with Him. They saw the scars where the nails had held Him on the cross in His hands and feet.

Verse 3 tells us that during those 40 days, Jesus spoke to His disciples about the kingdom of God. It must have been so comforting to them to have Jesus with them again alive!

Then, Jesus gave His men a very important instruction.

Acts 1:4-5

Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. (5) John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. Jesus wanted to prepare them for when He would leave them and return to heaven.

The apostles didn't fully understand what was about to happen; they were confused about what Jesus was talking about.

Acts 1:6-7

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” (7) He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know.”

The disciples were still hoping that Jesus was going to become their earthly king and free Israel from Roman power.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit** comes upon you. And you will be my **witnesses**, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Jesus was telling them that He was not going to set up His kingdom on earth now. He had to go back to the Father in heaven so that the Holy Spirit could come to **help** them and to **teach** them. [Teacher, to learn more about the Holy Spirit, look up John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-8, 13-15.]

Jesus was telling them that when He left to go back to Heaven, the Father was going to send the Holy Spirit who would give them the **power** they would need to do His will.

It is important to understand that there is only one God, but He is a three-part God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. You can think of it like the corner of the ceiling: there is a wall, another wall, and a ceiling that make up one “corner”.

If Jesus had stayed on earth as a human, he could only be in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit can be present everywhere because He is a spirit so He can help everyone all at the same time.

The Spirit gives us **comfort**, **guides** us into all truth, **reminds** us of God's word, **gives us the right words** to say to others, and fills us with the **power** to live our lives in a way that pleases God. The power of the Holy Spirit gives us the **courage** to say “No!” to sin, and “Yes!”

to God's way of thinking and acting. If you believe in Jesus, you have the power of the Holy Spirit in your life right now!

When Jesus finished telling them all these things, His feet lifted up off the ground and He began to ascend or go up into the sky. As He went up into the sky, a cloud hid Him from the apostle's sight.

Acts 1:9

After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him.

Imagine the disciple's shock when they saw Jesus going up into the clouds alive! Suddenly He was gone! Even though He had told them He was going, they didn't feel ready to see Him leave. Perhaps they had forgotten that He had promised to come back again.

Jesus will come back suddenly and without warning! It could be during your lifetime. It could be anytime. If you have asked Jesus to come into your life, you have become a child of God and someday you will live with Him forever in heaven!

Will you be glad to see Him when He returns? God wants us to stay in fellowship with Him so that when He comes, we will not be ashamed of ourselves. [Teacher, review the Memory Verse.]

What are some things you don't want to be caught doing when Jesus returns? [Teacher, let the kids discuss this topic: disobeying your dad, being rude to your mother, cheating in a game or on a test at school, being angry with your brother or sister, saying a bad word.]

Jesus could return at any time. When He does, will you be ready for His return? The disciples were amazed when they saw Jesus go up, think how surprising it will be when He comes back!

After the cloud hid Him from sight, the disciples stared at the sky.

Acts 1:10-11

As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. (11) "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are

you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

Who do you think these two men were? (Angels)

Two angels appeared, standing right there beside them and told them Jesus will come back again from heaven in a cloud. Although no one except God knows when this will take place, we do know that God always keeps His promises.

I wonder how long the disciples would have stood there staring up into the sky if those two angels had not come along.

Each day remind yourself that today could be the day of His return! In everything you do, ask yourself, "*Is this what I want Jesus to find me doing when He comes back?*" When you are tempted to think or say or do anything that you know is not pleasing to the Lord, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to say, "*No!*"

Jesus is coming back and He wants us to be ready so that we'll be happy to see Him.

The apostles were going to miss having Jesus walk with them and talk with them, but they were obedient and went to Jerusalem to wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

Next week our lesson will be about when God sent His Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are coming soon. I want You to catch me doing something good. We want to be pleasing to You in everything that we think, say, and do. Help us to call upon the power of the Holy Spirit to say, "*No!*" to sin and to continue to live close to You every day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Cloud Cards: Prepare a cloud-shaped card for each student. On it print in large letters: “**Perhaps today!**” Add 1 John 2:28 in smaller print below the two words. This card could be small enough to be set up “tent style” on a table or large enough to hang on the wall. Encourage the children to use it each day as a reminder of Christ’s return so they will choose behavior that would please Him.

Ask-It-Basket

Write the review questions on separate pieces of paper. Wad them up into balls and put them in a decorated basket. Ask each child to choose a question to answer

Game Center

Use the following review questions in another game of your choice:

1. Who wrote the Book of Acts? (Luke)
2. How many days did Jesus walk on earth between His resurrection and His ascension? (Forty days.)
3. Who are some people that Jesus appeared to in His resurrected body? (2 men on their way to Emmaus, Thomas, Peter.)
4. What instructions did Jesus give His disciples before He returned to heaven? (Stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit.)
5. Why did the disciples ask Jesus, “*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*” (They still thought Jesus was going to become their king and free Israel from Roman power.)
6. What did Jesus tell the disciples they would receive when the Holy Spirit came? (Power to be His witnesses.)
7. Why were the apostles staring up at the sky? (They were straining to see Jesus)
8. How did the two men say Jesus would return? (In the same way you saw him go.)
9. What did the apostles do after Jesus returned to heaven? (They waited in Jerusalem for the promise, just as they were told.)
10. Explain the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (There is only one God, but He is three persons. Like the three states of water.)
11. Why was it necessary for Jesus to go back to the Father? (So the Holy Spirit could come. Because Jesus is physical, He could only be in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit can be everywhere at once.)
12. Why is it good to have the power of the Holy Spirit? (He gives us courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority.)
13. How did Jesus go up into Heaven? (A cloud received Him out of their sight.)
14. When will Jesus come back? (Only God knows the exact time; but it could be any time.)
15. What do you want to be caught doing when Jesus returns? (Something good!)
16. What’s an important thing to remind yourself each day? (That this could be the day of His glorious appearing!)

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