

Aim of lesson

To see how the Lord Jesus, as he leaves his disciples, prepares them for the work he gives them to do.

Bible background

Acts 1.

Outline of lesson

Beginning

Use the questions at the beginning of the workbook to introduce the study of the Acts of the Apostles. The students can read Luke 1:1-4 and compare with Acts 1:1-2, to discover the author, Luke, and his former book to Theophilus. Ask the class if they know what Luke's two books are about. Draw their attention to the word 'began' in Acts 1:1. Encourage them to see that the book of the Acts of the Apostles should be considered as the record of the continuation of the work of the Lord Jesus. The work was done under his command and using the power he gave them. On the subject of what else Luke had done, you may also like to look at the use of the word 'we' after Acts 16:10. Chapter 21:1 is a good example showing that Luke took part in some of the journeys of Paul.

Preparation

Ask the class to imagine they are the disciples of Jesus. Have them consider the ways in which the Lord Jesus prepared his disciples for the work of preaching, as you read together Acts 1:1-12. You may like to make a list of their ideas on a blackboard or large piece of paper. The list could contain such ideas as:

- Jesus showed himself to the disciples during forty days and proved he was alive.
- He taught them more about the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus and the Kingdom of God are two main themes the apostles preached about.
- His first instruction was to wait in Jerusalem until they had power from God. Jesus knew that, just as he had needed a quiet time of preparation before starting his ministry, so his disciples needed a time to think and pray, before they were caught up in the work of preaching which would leave them so little time. The demands on their time would be great, as they had been on the Lord Jesus. The disciples also had to learn to wait as well as to act in obedience to their Lord.
- The promise of power would give them confidence that God and his Son were with them in what they did, and it would remind them that the work was not theirs, but God's.
- An important part of their preparation was seeing the Lord Jesus go into heaven. He had not just disappeared and left them wondering where he was or if he would appear again. They also had the anchor of the angels' words promising his return. This was perhaps the only time some of them would have seen an angel – and they would remember it well.

You will need to lead into these ideas with such suggestions as "What did Jesus teach them, show them, promise them?" etc.

Mixed feelings?

Encourage the students to write in the middle section of the worksheet three different things that the disciples might have thought about on the way back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. Did they feel sad that Jesus had gone, excited about the work of preaching, or glad about the promise of his return?

Why did Jesus go?

Help the class to think about why the Lord Jesus went to heaven. The preaching would have been easier if Jesus had stayed. Encourage them to consider the difference it made to the disciples. If Jesus had stayed, they would have asked him whenever there was a difficulty. He would have led, as he could preach better than anyone. By leaving his disciples to carry on his work, he allowed them to grow up, to take decisions for themselves by considering what their Lord would have done. In this way they would become more like him as they learned to think like him and take decisions to please him.

Matthias

Read together Acts 1:13-26 and help the students to think about what Matthias might have said as he told his family about what had happened. Encourage them to note the qualifications the others considered important in verses 21 and 22 as well as the way they asked God to make the final choice.

Note: It is often a good idea to introduce any passage to be read by setting the scene and telling the class what to look for.

Digging deeper

When Jesus comes back

This section explores what Jesus' return will be like, what Jesus is doing now, and how it involves us.

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class what their reactions are as they read the angel's words about the return of the Lord Jesus. Are they glad, worried or indifferent? What would they do if they knew that Jesus would come back next week? Would it change the way they spend each day of the week?

Prayer

You could help the class, in groups of two or three, to think about a prayer that the disciples might have said after witnessing the ascension and hearing the angel's words.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could write an imaginary letter from Theophilus thanking Luke for the gospel he had written to him and asking him to write down what happened next.
- The class could make a cartoon-strip story of the life of Matthias. Each could draw a picture of one of the events he had witnessed, concluding with the day he was chosen to be one of the twelve apostles.