

THE ASCENSION

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ACTS 1:1-14



Jesus left, but He will return.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Luke's review of the life and ministry of Christ – Luke is the author of the Book of Acts, which is really just a continuation of the Gospel he wrote. We have four Gospels, but we only have one Book of Acts, thanks to Luke. In his opening, Luke gives a recap of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. He mentions that Jesus gave many convincing proofs that He was alive again. Many have tried to discredit the Resurrection, but it is one of the most documented ancient events, with multiple witnesses. Luke reminds us of Jesus' charge to the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Although Jesus had breathed on them to receive the Holy Spirit, they were expecting and waiting for a greater outpouring of the Spirit's power.

Jesus ascends into heaven – Just before Jesus was lifted up to heaven, the disciples asked the Lord if He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel. They seemed to still be a bit confused about what the restored kingdom was all about. It is a good thing for us that Jesus did not restore the kingdom because we wouldn't have been a part of it. Now we get to enjoy everlasting life with God in heaven!

After He answered the disciples, Jesus was taken up while they were watching. A cloud hid Him. Like we might search for a balloon floating up in the sky, the disciples looked intently, hoping to catch another glimpse of the ascending Lord. Suddenly two men dressed in white appeared and made a wonderful announcement. Jesus would return one day just as He left! Today, we still look forward to His return. Though it is not for us to "know the times or dates", we should pray for His soon return.

The disciples return to Jerusalem to wait – The disciples returned from the Mount of Olives and met together in the upper room. They were joined by Mary, the mother of Jesus, along with His brothers. What a joy it must have been for them to relay the story of Jesus' ascension to Mary. She had an incredible life. She experienced the visit of the first angel, witnessed His miracles, agonized through the suffering of her son, rejoiced at the joyful news of His resurrection, and, now, learned of His ascension into heaven. This is the last we hear of Jesus' mother Mary.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

If there were any lingering doubts that Jesus was God, they were silenced at His ascension. During the forty days before the Ascension, Jesus had appeared on a number of occasions to the disciples. Each time He was met with doubters. This time, doubters and fear are not mentioned. What a tender moment it was as the Lord said goodbye. For three years these men had lived with the Lord. They had learned much and were arguably the most privileged men on earth. They not only saw the Lord, but they also walked with him, laughed with him, were afraid with Him and for Him, watched Him die, and then saw Him risen.

Jesus blessed them and was taken up into heaven. Their last act was to worship the man they had come to believe was God. From there, they went to the temple, where they praised God continually. Likely the curtain, torn in two at the death of Christ, was sewn together again. These men, however, now understood the Gospel. Never again would another sacrifice for sin be needed. Jesus, the Lamb of God, had been slain-- for them, for you, and for me.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Zechariah 12:10,11

Connecting the passage to Christ:

John connects this passage to Jesus. The soldiers pierced the side of Jesus instead of breaking His legs, since he was already dead. Jesus endured much suffering for us.

Questions for reflection:

- What does it mean to mourn? (Mourning is the emotion of sadness we feel when we have lost someone close to us, usually because of serious sickness or death.)
- Who would have mourned the death of Jesus? (The disciples, His family on earth, and others who believed in Him.)
- Do we still mourn over the death of Jesus? (Yes, in part, we mourn. When we consider how our sin caused Jesus to suffer and die, the sadness that comes could be considered mourning for Him. But we also know that He rose again. What a joy it is to know our sins are forgiven and that Jesus could not be held by death!)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

HELIUM ASCENSION

Supplies:

a helium balloon

Take your class outside and read the account of the ascension from Acts 1:1-9. Then let the balloon go and have the children watch it until no one can see it any longer. Then read verses 10-11. Tell the children that, because the time of Jesus' return is hidden, we never know when He will appear in the sky. That is why Jesus warned us to always be ready.

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS ORPHANS.

Supplies:

red construction paper

Have each child cut out a red construction paper heart and write "Jesus – John 14:20" on it.

Read John 14:16-20 to the children and remind them that, although Jesus left and is in heaven, he lives in the heart of all believers through His Spirit. Jesus lives inside the heart of everyone who believes. Have them take the hearts home to remind them.



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MARY'S STORY

Supplies:

Mary costume

Tell the last forty days of Jesus' life from Mary's perspective. Include the following key events:

The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus (John 19:25)

The resurrection (We can assume Jesus appeared to his mother as one of the 500 mentioned in Acts 15:6.)

The ascension (Mary was waiting in the upper room - Acts 1:14)

Feel the freedom to embellish the character of Mary as we have little details of her life. Make sure you include Mary's own gratefulness for her salvation. Mary can end with, "Jesus said He would return just as He left, and, if it is not in my life, I know I will see Him in heaven."

Break character and help the children to realize that the people they read about or hear about in the Bible were real. Help them understand that for those who believe, we will one day all meet one another in heaven!

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies:

pencil and paper

Draw a picture of Jesus ascending through the clouds and write the words "He will come back the same way he left" as a banner over your drawing.



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

DISCUSS HIS RETURN

Supplies:

white board

At the ascension of Christ, the angels dressed in white told the disciples that Jesus would return again. Jesus told the disciples he would return for them (John 14:3). Paul talks about the return of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4:15–5:9. After reading the account of the ascension, read Paul's teaching on the return of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians. Then answer the following questions as a class.

What do we learn about the return of the Lord? (The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night when people are least expecting it.)

How should we live in light of the fact that we do not know when the Lord will return? (We should live self-controlled and alert lives that follow Jesus' words.)

If someone tells you they know the day the world is going to end or the day the Lord is going to return, should you believe them? (No. Clearly scripture tells us that nobody knows the hour.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Theophilus – Theophilus is the man to whom the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts was addressed. The name means, "One who loves God." Luke's purpose for writing an account for him is so that Theophilus might know "the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4). Luke continues writing to this friend in the book of Acts where Luke calls his gospel his "former book." Luke adds the title "most excellent" before Theophilus' name indicating that he is a man of prominence. Theophilus is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, so his true identity remains a mystery.

