



Jesus Returns to Heaven

Acts 1:1–11



LESSON GOAL

Students will rejoice in God's plan for the Gospel to spread until Jesus returns.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Jesus told the apostles to share the gospel.
- Jesus told the apostles to wait for the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem.
- Jesus returned to heaven in a cloud.

KEY VERSE

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” —*Acts 1:8*

APPLICATION

- Remember that Jesus rose from the dead.
- Share the gospel with others.
- Thank God that Jesus will come again.

NEXT WEEK

The Holy Spirit Arrives
Acts 2:1–47

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to...

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are...

- _____
- _____
- _____

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

Materials Needed:

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

The book of Acts is God’s record of how the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles to spread the Gospel throughout Jerusalem, Judea, and to the ends of the earth. Luke, the traveling companion of Paul, wrote the book of Acts most likely while Paul was awaiting trial before Caesar during his first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 60-62). The book of Acts is Luke’s second historical record addressed to Theophilus, about whom almost nothing is known. (Luke describes Theophilus as “most excellent” in Luke 1:3, suggesting he may have been a government official.) In the beginning of Acts, Luke refers to the first volume of his history, known as the Gospel of Luke, as the “former account I made...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up” (Acts 1:1–2). The book of Acts begins with the presentation of Jesus’ instruction to the apostles and His ascension into heaven found in Luke’s Gospel. The first eleven verses of Acts present God’s plan for the spread of the Gospel through the Spirit’s power. The rest of the book of Acts records the Gospel’s progress.

Jesus’ Preparation of the Apostles

After reviewing the content of his Gospel, Luke summarizes how Jesus spent the time between His resurrection and His ascension preparing the apostles for their ministry. Luke specifically refers to the apostles as those “whom He had chosen” (1:2). The apostles were God’s chosen instruments to advance His glory through the proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus prepared His Gospel ministers for 40 days by giving them commandments, convincing them of His resurrection with “many infallible proofs,” and “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (1:2–3). In the subsequent years when the apostles suffered much for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, they must have been encouraged when they remembered these forty days with Jesus. They were suffering because they faithfully obeyed the last commands of their living Lord.

Jesus’ Promise of the Spirit

In Acts 1:4–8, Luke gives a specific instance of how Jesus prepared His disciples. In verse 4, Jesus gave a convincing proof of His resurrection. Although the New King James Version says that Jesus was “assembled together with them,” a better translation is that Jesus was “eating with them.” The fact that Jesus ate with His disciples (as He did in Luke 24:30, 42–43) emphasizes that Jesus had a resurrected body.

While Jesus ate with His disciples, He gave them precise instructions. He commanded them “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). The command suggests that previously the disciples had been

going to and from Jerusalem, but now the disciples were to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit.

The promise of the Spirit is a prominent theme in Scripture. The Jews knew that the New Covenant would be accompanied by an outpouring of the Spirit (Ezek. 36:25–27). The Spirit would cause a change in Israel's heart so that she would be obedient to God's commands. A prominent part of John's testimony was that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Mark 1:8; Matt. 3:11; John 1:33). Both John and Jesus (Acts 1:5) contrasted John's external water baptism, which could not change man's heart, with Jesus' future Spirit baptism. Before His death, Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). Although the disciples had already tasted of the Spirit's work in their lives, both in salvation and sanctification, they had not received the permanent indwelling and empowering of the Spirit which followed after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

The book of Acts records how the baptism of the Spirit spread first to the apostles and those in the Upper Room (Acts 2), then to the Samaritans (Acts 8:17), to the Gentiles (Acts 10:44), and finally to the dispersed believing Jews who had not yet heard of Christ (Acts 19:6). These specific occurrences of the outpouring of the Spirit are important because they mark the visible spread of the New Covenant. Apart from these special Spirit baptisms in Acts, all believers, whether during the time of Acts or today, are baptized by the Spirit when they receive the Gospel (1 Cor. 12:13).

Not only did Jesus give the disciples proofs of His resurrection and instructions to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit, He also spoke to them about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was a dominant theme throughout Jesus' ministry. The kingdom of God refers to the sphere of salvation of those who are submitted to Jesus as King. Although the kingdom of God had been inaugurated with the appearance of Jesus, the disciples still longed for the day when Jesus would "restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6) and reign on earth. When the disciples had "come together" (1:6) with Jesus on the Mount of Olives (see 1:12), they asked Jesus, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (1:6). Jesus did not correct the disciples for thinking that He would rule as Israel's king, but instead addressed their questions about when it would happen. Instead of giving them a date, Jesus told the disciples, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (1:7).

Although Jesus did not reveal the time of His earthly reign, He did emphasize what the disciples were to do in His absence. Jesus told the disciples, "You shall receive power" when the Spirit comes and "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (1:8). Through reliance upon the Holy Spirit, the apostles were to commit themselves to testifying to Jesus' death and resurrection. The apostles' testimony would begin in Jerusalem where they received the Spirit, spread throughout Judea and neighboring Samaria, and advance until it reached the ends of the earth. The ministry of advancing the Gospel has been passed on to today's saints, who still eagerly await Christ's return and reign.

Jesus' Ascension to Heaven

After Jesus "had spoken these things" (Acts 1:9), the apostles saw Jesus ascend into heaven. The apostles watched intently while Jesus was enveloped in a cloud (perhaps the glory of God). Even after Jesus was hidden from their sight, they "looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up" (1:10). The disciples stood there staring into heaven until two angels interrupted their gaze. The angels admonished

the men for staring up into heaven and promised that Jesus would come back in the same way He had left. Other scriptures also promise that Jesus will return in the clouds (Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:64). Following the ascension, the disciples “worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:52), where they went to the upper room and prayed (Acts 1:12–14).

Conclusion

When Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, the apostles had already been instructed for their future ministry. After receiving the promised Spirit, the apostles were to spend their lives proclaiming the testimony of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, not only in Jerusalem but ultimately to the ends of the earth. The rest of Acts records the apostles’ faithful obedience to Jesus’ instructions. The church today follows those same last words of Christ. While true believers eagerly await the return of their Savior in the clouds, they continue to devote themselves to being witnesses to Him to the ends of the earth.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Difficult Concepts

Witnesses: Witnesses are those who see something and tells others about it. As His disciples, the apostles had spent several years with Christ observing His miracles and listening to His teachings. That they were to be witnesses to Christ meant that they were to tell the truth about Him to the world.

Ascension: When the apostle Luke writes of Christ’s ascension, he is describing Christ’s literal leaving this world for the realm of heaven. There Christ would take His place on the throne at God’s right hand. That the Lord ascended from this earth denotes the fact that he was raised (or lifted) upward from this earth into heaven. That the disciples had witnessed this ascension would have been great motivation for their upcoming task of sharing the gospel.

Gospel: Because the disciples were to be witnesses unto Christ meant that they were to tell others about His death and resurrection. To share of both the person and work of Christ is the means that they were to share of the Gospel. The Gospel (meaning “good news”) is that Christ lived on this earth, died on a cross, and was resurrected. Because Christ shed His blood on the cross, forgiveness and remission of sin has been given to all those who believe.

The Coming of Holy Spirit upon the Apostles: The apostles were to be given the Holy Spirit for the purpose of sharing the gospel. God alone has the power to convict of us of sin, grant us understanding of the things of Christ, and give us a new heart that is obedient to His commands. Since the apostles did not possess such power in themselves, they were in need of the power of God’s Spirit to share the gospel.



Spreading Game

Put objects in the center of the room (such as beanbags or tissue paper). Tell children to spread the objects all over the room. When the floor is covered, tell them that in today's lesson, Jesus tells His disciples to "spread" the gospel, the good news about salvation, to the whole world. Finally, direct the children to collect all the objects and bring them back to the center—clean up!



Stop and Wait!

One of the concepts students often have a problem understanding is that the apostles had to wait in Jerusalem for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. The apostles could not begin sharing the gospel until after they had received the Holy Spirit. To illustrate this, have the students play a simple game. This could be anything from building something to a game like hot potato. As they play the game instruct them to freeze. As they are frozen they have to wait for your instruction before they can go back to their activity. This activity will illustrate how the apostles had to wait before sharing the gospel.



The Tool to Do the Job

In today's lesson the apostles could not carry out the Lord's instruction of sharing the gospel until given the proper tools to do so. To illustrate this to the students instruct them to begin building a tower with blocks, but fail to give them the blocks to build it with. Or, instruct them to paint a picture, while failing to give them the paint and canvas to complete the painting. The students will naturally become confused as to how they are to complete a project without having the proper tools necessary. When this occurs, explain to them that in the same way the apostles were not able to begin sharing the gospel without the Holy Spirit. The Lord told them to wait in Jerusalem because they did not yet have what was necessary to begin sharing the gospel—the Holy Spirit. At this point have the students wait several minutes before giving them the proper tools necessary to complete the project.



Gospel Down the Lane

To illustrate to the students what it is like to spread good news, instruct the students sit in a circle or in a long line. Begin the game by sharing some good news about Jesus' resurrection to the first student. The first student shares it with the second and so on until it reaches the end of the line and you say the phrase all together. Keep the phrase short and simple to prevent distortion during the activity. Explain to students that the disciples were told to share the gospel even to the ends of the earth. They were to share it and those people would share it until everyone in the world could one day hear the news.



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The Best News In The World

Ask the students if they have ever had good news that they wanted to tell someone so badly that you thought you would die if you did not tell someone. Maybe it was good news about a new brother or sister. Or maybe it was a very special gift or a visitor that they were excited who was going to come over. Well in today's lesson there was some very good news that the disciples were given. In fact this news was the best news in the world. Listen to today's lesson and find out what that great news is.



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A Witness

To illustrate the idea of a witness, ask the students what they did that week. Ask them what they saw other people do. Explain that they are witnesses to what



happened that week because they saw what happened. Who were witnesses to Jesus' death, and resurrection? The disciples were with Jesus and watched Him do miracles and teach. They were also witnesses to His death and resurrection and that is what they were to share with others.

The Waiting

Instruct the students to line up against a wall or along a line. Play a game of Red Light, Green Light with the students. After playing the game explain to the students that there were 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.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Right in the beginning of the Book of Acts is the story about Jesus' last days on earth. During those days He gave His disciples special instructions. He was getting them ready for when He would leave them. In the last lesson Jesus had died and then He was placed in a tomb. Three days later, He had come back to life. He had a healthy body but the holes in His hands and side could still be seen. These holes helped show the disciples that it really was Him. He spent His time with the disciples who would spread the truth of the gospel after He was gone.

Jesus wanted to show His disciples that He was really alive and that He had come back to life from the dead. The Book of Acts says that He appeared to them over a period of 40 days, and He gave them orders and continued to teach them about the kingdom of God. One of the things Jesus told them to do was to stay in city of Jerusalem. He wanted them there together because they would be getting the something very special. They would be getting something that God had promised them, and God wanted them to receive it in Jerusalem. That great thing was the Holy Spirit. He told them that in a few days, the Holy Spirit would come and that He would be their helper.

The apostles were excited. They wondered if Jesus was going to begin to restore His earthly kingdom. Would Jesus become the earthly King of Israel as they had hoped He would do? Jesus said that it was not for them to know God's timing in restoring the earthly kingdom. Instead, He told them, they were to about receive strength from the Holy Spirit. They were to tell the whole world about who Jesus is and what happened and why that is good news. They were to go out into the world, even to the far away places, and tell people about the good news of Jesus Christ. This was God's plan to bringing salvation to the whole world.

With that, Jesus was lifted up off the ground right in front of them, and He went up into the clouds and out of their sight. The apostles were all staring up into the sky. Just then two angels appeared beside them and asked them why they were looking into the sky. Then they told the men that Jesus would come again like He had gone into heaven.

After they saw these things happen, the apostles obeyed Jesus' instructions and returned to Jerusalem where they gathered together to pray and wait for the great gift that had been promised to them: the Holy Spirit.



Lesson Questions

Where did Jesus tell the disciples to stay?

Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem.

What did Jesus tell the disciples that they would receive?

Jesus told them to wait for the promise of the Father.

What was the promise of the Father?

The promise of the Father was the Holy Spirit.

What did Jesus instruct the disciples to do after they received the Holy Spirit?

Jesus said that they would be His witnesses.

Where did Jesus tell the disciples to go as His witness?

Jesus said to give the gospel (good news) to those in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

What did Jesus do after giving these instructions?

He rose up into the clouds to return to heaven.

Where did the disciples go?

The disciples waited in Jerusalem as Jesus had instructed them.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Jesus' Ministry Review

Read Acts 1:1, then discuss what miracles, lessons, commands, and instructions Jesus had taught in previous Matthew lessons (use old coloring sheets to aid in review). Read verse 2, then discuss how these things may have helped prepared the apostles for their new responsibility to share the gospel.



Transition

Transition means to change. In a similar way to how Jesus transferred the responsibility of earthly ministry from Himself to His apostles, there may be examples of transition in the student's own lives. Ask the students to think of tasks that their

parents used to do for them as babies, then trained them how to do and now they do themselves. Some examples might be 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 continue after He had returned to heaven. They could not have done any of this on their own except through the power that would come from the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to them in a little while as they waited in Jerusalem.



Preparation Demonstration

Ask the students if they have ever cooked with anyone in their family. Discuss what it takes to bake a cake (or muffins or cookies). Bring in the ingredients along with a toaster oven. (Keep these hidden until later in the demonstration). Explain to the students how important it is to follow the recipe. Ask them where the recipe came from (possibly a relative or cookbook) and how important it is to follow the directions for it to turn out correctly. In a similar way, Jesus gave the disciples instructions how to spread the gospel, the good news about salvation, to the whole world. After mixing the ingredients ask the students if the recipe is complete—no! In order for the cake to be complete it needs to be baked, and in order for it to be baked you need the power (electricity) for the oven to work. In a similar way, Jesus gave the disciples the power to do the work, the Holy Spirit.



The Spread of the Gospel

To illustrate how the gospel spreads while teaching, discuss with the students 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 students will see that the coloring has spread throughout all the water. Jesus commanded the disciples to share the gospel with the entire world.

Praise and Worship

Praise Him, Praise Him

Trust and Obey

Seek Ye First

There Is a Redeemer



The Holy Spirit

S is for scripture, He was the inspiration,
(close thumb over bent fingers)

P is for power, to spread the gospel to the nations,
(point down with two fingers spread apart as if walking)

I is for intercede, He talks to God for us,
(hold up pinky finger, close other fingers)

R is for receive, God's help which we can trust,
(cross middle finger over index finger, close other fingers)

I is for inside, He lives inside my heart,
(hold up pinky finger, close other fingers)

T is for Trinity, of which He is a part,
(bend fingers with thumb between index and ring finger)

What do these letters spell?
(hold hands palms up, shrug shoulders)

S-P-I-R-I-T?
(repeat letter motions from above)

Spirit, the blessed, Holy One,
(point up)

Sent to those who believe.
(tap temple, then pat heart)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



"Spreading the Good News"

Materials: copies of "Spreading the Good News" craft page, glitter paint, paintbrush

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft page. Squirt some glitter paint on the map near where Jerusalem would be. Tell the students to spread the paint with the paintbrush all over the map. Talk about Jesus' command to spread the Gospel.



"God's Plan to Spread the Gospel"

Materials: copies of "God's Plan to Spread the Gospel" craft page, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Give each child a copy of the craft page and instruct him or her to color in the pictures at the bottom. Have the students cut out the pictures and then glue them in the correct order.

Coloring Pages

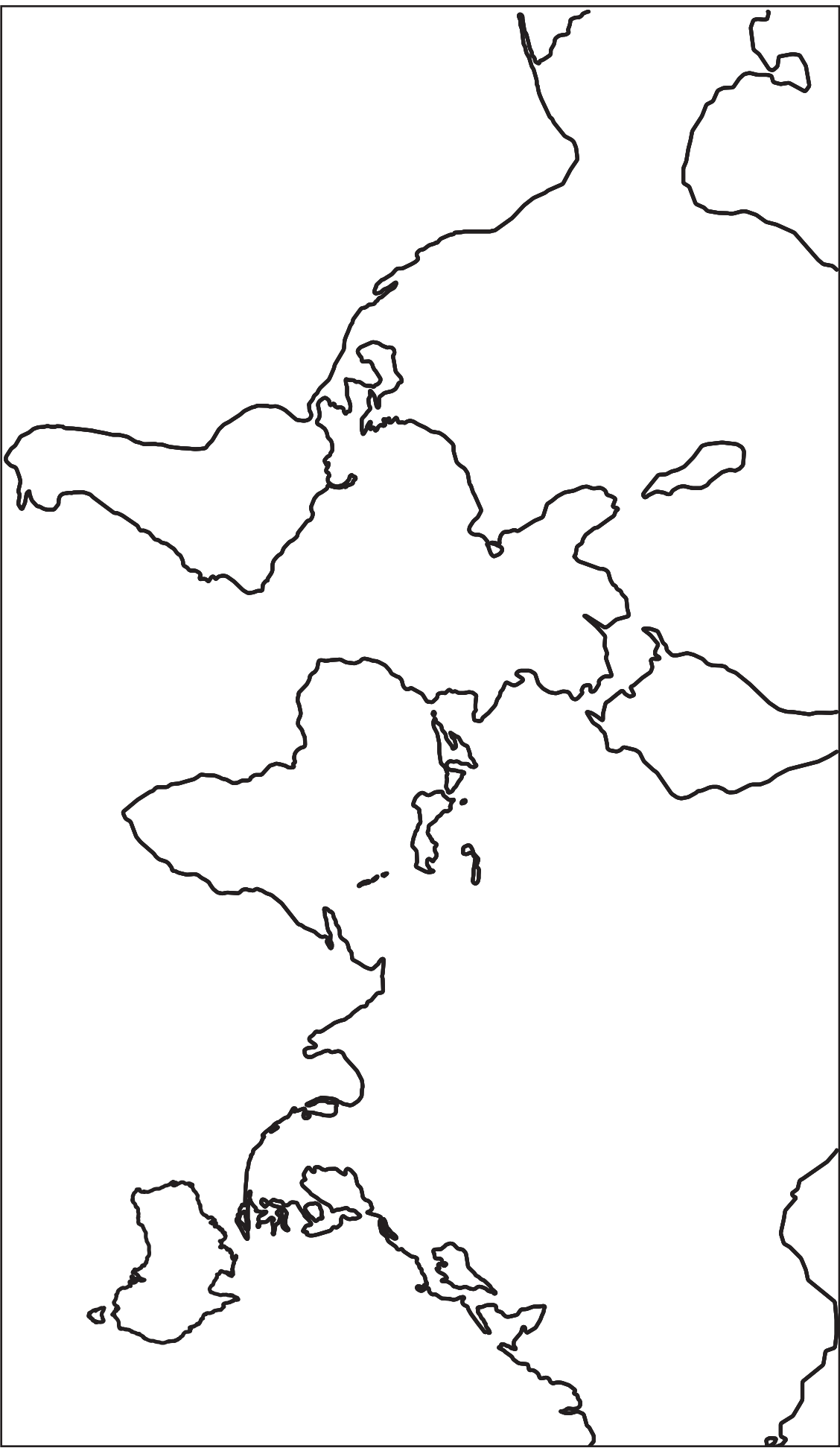
Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

"...you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." —Acts 1:8b

Spreading the Good News



“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” —Acts 1:8

God's Plan to Spread the Gospel

Cut out the pictures below and glue them in the order of the biblical account.

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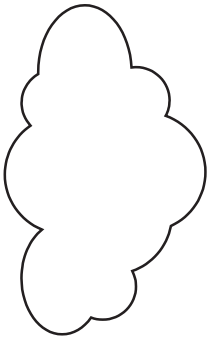
Jesus died on the cross.
—Matthew 27:45–50

Jesus was raised from
the dead.
—Matthew 28:1–7

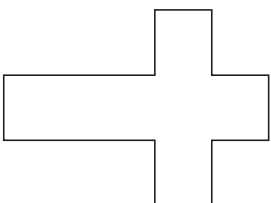
“...to whom He also
presented Himself alive
after His suffering by many
infallible proofs, being seen
by them during forty days
and speaking of the things
pertaining to the
kingdom of God.”
—Acts 1:3

“But you shall receive power
when the Holy Spirit has
come upon you; and you
shall be witnessed to Me in
Jerusalem, and in all Judea
and Samaria, and to the end
of the earth.”
—Acts 1:8

“Now when He had spoken
these things, while they
watched, He was taken up,
and a cloud received Him
out of their sight.”
—Acts 1:9



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“...He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” —Acts 1:3



“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’” —Acts 1:9–10

