



LESSON 25

Jesus returns to heaven

ACTS 1:1-11



Jesus' work continues as His people tell the world about Him.



"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" (Acts 1:8).

Supporting Truths

1. Christians are witnesses about Jesus.
2. Christians witness with confidence.
3. Christians witness by the Spirit's power.
4. Christians witness about God's kingdom.
5. Christians witness until Jesus returns.

Objectives

1. Define "witness."
2. List two things Jesus did to give the apostles confidence.
3. Explain how we can experience the Spirit's power in our lives.
4. Describe the church's double mission to grow and show God's kingdom on earth.
5. State that Jesus will not return until all nations have heard about Him.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Summary

After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared several times over the course of 40 days. During that time, He taught the apostles about their mission. They would continue Jesus' own work by telling the whole world the truth about Him. To do this, Jesus told them that they would need the power of the Holy Spirit. After giving these instructions, Jesus ascended into heaven.

Spotlight on the Gospel

When a person becomes a Christian, he receives an entirely new mission in life. His job is now to tell others about Jesus—about His death, His resurrection, His kingdom, and His return one day. This is what Christians do because they are subjects in Christ's kingdom. They are also motivated to do this mission because they know Jesus really is alive, because they have the Spirit's power, and because they know Jesus is with them now and will come back when their mission is accomplished.

LAST WEEK



Jesus rises from the dead

Mark 16:1-8

THIS WEEK



Jesus returns to heaven

Acts 1:1-11

NEXT WEEK



The Holy Spirit arrives

Acts 2:1-47

THE PASSION WEEK OF JESUS

THE GOSPEL SPREADS IN JERUSALEM

Lesson Commentary

Jesus' work continues as His people tell the world about Him.

Now that Jesus had died and risen from the dead, His work on earth was done. He had paid the price for sin, once and for all (1 Pet 3:18), and He had perfectly glorified His Father, in life and in death (John 17:4). Still, there is an aspect of His work that is not done yet. He is still calling sinners to trust in what His death accomplished, and He will not come back until all nations have heard about Him. The book of Acts continues the story that Luke began. It is the story of Jesus working through His followers to call all people to Himself.

Jesus taught the apostles to witness (1:1–3)

Since the gospel of Luke was about what Jesus “began to do and teach until the day he was taken up,” Acts is about what He would continue to do and teach after He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:1–2a). But how would Jesus do these things if He was no longer on earth? He would do it through His apostles. This book is called “Acts” because it is about the actions that Jesus did through His apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But for the apostles to continue Jesus’ work and teaching, they needed several things. First, they needed to be the right kind of people. Jesus had already taken care of that (1:2b). Relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21–22; 4:18–19), Jesus had already chosen these key men to go and bear much fruit (John 15:16). Second, they needed unshakable confidence. And Jesus provided (Acts 1:3a). He kept appearing to them over the course of forty days, proving that He was alive and validating His message (1 Cor 15:5–7, 14).

Third, they needed to know what to say and do, so Jesus taught them about the *kingdom of God* (Acts

1:3b), which is *the realm of God's rule over those who belong to Him*. This applied to the apostles’ mission in two ways. First, their mission was to extend God’s kingdom

by calling all people to submit to Jesus as Lord (Acts 2:36). Second, their mission was to make God’s kingdom visible on earth by teaching His people to be loyal subjects under His rule (2:42; 5:29). Jesus was teaching the apostles about the church. With its double mission of proclaiming and obeying, the church is God’s growing kingdom on earth until Jesus returns (Matt 28:19–20; 1 Pet 2:9, 12).

THINK ABOUT IT

Obedience is hard, so believers must face the challenges with courage (1 Cor 16:13).



The Holy Spirit would empower the apostles to witness (1:4–8)

But this is no easy mission! Israel had failed at this same mission (Exod 19:6; Isa 43:10), so not even the apostles were able to do it by their own strength. They needed to wait in Jerusalem until the Father gave what He promised by sending the Holy Spirit to work more directly, more permanently, and in more people than ever before (Acts 1:4; Isa 32:15; Ezek 36:27; Joel 2:28). Jesus called this a “baptism” because just as John baptized people by immersing them in water (Matt 3:11), so *baptism in the Spirit* would happen when *Jesus pours out the Spirit over believers* (Acts 1:5, 2:33).

All this talk of the Spirit sounded to the apostles like the prophecies about Israel’s restoration (1:6; Isa 32:15–18; Ezek 36:27–38), so it’s no surprise they thought Jesus’ earthly kingdom might soon be established (Acts 1:6). In response, Jesus did not correct their grasp of the kingdom itself. While the church is currently the realm of God’s rule on earth, God’s kingdom will not be complete on earth until a perfect human representative rules on earth as God intended in the beginning (Gen 1:26). So one day Jesus will return, reign in Jerusalem, restore Israel, and govern all nations (Zech 14:8; Rev 20:4–9). So the apostles rightly expected Israel’s promised restoration (Rom 11:26–29). But they wrongly asked

THINK ABOUT IT

Because Jesus is alive, we can be confident that our work for Him is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58).



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about the timing (Acts 1:7). When Israel rejected their King, Jesus taught that His kingdom on earth was delayed until His return (Luke 19:11; Matt 19:28), but the time of His return is not for us to know (Matt 24:36-42).

Instead of asking about the kingdom's timing, the disciples needed to be focused on their present mission. The Holy Spirit came to empower the apostles to be *witnesses*, *people who tell the truth* about Jesus (Acts 1:8). Just as Jesus came to tell the truth about the Father (John 1:18; 18:37), so the apostles were to continue that mission by telling the truth about Jesus. Since they were continuing Jesus' mission, they

needed to be empowered by the Spirit, just as Jesus was for His mission (Luke 3:21-22; 4:1). Since the apostles were appointed to found the church (Eph 2:20), they were uniquely empowered to write

Scripture (John 14:26; 16:13) and to do miracles to prove that their testimony was true (Heb 2:2-4). The rest of Acts records the result: they successfully witnessed in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), in Judea and Samaria (8:1-11:18), and beyond as far as Rome (11:19-28:31).

Now that the Spirit has come, all believers are baptized in the Spirit at the moment of conversion (1 Cor 12:13; Rom 8:9). Although the miraculous gifts applied only to the time of the apostles, all believers continue to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to grow the church (1 Cor 12:7, 11). To experience that power, we must not grieve the Spirit by our sin (Eph 4:30). Instead, we must allow the Spirit to have control in our lives (Eph 5:18)

by obeying the Word He inspired (Col 3:16). When we do, the Spirit will work through us more powerfully than we thought possible (Eph 3:16, 20).

One day, by the Spirit's power, the church will finish what the apostles began, spreading the news of Jesus to every nation.

Jesus' ascension motivated the apostles to witness (1:9-11)

After giving His apostles final instructions, Jesus *ascended* (Acts 1:9). Since Jesus *went up into the sky*, it's no surprise that He became hidden in a cloud. But this cloud was also a final proof that Jesus is the God of glory. It was like the cloud that temporarily hid Him during His transfiguration (Luke 9:34-36), and that cloud was the same bright cloud of God's presence that had appeared at the Red Sea (Exod 14:19-20), on Mt Sinai (24:16-19), in the tabernacle (40:34), and in the temple (1 Kgs 8:10-11). When the apostles saw Jesus "taken up in glory" (1 Tim 3:16), it gave them confidence that He is even now seated at God's right hand (1 Pet 3:22). He is Lord, reigning from heaven and giving His church authority and power to accomplish its mission (Acts 2:33-36).

But at that moment, the apostles kept looking, perhaps wondering if the cloud would go away and Jesus would reappear as He had during His transfiguration (1:10). Instead, angels gave them one final encouragement: the glorious cloud of Jesus' ascension is a clear sign that He will one day return in an even greater cloud of glory (1:11; Luke 21:27). When He does, the kingdom the apostles longed for will come, for at that time every knee will bow to Him (Phil 2:9-11). But until then, His coming encourages us to work hard at our job. It motivates us because the sooner we finish telling all nations about Him, the sooner He will return, make everything right, and be with us forever (Mark 13:10). And it motivates us because when He does come, we want Him to find us working with eagerness and living in purity (Rom 13:12-14; 2 Pet 3:14; Rev 22:12).

THINK ABOUT IT

The sooner we tell all nations about Jesus, the sooner He will return to set up His kingdom on earth (Mark 13:10).



Now that the Spirit has come, all believers are baptized in the Spirit at the moment of conversion (1 Cor 12:13; Rom 8:9). Although the miraculous gifts applied only to the time of the apostles, all believers continue to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to grow the church (1 Cor 12:7, 11). To experience that power, we must not grieve the Spirit by our sin (Eph 4:30). Instead, we must allow the Spirit to have control in our lives (Eph 5:18)

THINK ABOUT IT

"The gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations" (Mark 13:10).



THINK ABOUT IT

Because Jesus ascended, He is always with us to help us proclaim Him and obey Him (Matt 28:20; Eph 4:10).



Lesson Outline

Jesus' work continues as His people tell the world about Him.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Tell everyone about Jesus because He is alive (1:1–3a).
2. Tell everyone about Jesus because He teaches us how (1:3b).
3. Tell everyone about Jesus because the Spirit helps us do it (1:4–8).
4. Tell everyone about Jesus because He is our great God (1:9).
5. Tell everyone about Jesus because He is coming back (1:10–11).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Jesus taught the apostles to witness (1:1–3).
 - Jesus would continue His mission through His apostles (1:1–2).
 - Jesus gave them confidence to do this mission (1:3a).
 - Jesus gave them knowledge to do this mission (1:3b).
2. The Holy Spirit would empower the apostles to witness (1:4–8).
 - The Father had promised the Holy Spirit (1:4).
 - The Holy Spirit would baptize them (1:5).
 - The Holy Spirit would give power for witnessing (1:6–8).
3. Jesus' ascension motivated the apostles to witness (1:9–11).
 - Jesus went up into the sky (1:9).
 - Jesus will come back down from the sky (1:10–11).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **How long did Jesus keep appearing to the disciples?**
For 40 days.
2. **Who did Jesus say would come and give them power?**
The Holy Spirit.
3. **What did the Holy Spirit give them power to do?**
Be Jesus' witnesses.
4. **After He said all this, where did He go?**
Up into a cloud to heaven.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What is the book of Acts about?**
It is about what Jesus continued to say and do through His apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. **How did Jesus give the apostles confidence to speak and act?**
He appeared to them many times.
3. **What did Jesus teach the apostles about?**
God's kingdom: the realm of God's rule over His people.
4. **How is God's kingdom currently seen in the church today?**
The church shows God's kingdom by living under His rule, and it grows God's kingdom by telling others about Jesus.
5. **What did the Father promise even back in the Old Testament?**
He promised to pour out His Holy Spirit to give cleansing and power.
6. **Where were the apostles supposed to be witnesses about Jesus?**
In Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
7. **How can you experience the Holy Spirit's power?**
By being born again through faith and repentance. Then, as a Christian, by submitting to the Spirit by trusting His power and obeying God's Word.
8. **How does Jesus' ascension encourage us to be His witnesses?**
It shows us His glory as the true God. It shows us He is in heaven, so He can be with us spiritually always. It shows us He will one day come back in a cloud of glory.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5

A
B
C



INTRODUCE



ILLUSTRATE



APPLY

TO THE END OF THE EARTH

Jesus told the apostles to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Illustrate this before the lesson with three buckets: one close (Jerusalem), one half-way across the room (Judea/Samaria), and one on the opposite side of the room (end of the earth). Have the children take turns racing to see which child can place a ball (or another small object) in each bucket, beginning with the closest bucket first and finishing with the farthest. Use this activity to introduce the idea of taking the Gospel all over the earth.

THE WAITING

Instruct the children to line up against a wall or along a line. Play a game of Red Light, Green Light with the children. After playing the game, talk about the periods where they had to wait for the green light before they could move. In today's lesson, we will see that the apostles were instructed to go to Jerusalem and to wait until they were given the "green light" to spread the gospel.

TRANSITION

Before His ascension, Jesus transferred the responsibility of His earthly ministry to His disciples. It's likely the children have experienced a transition (change). Ask the children to think of jobs that their parents used to do for them as babies, then trained them how to do and now they do themselves: feeding themselves, getting dressed, putting on shoes or tying shoes, and brushing teeth. In a similar way, while Jesus had His ministry on earth, He taught His disciples the truth, then He gave them the ministry to share this truth with others after He had returned to heaven.

ASCENSION

When the apostle Luke writes of Jesus' ascension, he describes how Jesus was literally lifted from this earth to heaven. There Christ would take His place on the throne at God's right hand. The disciples witnessed this ascension, and it greatly encouraged them in their upcoming task of sharing the gospel. Illustrate this by lifting an action figure off the floor to the ceiling with clear fishing line run hung over a small fastener attached to the ceiling.

GOSPEL'S MEGAPHONE

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheet, construction paper, yarn, scissor, tape.

Directions: Use the construction paper to make a megaphone (cut a curve at one at the angle). Color the rectangle "Proclaim that Jesus Saves". Tape it on the megaphone. Make two small holes on the smaller side of the megaphone. Pass the yarn in the hole and make a necklace.

Gospel's Megaphone

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6-8



INTRODUCE



ILLUSTRATE



APPLY

A WITNESS

Tell the children about a memorable event you witnessed: a sporting event, natural disaster, accident, crime, historical event, etc. Ask the children if they've ever witnessed anything memorable. In today's lesson, we're going to learn about the job Jesus gave to His apostles: they were to be His witnesses. They had witnessed Jesus' teaching, miracles, death, burial, and resurrection, and after Jesus' ascension into heaven, they were to share these things with the whole world.

PREPARATION

DEMONSTRATION

Have the children ever cooked with someone in their family? Discuss what it takes to bake a cake (or muffins or cookies). Bring some ingredients along with you to class. Ask the children how important it is to follow the directions on the recipe. In a similar way, Jesus gave the disciples instructions on how to spread the gospel. In today's lesson, we will learn about these instructions.

POWER TO WITNESS

Bring a remote-controlled car or other battery operated toy to class. These kinds of toys are great, but they often drain their batteries and need to be plugged into an outlet and charged up before they can be used again. We have to wait to use them until power returns. In today's lesson, Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). Only then—with the Spirit's power—would they be able to accomplish their mission: taking the message of salvation to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

GOING TO HEAVEN

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons, tape, scissors, yarn, brad, 8 oz foam cup.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on cardstock. Color the three images, and cut them. color the cup with a light blue. Décor the cup with clouds. Make a hole on the top on cup. Have a long piece of yarn passing through the hole. Tape the cloud on the top, Jesus below the cup, and at the bottom the Bible verses.

Going to Heaven

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2



THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

To illustrate how the Gospel spreads, discuss with the children how the gospel began in the town of Jerusalem. It was like a tiny drop in a big world. Using a large transparent container filled with water, put a couple drops of food coloring into the still water. As the story progresses, the children will see that the coloring has spread throughout all the water. Jesus commanded the disciples to share the gospel with the entire world.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

AGES 9-11



INTRODUCE



ILLUSTRATE



APPLY

INTRODUCTION

How many of the children like to post updates or announcements on social media? What kinds of things do they post about? How often do they post things? What is the greatest number of 'likes' or comments they have ever received on a single post? What's the greatest thing they have ever posted about? The apostles in today's lesson were given a message like that, only greater! These men were chosen by God to tell the world about His Son, Jesus Christ. And while they did not have social media to share this news, they did have a plan. In today's lesson, we will see God's plan for the spreading of the gospel recorded in Acts 1:1-11.

LIKE RIPPLES IN THE WATER
Show the children a short video clip or picture of ripples in the water that result when an object is dropped into it. The circles in the center start out small but grow larger as they move outward. This is a perfect picture of the disciples' mission (Acts 1:8). We will learn more about this mission in today's lesson. Challenge the children to think of this mission every time they see ripples in the water.

WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

On August 20, 1974, Nolan Ryan threw the fastest pitch ever recorded at that time: 100.9 mph over the plate, or between 107 and 109 mph when it left his hand. So why does Ryan's name, and not the ball's, appear in the record book? Why does he get the credit? The baseball does not have the power to move itself. It is the person controlling the ball. This is similar to how the Holy Spirit empowers us to witness. We go and share (the ball), but the Holy Spirit gives us the power to faithfully carry out our mission.

THE POWER OF DISH SOAP

The disciples needed the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish their mission. Illustrate this by pouring some oil into a water bottle filled halfway with water. We can shake the bottle as much as we want, but we can't make the two mix in our own power. But put in a little dish soap, and we're able to make the oil dissolve into the water with a few gentle shakes. The dish soap gives us the power to make the two mix, just like the Holy Spirit gives us the power to share the Gospel.

DEAD BATTERY

Cell phones are great, but it is a real bummer when their battery dies. Have the children ever experienced this? Have they ever been in a situation when they really needed their cell phone, but the battery was dead? A cell phone with a dead battery is like a Christian who is not filled with the Holy Spirit: they lack the necessary power to function properly. To experience the Holy Spirit's power to witness, we must not grieve the Spirit by our sin (Eph 4:30). Instead, we must allow the Spirit to have control in our lives (Eph 5:18) by obeying the Word He inspired (Col 3:16). When we do, the Spirit will work through us more powerfully than we thought possible (Eph 3:16, 20). Is your spiritual "battery" charged up? Are you ready to accomplish the works God has prepared for His children (Eph 2:10)?