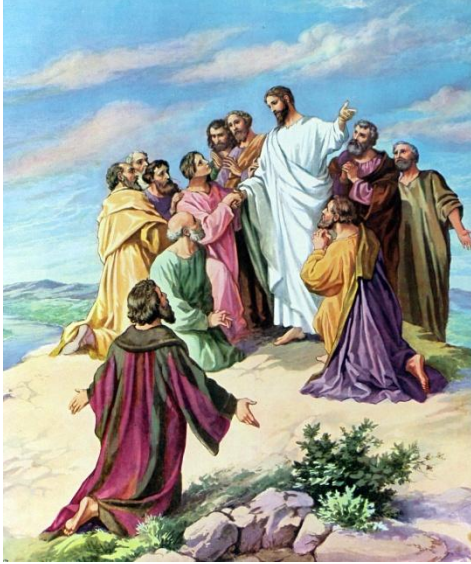


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 1



JESUS RETURNS TO HEAVEN

Scripture Text: Acts 1:1-14

The Book of Acts contains the most complete account of the early church that we have. God has preserved it for us that we might have it for a guide and example. Jesus placed it in our hands, is watching how we use it, and will require an accounting at the end. It is serious business. The Book of Acts is to us as a medical book is to a doctor or a blueprint is to a carpenter and more important than either. We look in it for our pattern, not excluding the rest of the New Testament, of course.

Jesus' words in **Acts 1:8** are the key to the Book of Acts. All the good accomplishments of the church told there, and continuing on through the centuries since, are the fulfillment of the promise in this verse. It is one long, heroic tale of great lives and victorious deaths, of souls saved and spiritual battles won. God still calls for those willing to be used of Him as witnesses. The need is great. Precious souls must be rescued before it is too late. It is hoped that these studies will help to make us better workers for the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

—Acts 1:8

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—**John 20:1-18** Jesus arose from the dead.
- Tue.—**John 14:15-26; John 15:26-27** The promise of the Spirit.
- Wed.—**John 16:1-15** Must be guided by Holy Spirit.
- Thu.—**Mark 13:28-37** God keeps time of plan secret.
- Fri.—**Luke 24:44-53; Mark 16:19-20** Jesus' ascension.

Devotional Reading: Acts 1:9-11 Jesus will come as He left.

Last-Minute Instructions

The same writer, Luke, wrote both Books of Luke and Acts as letters to his friend Theophilus. Read the first four and the last five verses of Luke. See how Acts follows Luke without a break.

Acts 1:1-3 Jesus **showed himself alive after his passion**—suffering—**by many infallible proofs**. There was no question but that Jesus had risen from the dead. He was seen and heard many times by the Apostles. Now it was forty days since he arose.

Why Wait?

Acts 1:4-5 **Being assembled** with the Apostles near Bethany, Jesus gave them a command and a promise. They were to **not depart from Jerusalem**, but wait for something. He would send **the promise of the Father** (**John 14:16; John 15:26**). He explained, **ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence**. But they were more interested in earthly, fleshly matters. Their thoughts were of the flesh rather than the Spirit. The world needed the Gospel. Why not start immediately to carry it to them? Because they lacked their greatest need to successfully carry the Gospel. God would not be glorified until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

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They needed His power, love, wisdom, and insight. They were spiritually blind, ignorant, and weak. We are the same without Holy Spirit baptism. We need not wait, as they, for His coming to the world. We need wait only long enough to dedicate ourselves fully to God, and the Spirit will come in.

Baptism is a submerging, a complete putting under, and a covering with. Saints are baptized in Christ (**Romans 6:3**). They are baptized in the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:5**). Just as a bottle filled with water is submerged in water, they are filled with Christ and the Holy Spirit. The water is in the bottle and the bottle is in the water. Water baptism is only a symbol of the real spiritual baptism which makes people saints. No one is properly equipped to work in the Gospel until he has this filling.

No Earthly Kingdom

Acts 1:6-9 Palestine was under rule of a foreign power—Rome. In their minds was the thought that Jesus had come to free Israel from this domination. They thought the time had arrived. **Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?** Jesus closed the door on this question. God the Father holds the **times and seasons** of His future plans **in his own power**. He does not tell the dates to men, but through His Spirit, He reveals His kingdom.

Then Jesus drew their minds back to the thing that really mattered. **Ye shall receive power**. They needed power of understanding, of wisdom, of love, of faith, of influence, and power over sin. These and more would be given. They were to receive the Source of power. The **Holy Ghost** was to **come upon** them. **And ye shall be witnesses unto me**—Christ—everywhere. Their witness was to begin at home and then cover the whole earth. This is still the work of the church. **While they beheld, he was taken up**. It was visible, not secret. He could not return to Heaven by way of death, for, having risen, He could not die again (**Romans 6:9**). **A cloud received him**—hid Him.

Despite many plain Scriptures warning of the impossibility of finding or setting dates for God's future plans (**Mark 13:32**), still some persist in trying it. Some even try to outline the plans, pointing out men and nations and events and times. Then they find after time has elapsed that they were mistaken.

Waiting for the Promise

Acts 1:10-14 They looked steadfastly—in amazement and wonder. **Two men . . . in white**. Their sudden appearance, dress, and message mark them as angels. **Why stand ye gazing . . . ?** Because they did not know where He had gone, what He would do, or if He was coming back. He had told them (**John 14:2-4**), but they were **slow of heart**. The angels told where He had gone, that He will come back, and how. It was a message from God, for only God could know.

Assured, they returned to Jerusalem. It was a **Sabbath day's journey**, approximately two thousand paces—a short distance. They were obeying Jesus' command (**verse 4**). **They went up into an upper room, where abode** all the Apostles except Judas Iscariot (**Matthew 27:5**). **These all continued with one accord**—unity and agreement—**in prayer and supplication**. **The women**, who followed Christ **and Mary the mother of Jesus**, and his brethren, were all drawing near to God while waiting for His promise to be fulfilled. With no command but to wait, they passed the time in prayer. Why? Because they wanted to. These were people whose sins were gone. Their hearts hungered for more of God. When we are in the same condition, God will fill and use us. If we keep this promise before us, we will have sufficient motive for soul winning. We know not when He is coming, but we do know the time is short.

Witnesses for Christ

The church witnesses unto Jesus to the entire world. They are not spectators, pleasure seekers, entertainers, salesmen, or actors, but witnesses. Every activity of the church should be carried on to contribute to the effectiveness of this witnessing. Real witnessing is the most heroic work there is. Fired with the passion to

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rescue souls for Him, witnesses have endured neglect, hardship, heat, cold, imprisonment, torture, and death. They were glad to do it for the sake of bringing glory to the Savior's name.

JUST A THOUGHT

No other activity welds fellowship like working together.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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