

# Our **GUIDE**

## for little ones

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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 60

### The Ascension

*Acts 1:1-11*

For many weeks now, in your Sunday School lessons, you have been hearing the story of Jesus. That story has come from four books in the Bible — the four *gospels*: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The names of the *books* are the names of the *writers*. Two of those writers you already know. Matthew was the *tax collector* who was called by Jesus to be a disciple. And John was a *fisherman* who became the “disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Today we leave the Gospels and begin our study of the book of Acts.

Do you know who wrote *this* book?



We must remember, of course, that the *author* of the book is *God*.

The author of the *whole Bible* is God. Whether it be the book of

Genesis, or Job, or Isaiah, or Luke, or Galatians, it is always *God’s Word*. We say that God *inspires* the writers. That’s a hard word, isn’t it? But it’s an *important* one. It means that God works in the hearts of the writers, by the Holy Spirit, so that what *they* write is *His Word*.


Whom, then, did God “inspire” to write the book of Acts? It was a man by the name of Luke. You recognize that name, don’t you? It’s the name of the third of the Gospels. The man who wrote the Gospel of *Luke* was the same man who wrote the book of *Acts*. He was not one of the apostles. In fact, he was not

**Note to Parents:** These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

even a *Jew*. He was a *Gentile* Christian. And he was not a tax collector or a fisherman. He was a *doctor*. He had graduated from *medical school*. But he became, really, a *medical missionary*. He was a friend and companion of the apostle Paul. In fact, when Paul was an old man, and in prison in Rome, soon to be put to death by the Romans, he wrote that only *Luke* was with him. Paul called Luke the “beloved physician.”

It’s this beloved physician, then, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. What are those two books of the Bible *about*? You know that the Gospel of Luke is about the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension ... of *Jesus*. The whole book is about what *Jesus did*. And do you know what? The book of Acts is too. It’s all about what *Jesus did*. We will read, in the book of Acts, exciting stories about disciples being let out of prison by an angel, about Stephen being stoned to death, about Paul in a shipwreck. And Jesus did it all. Acts, you see, is about the *spread of the gospel*. It’s about the *gathering of the church*. And who is it who gathers the church? Jesus. From heaven. As He said. “All power is given unto Me.” He does *all things*. And we can be sure that, in heaven, He pays *special attention* to His *church*, to His *people*. The book of Acts is therefore about what *He* does — for *them*.

The book of Acts begins with the story of Jesus’ *ascension*. Jesus, you remember, had led His disciples to the



Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem, and there He talked to them for the last time. He told them, one more time, about the “promise of the Father” — the gift of the Holy Spirit. The disciples listened with *awe*, with *wonder*. A marvelous gift. From heaven. For them. Their hearts must have beat faster, just listening to Jesus.

And then they remembered their old hopes and dreams. Their hopes about the *kingdom*. Could it maybe be, they thought, that the coming of the *Holy Spirit* will bring also the coming of the *kingdom*? God had promised, after all, to give the kingdom to David *forever*. And for the last *600 years* there were *no kings* in Israel. There was *no kingdom*. The nation of Israel had *fallen*, and it had never been *restored*, or *brought back*. Maybe, just maybe, when Jesus rules from heaven He will *fix* that.

So the disciples ask Jesus the question: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

The disciples, you see, were still mixed up. They didn’t yet understand that the nation of Israel did not need *fixing*. It didn’t need fixing, because it was only a *picture*. It was a picture of the *real* kingdom. Do you know what that kingdom is? It’s the *church*. That’s a kingdom of an entirely different *kind*. It’s *not* a kingdom with a throne in Jerusalem. It’s *not* a kingdom located in the land of Canaan. It’s much *larger* than that. It’s much more *glorious* than

that. It's a kingdom in which Christ rules — in the *hearts* of His people ... His people of *every land*. And how will that kingdom *come*? Not suddenly on Pentecost, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, but by the slow, hard work of the preaching of the gospel. When will that work be finished? When will Christ come again to take His people to live and reign with Him forever in a new heavens and a new earth? Only God knows.

That's what Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives. "It is not for you to know the times," Jesus said. Leave that to *God*. And what about the gift of the Spirit? The Spirit will give you power all right, but it will be power to *preach*, to be *my witnesses*. Where? In Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. So great, so glorious, will be *their work*. So great, so glorious, will be *that kingdom*.

The disciples must have understood that Jesus' instruction to them was now *finished*. They had seen everything they had to *see* of Him, and they had heard everything they had to *hear* from Him — in order to be His witnesses. Maybe, therefore, they were not so surprised when Jesus, as He was *blessing* them, began to *leave* them. But it was, nevertheless, an *amazing* thing. Jesus didn't just *vanish* from their sight, as He had done at other times during the last 40 days. He began slowly to *rise*. Higher and higher He went. And then a cloud, a special cloud, came to receive Him out of their sight. Jesus was now gone from

them. They knew that.

Can you imagine how the disciples must have felt? Were they *sad*? Probably so, because it would seem to them that now, more than ever before, they *needed* Him — and He was *gone*. But were they also *glad*? Probably so, because they knew that their Lord had *gone to heaven*. They had *seen it happen*.

So they were *glad*, and they were *sad*. And then suddenly two angels stood by them. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven," the angels asked. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

No need therefore to be sad at *all*. For Jesus will return, on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to take His people to Himself, to be where He is. What a day, and what a *kingdom* that will be!

The disciples caught that. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

### How Well Did You Listen?

1. Who is the *Author* of all of the books of the Bible?
2. Who is the *writer* of the book of Acts? What was the *occupation*, the *life's work*, of this writer?
3. What question did the disciples ask Jesus just before He ascended to heaven?
4. How did Jesus go away from the disciples on the Mount of Olives?
5. Who appeared to the disciples after Jesus ascended to heaven?

6. How did the disciples feel when they went back to Jerusalem alone?

## The Appointment of Matthias

*Acts 1:12-26*

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples went back to Jerusalem with great joy in their hearts.

Yes, their joy was *great*. The disciples were *thrilled*. Do you see why? The disciples were beginning to understand that God had done, and was doing, great and marvelous things for His people. And the disciples of Jesus had the great privilege of being right smack in the middle of it all. Just think! Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension day — never in all of human history had anything ever happened that could compare to *this!* Could the followers of Jesus possibly say “Ho hum” — and go about their business as usual? Oh, no! Not in the middle of such *astounding developments*. The disciples were, we might say, *bubbling over* with joy. Where better to go, therefore, than to the *temple*? And what better thing to do than to *praise* and *bless* God? That’s what the disciples did. Every day they were in the temple, praising and blessing God.

These were exciting days for the disciples — not only because of what Jesus had *done*, but also because of what He had *promised to do*. He had promised to send them, soon, from heaven, a *present*. Did they know what that present, that great gift, would be? Well,

yes and no. They knew it would be the *Holy Spirit*. They knew, too, something about what the Spirit would *do* for them. For Jesus had told them that the Spirit would *teach them all things*, and even help them *remember everything that Jesus had taught them*. The blessing of the Spirit would, therefore, be *spiritual*. And that was exactly what His disciples *wanted*. Jesus had called them to be His witnesses. But they knew that, unless they could somehow get some of His *power* and some of His *knowledge*, they might just as well go back to their *fish-ing*. They could never be *preachers*.

*So much*, therefore, do the disciples *desire* this gift of the Spirit. But they have no idea how it will happen. Nor do they know *when*. Or *where*. So they stayed, as much as possible, *together*. Early in the morning already they would be together in a large upper room in a house in Jerusalem. During the day they were together in the temple. And then, in the evening, they would be together again in the upper room — praying ... about the wonderful gift soon to be given them by their ascended Lord.

Not only the *eleven*. The gift of the Spirit had been promised to *all of Jesus’ followers*. To the *church*. In the upper room, therefore, there were more than eleven men. Jesus’ brothers were there too. And His mother. And the women who had come to the empty tomb on resurrection Sunday. And other of Jesus’ followers. About 120 people in



all. All waiting eagerly for the present from heaven.

Ten days they waited. And during that time the disciples must have talked much about all the things that they had seen during the past couple of months.



And they studied the Scriptures.

Soon after His resurrection, you will remember, Jesus had *opened their understanding*. The Old

Testament had then become almost a *brand-new book* to them. Studying it together, now, in the upper room, must have been *exciting* — especially when they found prophecies about the astounding things that they had themselves witnessed. There was, for example, the treachery of one of their own. Judas Iscariot had betrayed his Master, and afterwards he went out and hanged himself. The Scriptures had actually *predicted* all of that. That was amazing. And now the disciples discover something *more*. In the Psalms, they read that someone else will *take the place* of the traitor.

Who will that *be*? Who will take the place of Judas? Who will appoint another *apostle*? Jesus *Himself* had appointed the twelve. But He's now in heaven. Could it be, therefore, that Jesus left this for *them* to do? The disciples think so.

So ... what to do? They decide right away that this is a matter, not simply for the *eleven*, but for the *church*. So Peter stands up, before the 120 in the upper room, and says, "Men and brethren,

this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake concerning Judas." Peter then showed, *from the Scriptures*, that another man must be appointed to take the place of Judas. Who might this man *be*? Well, says Peter, he must be one who had himself *seen Jesus' work* — from the very beginning. And he must be one who had himself *seen the risen Lord*. A *witness*, after all, is one who has *seen* something. And that's what the apostles must be — *witnesses*. Jesus Himself had said so.

Who of the 120 had been with Jesus "from the beginning"? Probably not many. Maybe only two. There were two, anyway, that were picked out as possible replacements for Judas Iscariot — Barsabas and Matthias. From these *two*, *one* must be chosen. Now, who will do the choosing? Peter's answer was — *Jesus* must choose. How? They will *cast lots*. Who *controls* the lot? Not man. But *God. Through Christ*. So, says Peter, the appointment will really, then, be *Jesus' appointment*.

So they cast lots. And the lot fell on Matthias. And Matthias was, from that day forward, numbered with the apostles.

Already we see the apostles *taking the lead* in the church. They are *showing the way*. That's *good*. And they are using the *Scriptures* as their guide. That's even better. All that they lack, yet, is the gift of the Spirit. And Pentecost is just around the corner.

### How Well Did You Listen?

1. What did the disciples do when they went back to Jerusalem?
2. For what special present, from heaven, did the disciples wait in Jerusalem? Where did they wait?
3. About how many people were waiting in the upper room?
4. What did the disciples *study* when they were together in the upper room?
5. Who was chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot?

6. How did the disciples learn that someone must take the place of Judas Iscariot?
7. How did the disciples leave it to *Jesus* to appoint the replacement for Judas?

### Memory Verse

Luke 24:52 “And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

### How Well Do You Understand?

1. What do we mean when we say that Luke was *inspired* to write the book of Acts?
2. How can we say that the book of Acts is about what *Jesus did*, if Jesus was no longer on this earth?
3. What was the Old Testament nation of Israel a picture of?
4. When the disciples left the Mount of Olives, they knew that Jesus would not any more suddenly appear to them, as He had done before. How did they know that?
5. Why were the disciples *thrilled* when they went back to Jerusalem?

Color the shapes with dots **blue**.  
Color the shapes with squares **brown**.  
What do you see?

