



# Week four The mountain of ascension

‘why are you staring into heaven?’

- Welcome (5-10 minutes)

Talk about how you make choices. Do you like to choose people to be on a team? What are your strong memories about ‘being picked or passed over’?

- Worship (10-15 minutes)



**pray**

<sup>13</sup> The LORD looks down from heaven  
and sees the whole human race.  
<sup>14</sup> From his throne he observes  
all who live on the earth.  
<sup>15</sup> He made their hearts,  
so he understands everything they  
do.

Psalm 33 (NLT)

- Word (50 minutes)

Jesus has deliberately made sure that his followers are confident of his bodily resurrection in the 40 days since the women first saw him in the garden. He has instructed them further that they have a task to fulfil and that they need to wait for the power to be given them in order that they might begin. Here, Luke is reminding us of the apostle’s privileged place in history as the transition is made between the ministry of God Incarnate and the mission of the Church that Jesus builds through his people in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Read the passage:

Acts 1 (The Message)

<sup>1-5</sup>Dear Theophilus, in the first volume of this book I wrote on everything that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he said good-bye to the apostles, the ones he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. After his death, he presented himself alive to them in many different settings over a period of forty days. In face-to-face meetings, he talked to them about things concerning the kingdom of God. As they met and ate meals together, he told them that they were on no account to leave Jerusalem but “must wait for what the Father promised: the promise you heard from me. John baptized in water; you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And soon.”

<sup>6</sup>When they were together for the last time they asked, "Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?"

<sup>7-8</sup>He told them, "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world."

<sup>9-11</sup>These were his last words. As they watched, he was taken up and disappeared in a cloud. They stood there, staring into the empty sky. Suddenly two men appeared—in white robes! They said, "You Galileans!—why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky? This very Jesus who was taken up from among you to heaven will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left."

<sup>12-13</sup>So they left the mountain called Olives and returned to Jerusalem. It was a little over half a mile. They went to the upper room they had been using as a meeting place:

Peter,  
John,  
James,  
Andrew,  
Philip,  
Thomas,  
Bartholomew,  
Matthew,  
James, son of Alphaeus,  
Simon the Zealot,  
Judas, son of James.

<sup>14</sup>They agreed they were in this for good, completely together in prayer, the women included. Also Jesus' mother, Mary, and his brothers.

It is the activity of the disciples that Luke records in this, his 2<sup>nd</sup> book. The disciples are given a rebuke for staring into space and are encouraged to get on with what he has told them about.

- Why is the ascension a major event in Jesus' ministry? What significance does it have for your faith?

The followers are rebuked for staring into space after Jesus had ascended.

- Draw your response to the ascension in the space below. Let it show your feelings and your understanding of what has just happened.

Jesus gives his authority to be his witnesses not through the humanly given baptism with water, but through the divinely given baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- What do you understand by Jesus' command to 'wait to be his witness until you have received the Holy Spirit'?

While he was still with them, he said:

Don't leave Jerusalem yet. Wait here for the Father to give you the Holy Spirit, just as I told you he has promised to do. <sup>5</sup>John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Verse 4



- Talk about your experiences of God's Holy Spirit. How do you know that you are equipped by him? (Look at examples of the Apostles at work later in Acts if you are stuck for ideas!)

The Church's ability to serve God and to extend his Kingdom is dependant on her obedience in following Jesus.

- What are your weakest points when it comes to serving God?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5

- Write a short prayer for your church in the space below, asking for help to be Jesus' witnesses as he asks us to be.

**pray** Spend some time listening to God in quiet. Ask him to bless you with his Spirit for the good of his Kingdom. Re-read verse 4 if you have trouble focussing and allow its message to sink into your heart.

Every one of the apostles is named. Also indicated are others who were with them as witnesses to the resurrected Jesus and also to the Ascension. This is recorded along with their commitment to stick with their understandings of what Jesus had taught, shown and commissioned them to do.

- Write a belief statement that describes the crucial elements in your faith.  
(love hope truth justice Holy Spirit Grace Jesus Father serve people prayer  
trust worship purpose witness joy strength faith mercy Son God awe earth)

- Jesus insists on a time of waiting before sending the disciples out to do ministry. What were/ are the reasons for this? What can the church today learn from his example?

**Witness (20 – 25 minutes)**

Look again at verses 7&8. Ability to be witnesses comes with the power from God, this baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**pray** Pray for the witness of the Church. That God will bless places of new ground for his Kingdom and that he will affirm you with the confidence that comes from the Holy Spirit's power to be his witnesses with Spirit- filled effectiveness.

**Time for refreshments, you've earned them!**



Bibliography  
Stott, John; *The Message of Acts*; BST ; IVP; 1991