

GOD'S BIG PLAN

Jesus Goes Back to Heaven Matthew 28:16-20

Supporting Scriptures: Mark 16:15-16, 19-20; Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:3-12; 1 Corinthians 15:3-7
Psalm 68:18, John 3:16-17, John 14:1-6; Romans 10:13-15



Lesson Goals: To understand that Jesus returned to heaven.
To understand that Jesus expected the disciples to go and tell.
To understand that Jesus expects us to go and tell.

Scripture Memory So go and make followers of all people in the world. Matthew 28:19 (ICB)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Don't read it. Tell it as a STORY. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let's review what we have learned so far. (Review the previous stories, focusing on those leading to Christ's death and resurrection. Encourage your students to share.)

So, what are all the things we've learned about that happened after Jesus came back to life? Who remembers? (Allow your students to share what they remember.) Who was the first to see Jesus alive? (Mary Magdalene.) The other women saw Him, as well. They were given a message for the disciples. "Tell them I'm going ahead to Galilee. They'll see me there." So the women ran to tell the disciples. That same day, Jesus joined two followers on the road to Emmaus. What did they talk about? They told Jesus they were sad about the things that had happened that weekend. Jesus explained to them why those things had to happen. He explained God's big plan of salvation. They had talked with Jesus, but they didn't recognize Him until he broke the bread for them. Then Jesus disappeared.

That same evening, Jesus appeared to ten of His disciples. He entered through a locked door, but showed them that He wasn't a ghost. They could touch Him. He could eat. He even ate fish right there in front of them. He visited them again and Thomas, who wasn't there the first time and who refused to believe without seeing, saw and believed. Let's see what else happened.

READ: Matthew 28:16-17 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)

Some of the disciples were still struggling. So much had happened in such a few days. They had watched Jesus die right before their eyes. But He had come back to life! He appeared to them and ate with them. Even in their doubting, they obeyed. They went to Galilee as Jesus had instructed them. They worshipped Him there, and then Jesus talked with them. He said, "While you are going, make followers of all people in the world. When they believe, baptize them. You are to baptize them in the name of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And after you have baptized them, teach them. Teach them everything that I have told you." Jesus encouraged them in this new task, "You can be sure that I will always be with you. I will never leave you." What a job! How would they ever be able to do it all? They must have talked of nothing else as they returned to Jerusalem.

Over the next forty days, Jesus appeared to many people. He appeared to a group of five hundred people. Jesus also appeared to His brother James, as well as His other followers. One day, while Jesus was

eating with His disciples, He took the opportunity to remind them that He would send them what the Father had promised, the Holy Spirit. "Don't leave Jerusalem," Jesus told them. "Wait for the gift My Father promised."

Then, Jesus took His disciples outside of the city. He blessed them and told them that when the Holy Spirit was given to them, they would receive power. With that power they would do what Jesus had already asked them to do. He explained a little more by telling them, "You will be my witnesses. You'll start at home, right here in Jerusalem. Then you'll move out to the neighboring cities of Judea. Then, you'll move even farther out to areas like Samaria, and after that, you will go to the whole world."

After Jesus said this, He was taken up into heaven. Up, up He went and they watched Him rise until a cloud hid Jesus from their sight. Suddenly, two men dressed in white appeared beside them. "Why do you stand here staring up into the sky? Jesus is gone, but He's not gone forever. One day, He will come back the very same way you saw Him go!"

After Jesus went back to heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. Jesus had told them to stay there until God's gift of the Holy Spirit was given. They were very excited. They went to the temple every day and praised God there. And when the time came, the disciples went out from Jerusalem and preached everywhere. Just as Jesus had promised, He was with them.

Review:

Let's review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

God's Word, the Bible, is very clear. Jesus died in our place, for our sins. Anyone who believes that and places their trust in Him will be saved. God's Word says that, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But it continues with some questions. How can people call on God unless they believe? How will they believe unless they hear about Him? How will they hear about God unless someone tells them? And how can anyone tell them if they have not been sent? Well, that's what Jesus did right before He returned to heaven - He sent His disciples out to tell the whole world. Because they were obedient, you and I have heard about Jesus and can choose for ourselves if we will believe in God and call out to Him. Have you done that? Is it something you would like to do?

And if you have already chosen to believe in God, if you have been saved from the penalty for your sin, then you are being called out, just like Jesus' disciples were. How will anyone else know about God and His love for them if they have never heard God's good news? How can they hear if no one ever tells them? How will someone tell them if they haven't been sent? Just as Jesus sent out His disciples thousands of years ago, He is sending you. He sends you with the same message He gave His disciples. "So go and make followers of all people in the world. When they believe, baptize them. And after you have baptized them, teach them. Teach them everything that I have told you." What an exciting task we have been given. How in the world will we do it all? Jesus' promise is for us, as well. He will always be with us. He will never leave us!

Planning for Next Week
Lesson 44 • The Helper Comes
Acts 2

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: “This Little Light of Mine”

SHARE: Last week we learned that Jesus is alive! Mary saw Jesus alive. The two men walking back home to Emmaus saw Him, too. Jesus even visited His followers and ate fish with them.

For forty days, Jesus visited with many people. He visited over five hundred people in all! He told them important things. Jesus wanted His followers to remember what He said. Jesus wanted His followers to obey.

Jesus wants everyone to know that He loves them. Jesus wants everyone to know that He died for them. But Jesus was about to leave. How would everyone find out about Jesus’ wonderful news? Jesus had a plan!

Jesus gave some very important instructions to His followers. “Go! While you are going, tell everyone about me so that they can believe in Me. Teach them everything I have taught you!” Jesus told His disciples that He would help them.

But where should they go? Jesus helped them know where to go. He said, “Tell people about me in your home town. Tell them about me in the towns around you. Tell them about me in towns far away. Tell people everywhere about me. Tell the whole world!” That’s a pretty big job, isn’t it! But remember, Jesus promised to help them.

Something pretty amazing happened after Jesus told them this. Jesus’ feet came off of the ground. It was like He was floating! Jesus rose higher and higher in the sky. Then Jesus’ followers couldn’t see Him anymore because a cloud hid Him. Then some men dressed in white robes talked to Jesus’ followers. “Why are you staring up at the sky? Jesus is gone. Jesus may be gone, but He won’t be gone forever. Jesus is coming back from heaven one day, just like He went!” Jesus’ followers ran back home very excited! And do you know what? They obeyed Jesus. They went all over the world telling people about Jesus!

Guess what? You can do what Jesus’ followers did. You can tell people about Jesus. You might be too small right now to go all over the world, but you can start where you are. You can tell your family about Jesus. You can tell your friends about Jesus. Who else can you tell about Jesus?

PRAY: Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Help me tell everyone about Him.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Make origami boats from old maps. Write the memory verse on the boat.
- Provide pictures of various foreign countries, neighboring states and local places. Ask your students for ideas on sharing Jesus with the people in those places.
- Play "Follow the Leader."
- Make a banner of flags. Intermix state flags with country flags.
- Bring foods from other countries for tasting.
- Make crafts from other countries. For example: Mexico - God's Eyes (from yarn and craft sticks); China - Chinese Paper Lanterns; Italy - Pasta Necklace, etc.
- For older students and adults: A commitment time with a formal invitation might be in order. Be sensitive to the needs of your group. God may be calling out missionaries from your small group.