

# Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

## Ice-Breaker

1. What day of the year can you hardly wait for?
2. What long-awaited "prize" was worth the wait (season tickets, driver's license, etc.)?

## Scripture Passage

### Acts 1:1-11

#### The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

<sup>4</sup> And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

#### The Ascension

<sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, <sup>11</sup> and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

## Bible Study

1. What would you call Jesus' ascension to heaven?
  - ( ) sad - the end of his earthly ministry
  - ( ) hopeful - the start of a new phase of his ministry
  - ( ) prophetic - as he left, he will return
  - ( ) amazing - that would have been something to see!

2. If you were one of the disciples, how would you have felt about Jesus leaving?

- terrified
- abandoned
- confused
- angry
- excited about what was ahead

3. What were the angels telling the disciples?

- "Don't worry, he will come again."
- "Don't just stand there, get on with it."
- "It is time to begin your mission."
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you think the disciples did during the 10 days they waited for the Holy Spirit to come?

- grieved over Jesus' departure
- praised God with much joy
- talked about their mixed-up feelings and encouraged each other
- recalled Jesus' teachings and tried to understand what was going on
- sat in silence waiting for something to happen

5. What do you see as the key point of this passage?

- God's kingdom includes the whole world.
- Jesus will return, but don't stand around waiting for him.
- Jesus' mission and ministry continues through his followers.
- The power of the Holy Spirit is crucial to every Christian's life.

6. In verse 8 Jesus says "you will be my witnesses." Where do you feel called to be Christ's witness?

7. What holds you back from spreading the word about Jesus?

- lack of knowledge
- lack of concern
- lack of courage
- lack of non-Christian friends or acquaintances
- nothing; I'm doing it!
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reference Notes

**1:1-5** Greek literary style demanded the transition from a book's preface to its narrative be as smooth as possible. Luke fulfills that demand in this passage as he sums up the content of his Gospel and proceeds in verse 6 to begin his second major work. Luke apparently intended Acts to be the second volume of his two-volume work on the life and ministry of Jesus.

**1:1 *my former book.*** That is, the Gospel of Luke. Church tradition is unanimous in its witness that Luke authored both works. ***Theophilus.*** An unknown figure. He may have been Luke's patron who underwrote the cost of writing the Gospel of Luke, or a Roman official. ***all that Jesus began to do and to teach.*** This is a clue to the way one should view this book; it is the continuing story of the work of Jesus through his Spirit in the life of his body, the church.

**1:2 *until the day he was taken up to heaven.*** See Luke 24:50-53. The Ascension does not mark the end of Jesus' ministry, but simply a new phase of his work. He now exercises his divine reign from heaven. ***through the Holy Spirit.*** The Spirit played an important part in the earthly ministry of Jesus (in his conception, Luke 1:35; in his announcement, Luke 3:16; in his baptism, Luke 3:22; in his temptation, Luke 4:1; in his teaching, Luke 4:14; in his prayers, Luke 11:13; and in his expectation for the future, Luke 24:49). ***apostles.*** See Luke 6:12-16. Apostles were ambassadors commissioned to represent the one in whose name they are sent. In the Gospel, this term refers to the Twelve. Normally, this is its meaning in Acts as well, although others (like Paul and Barnabas, Acts 14:3-4) are also called by this title.

**1:3** In the Gospel, Luke went to some length to underscore the reality of the physical resurrection of Jesus so that his readers could be assured that the apostles were not seeing a ghost (Luke 24:37-42), but he did not mention the span of time over which the appearances occurred. Matthew and John record a couple of these later appearances prior to the Ascension. the kingdom of God. The announcement of the reign of God through which he saves his people was the theme of Jesus' earthly ministry as well (Luke 4:43). "The point is that this is to continue to be the theme of the witness of the church, which will thus follow on from the preaching of Jesus (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31)" (Marshall).

**1:4 *the gift my Father promised.*** The Holy Spirit (see Isaiah 32:15; Joel 2:28-32; Luke 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; Galatians 3:14). Jesus quotes the words of John the Baptist (Luke 3:16) as a reminder that from the very beginning the expectation was that through him the Spirit of God would be poured out on all his people.

**1:5 *baptized with the Holy Spirit.*** Baptism was associated with cleansing. The metaphor would communicate a being flooded with God's Spirit. It "does not convey all that the gift entails, but it does give the required sense of an overwhelming experience" (Williams). Thus, Jesus raised the expectations of the disciples regarding what the next step in his agenda for them might be.

1:6-8 Throughout the Gospel, it was clear that Jesus and the disciples had very different ideas about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:46-56; 22:24-38). The question of verse 6 reflects three such misunderstandings: (1) It would not be Jesus per se who would be doing the work from now on, but the disciples empowered by his Spirit; (2) The time of the kingdom's establishment was still far off, the timing of which should not concern them, and (3) The kingdom is not a matter of the political destiny of Israel, but a spiritual realm involving the whole world.

1:8 This verse embraces the twin themes of the whole book. The mission of Jesus is continued through the work of his Spirit empowering and enabling the disciples to bear witness to him (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 12:11-12). The result of this empowering will be the spread of the Gospel throughout the world, from the spiritual heart of Israel (Jerusalem) to the immediate vicinity (Judea) to the despised Samaritans in the adjacent province to the north, to the outermost reaches of the earth. Williams is undoubtedly correct when he asserts that the disciples probably understood Jesus to mean that they should preach to Jews throughout the empire since the acceptance of Gentiles in the church was still a huge barrier not yet considered (see chapter 15). The book is built around these geographical markers. Chapters 1:1-6:7 occur in Jerusalem and Judea; 6:8-9:31 deals with events that lead the church to Samaria; and 9:32 on recounts the chain of events that leads Paul to journey throughout much of the Roman Empire with the good news of Jesus.

1:9 ***a cloud hid him from their sight***. This is not a statement of weather conditions at the time, but a declaration of Jesus' deity. "In Biblical language the cloud was often a symbol of divine glory (Exodus 16:10; Psalm 104:3)" (Williams). See also Daniel 7:13-14.

## Caring Time

How can this group encourage you and pray for you?

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