

Acts 1:1-14

Aim of Lesson

To give assurance that Jesus is still alive and will come back to the earth as king.

Background study

Ezekiel 21:24-27; Luke 1:1-4; 24:44-54; Ephesians 1:15-22; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 2:79. Have ready a picture or description of the Mount of Olives.

Suggested outline of lesson

This is a short lesson and allows time to consider the interesting detail of the authorship of the Acts and the reason for the writing of the record. Read together the first verse of the book to show that it was in the form of a second letter to someone called Theophilus, and that the writer had sent an earlier letter telling about the life of Jesus. Then ask the children to turn to Luke and read the first four verses, thus establishing the author of both records to be Luke, the doctor. Point out the significant fact that he acquired his information from eye-witnesses. Therefore, we can be sure that both the gospel record and the Acts are true accounts of what happened. In fact, as Luke says in verse four, the only reason for writing it down was to make sure that the truth of the matter was known. God has preserved what Luke wrote, over nineteen hundred years ago, and it has now been translated from the original Greek language in which it was written, into our own language so that we can read it for ourselves and be sure of what really happened.

Remind the children that one of the most important things that Luke recorded was that Jesus rose from the dead three days after he was crucified. Ask the children what they remember about the incidents that proved to the disciples that Jesus was really alive, and remind them of the joy and the amazement of his friends. Discuss the kind of questions they would have asked Jesus. Many times during a period of forty days Jesus talked to them and taught them from the scriptures about his mission, and about God's wonderful plans. He also told them that they must stay in Jerusalem until they had received power from God when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

The climax of the story is set on Mount Olivet, about a mile from the city centre - the maximum distance one might travel on the sabbath. Describe the hillside scene where Jesus walked with his disciples for the last time. They had been there with him on many occasions, but this time it felt very different. They so longed for the kingdom to come, for which Jesus had taught them to pray, that they asked him whether the time had come at last for the kingdom of Israel to be re-established with Jesus as its king. Convey their hopefulness, perhaps subdued by the answer that they were not to be concerned about dates or periods of time, since these are in God's hands. The answer to their question was 'no', but at the same time it confirmed that their hope was the right one. Their prophets had foretold that a descendent of David would take the throne and rule for ever, and the disciples knew that Jesus was that promised king.

Jesus' parting words to his disciples were in the form of an instruction and a promise. He repeated that they were to receive special power from God, and told them that they were to make the name of Jesus known not only in their own country but all over the world. They were to tell everyone about the coming kingdom, and they would be helped in this work by the spirit. The event that followed was both dramatic and beautiful, and would live in the disciples' memories for the rest of their lives. On this occasion Jesus did not simply vanish from their sight, but was miraculously taken up from the hilltop, within a cloud. Unwilling to take their eyes from their master, the disciples continued to peer upwards into the cloud, in astonishment and awe. They were further excited by the sudden appearance of the two men in white (angels) who gave them a promise from God. Let the children read this key verse and explore the clear implications of the message. Link this promise with the future kingdom and the kingship of Jesus, for which we still wait with firm hope.

With confidence in the assurances they had been given by Jesus and then by the angels, the men returned to Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus' instructions. Luke records, in the last verses of his gospel record, the reactions of the disciples. Joyfully they met with other believers to worship God and to prepare for the work of preaching which was now theirs.

Relevance to the children's lives

When the disciples saw Jesus go up into heaven, did they feel miserable? Did they feel that Jesus had deserted them? How did they feel? Why were they so glad? Are we ever really alone? What can we do to help us feel that Jesus is very near?

Worksheets

The code reads 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?'

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we know that you never leave us, but sometimes we forget this. Please help us to feel your presence more and more. We are happy knowing that Jesus will one day return. Amen.

Memory verse

"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" (Acts 1:11).