

Lesson 1

The Ascension

Key words:

Resurrection: 1. rising from the dead. 2. Jesus rising from the dead on Easter Sunday. An event recorded in all four gospels and the central belief of Christianity.

Ascension: the event, 40 days after the resurrection, when Jesus returned to God, the Father, in heaven.

Apostles – the disciples, and those who joined them, sent out by Jesus to spread the good news.

After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples many times.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I, myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.



Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.' (Luke 24: 36-49)

Answer these questions:

1. Why were the disciples frightened?
2. Give two ways that Jesus proved to them that he was physically real.
3. What do you think the power that the disciples had to wait for was?



The Commissioning of the Disciples

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28 16-20)

Finish these sentences:

- According to Matthew Jesus asked the disciples to
- Jesus promised the disciples that



Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. (Acts 1: 4-9)

Finish these sentences:

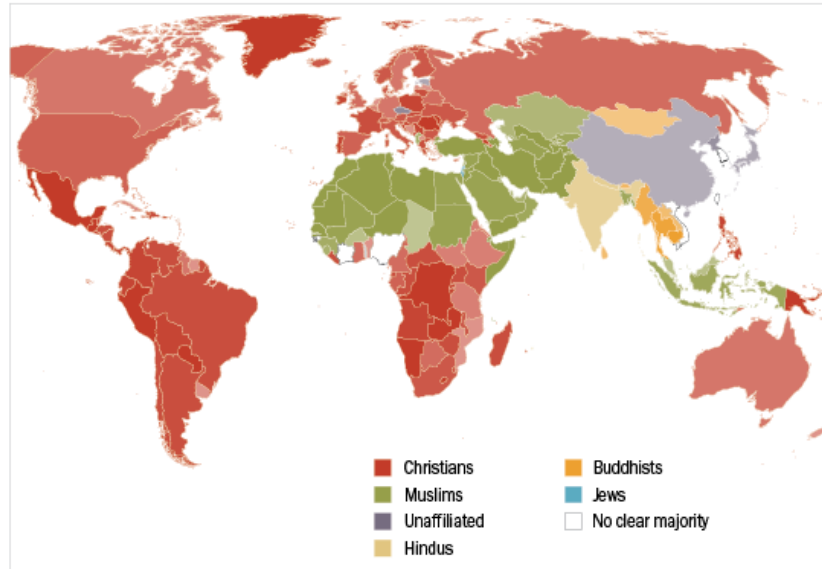
- According to Luke in Acts, Jesus asked the disciples.....
- Jesus promised the disciples.....
- The disciples wanted to know
- Jesus responded....
- Jesus told the disciples they would be his 'witnesses'; this means...



This image shows how the disciples followed Jesus' instructions to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Majority Religion, by Country

Countries are colored according to the majority religion. Darker shading represents a greater prevalence of the majority religion.



Nine countries have no clear religious majority: Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Macau, Nigeria, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Togo and Vietnam. There are no countries in which adherents of folk religions make up a clear majority. There are also no countries in which followers of other religions (such as Bahai's, Jains, Sikhs, Shintoists, Taoists, followers of Tenrikyo, Wiccans or Zoroastrians) make up a clear majority.

Few Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

What happens next?

Watch this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcFw8pLBSIo>

“When he had led them out of the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven.” (Luke 24:50)

Just as the resurrection is a matter of faith and interpretation, so is the ascension. There are other explanations but if Jesus had the special power of God to rise from the dead, it is equally possible that this same power means he was able to leave the earth physically and return to heaven. Only Mark's and Luke's gospels finish off their story by telling their readers that, after meeting his disciples and asking them to carry on his good work, Jesus left them for the last time.

Task:

What does the fact that this event is called the **ascension** tell you about where Jesus went? Explain why.



Rembrandt's version of the ascension

Challenge: How else might Jesus' final disappearance be explained?

