

Use Week of:

Unit 27 • Session 4

Jesus Returned to Heaven

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 28; Acts 1

STORY POINT:

Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 11:25

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 206



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 208



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 214



Leaders, grow on the go! Listen to session-by-session training every week on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or LifeWay's Digital Pass:
ministrygrid.com/gospelproject | gospelproject.com/podcasts

LEADER Bible Study

After Jesus' death and resurrection, He appeared to His disciples over a 40-day period. At one point, He appeared to more than 500 people. During that time, Jesus taught about the kingdom of God. Some of them wondered if Jesus was finally going to overthrow the Roman government and set up His kingdom on earth.

Jesus had a different plan for the disciples. He directed the Eleven to go to a mountain, where He appeared to them again. They worshiped Him, but some still doubted. (Matt. 28:17) On the mountain, Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission. He commanded His disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel, the good news about Him.

The Great Commission is not just for missionaries far from home. All believers are called to share the gospel with others, teach them to obey God's commands, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus finished His commission with a profound promise: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Father's promise—the Holy Spirit. Those who repented of their sins and trusted in Jesus' death and resurrection would be baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would give them power to live holy lives and take the gospel to the ends of the earth. After Jesus told the disciples these things, Jesus was taken up into the sky—right in front of their eyes!

Jesus is alive in heaven, waiting to return for His people. Jesus told the disciples He was going to prepare a place for them, and when we die, we will be with the Lord. (John 14:1-3) In the meantime, Jesus has not left us alone. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us do God's work. One day, Jesus will return to make all things new and to rule as Lord over all.

The BIBLE Story

Jesus Returned to Heaven

Matthew 28; Acts 1

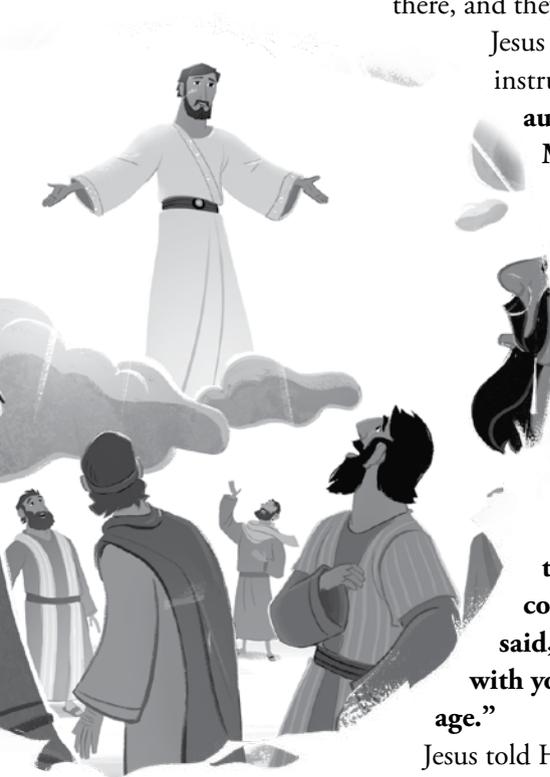
After Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead, He spent time with His disciples over 40 days. During that time, Jesus told them even more about God's kingdom. Then Jesus told His disciples to go to a mountain in Galilee. They saw Jesus there, and they worshiped Him.

Jesus gave His disciples important instructions. Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

Jesus gave the disciples—and everyone who follows Him—a job to do. He said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Make disciples of people from every nation.”

Jesus also said, “Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Then Jesus said, “Remember this: I am always with you, until the very end of the age.”

Jesus told His disciples to wait in the city of Jerusalem until God kept His promise to give them the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you. You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”



After Jesus said these things, He went up into heaven. The disciples watched Jesus until a cloud hid Him from their sight. **All of a sudden, two angels appeared.** They were wearing white clothes. **These angels asked,** “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? **This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come again. He will return in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven.**”

Christ Connection: Jesus left earth and returned to heaven, but He did not leave us alone. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us do God’s work—to teach people everywhere about Jesus so they will trust in Him as their Lord and Savior. One day, Jesus will return to make all things new and to rule as Lord over all.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Call for active listening:** Distribute key words on index cards. Kids should hold up their cards when they hear their words in the story.
- **Use figures:** Use people figures or play dough models to represent Jesus and His disciples. Move around the figures as you tell the story.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jesus Returned to Heaven

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 28; Acts 1

STORY POINT: Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission.

KEY PASSAGE: John 11:25

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about a time they were asked to do something that felt impossible.

SAY • Sometimes the chores we have to do might feel too difficult for us. A tough job may feel like it would take so long to complete that it is impossible. Today we will learn about a job Jesus commanded His disciples to do. It may have seemed like an impossible task, but God would give them the power to do it and fill them with joy as they worked.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “How Long?” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “How Long?” activity page. Help kids use the clocks provided to determine how long until the time indicated.

SAY • Sometimes we have to wait for things we want to happen. Perhaps you have waited hours, days, or even months for certain things. Today we will learn about Jesus’ return to heaven and how we are to live while waiting for Him to return to earth.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Follow-the-leader

Select a kid to be the leader. Instruct the kids to line up behind the leader. The kids must follow the leader around the room mimicking any movements and behaviors the leader chooses to do. Play multiple rounds, selecting a new kid to be the leader in each round.

SAY • Great job following the leader! Today we will learn about the mission Jesus gave His followers. If we say Jesus is our King, that means we follow His lead!

OPTION 2: Play dough disciples

Provide each kid with a lump of play dough. Instruct the kids to use their play dough to make a few people figures and set the figures in a line.

· play dough

SAY • Only God can make people. However, today we will learn about how we can be a part of God's plan to make ordinary people into disciples of Jesus. How do you think we can do that?

Transition to teach the story

**LOW
PREP**

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jesus Returned to Heaven

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 28; Acts 1

STORY POINT: Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission.

KEY PASSAGE: John 11:25

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a flannel shirt and overalls.]

LEADER • Hey, kids! Welcome back to the farm. Guess what I just did? *[Allow responses.]* Those are all good guesses. I just got back from the grain elevator. It's really interesting.

As a farmer, once I harvest all my corn, I drive a truck full of it to large building called a grain elevator. There, we weigh my truck with all the grain, then I dump all the grain out and weigh my truck again. The difference in weight is how much grain I produced. Then the grain is examined for quality to see what the fair price per pound will be. That's basically the end of my job with the grain. But it's not the end of the grain's journey.

All the grain I dump out falls through a grate into an underground area where the actual elevator part is. Imagine a giant belt with buckets on it, moving

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

round and round. That's basically what a grain elevator is. The buckets move through the grain, scooping it up and carrying it to the top of the grain elevator. There, it's dumped off into different storage bins to wait. When enough farmers have all sold their grain and the bin is full, the grain from the bottom of the bin is transferred—by another elevator—into a railroad car to go wherever the grain is needed!

So the grain goes down from my truck, then up into the bin, then down again to the second elevator, then up into the train car! Up, down, up, down. Sounds exhausting! But it makes me think of Jesus. Jesus came down from heaven, then went up on a cross, then down into the grave, then up from the grave, and then up even more to heaven! Let's learn about that.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • We've finally arrived at the story our big picture question has been hinting at. *Where is Jesus now? Jesus ascended into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.* Jesus' work to save sinners is complete, and His place in heaven is one of honor and glory.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • After **God raised Jesus from the dead to defeat sin and death, Jesus taught that all the Scriptures point to Him.** Then, **Jesus proved He is alive** by

appearing to the disciples. Today we will learn the last thing Jesus commanded the disciples to do before He returned to heaven.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- “Jesus Returned to Heaven” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Open your Bible to Matthew 28; Acts 1. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus Returned to Heaven.”

LEADER • When I was younger, I didn’t fully understand this story. If you are like I used to be, you may hear about Jesus’ going back to heaven and feel a bit sad—like when you reach the end of a book or movie series that you really enjoy. I used to think that Jesus’ going back to heaven was, in a way, like the end of Jesus’ story. That’s not the truth though!

Jesus’ story didn’t end when He returned to heaven because He sent the Holy Spirit to live within His disciples. **Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission.** The story of God’s loving plan for the world is still going on, even today! Now, when I think about Jesus’ ascension, I don’t feel sad. Instead, I feel excited and overjoyed to know that I get to be a part of the story!

God’s love for the world is incredible. He did not send Jesus to save only people from Israel, but from every nation, tribe, and people group in the entire world.

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus left earth and returned to heaven, but He did not leave us alone. Jesus promised to send

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us do God's work—to teach people everywhere about Jesus so they will trust in Him as their Lord and Savior. One day, Jesus will return to make all things new and to rule as Lord over all.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 27, Session 4” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why Jesus did not stay on earth. Guide them to discuss ways we can live on mission until Jesus returns.

• “Unit 27, Session 4”
Questions from Kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the photos from the “Gospel on the Move” printable. Read the prayer update from the printable.

• “Gospel on the Move”
printable

LEADER • We support missionaries around the world because **Jesus gave His disciples the Great**

Commission. Supporting missionaries is one way that we obey Jesus’ command to make disciples.

We can obey the Great Commission in many ways. We can give money to help missionaries pay for their travels. We can also pray for missionaries and the people they are trying to reach. We can even be a part of the Great Commission when we live on mission in our own communities.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 11:25. Then sing the key passage song.

• Key Passage Poster
• “Live (John 11:25)”
song

LEADER • Jesus did more than just rise from the dead; He completely defeated sin and death so that we, too, can rise from the dead when Jesus returns. If anyone

has faith in Him, she will live even after her physical body dies.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Jesus, Our Savior”
song

LEADER • Jesus is our Savior. He went back to heaven but will return someday to fix everything sin has broken. Let’s worship Him and live for His glory. Sing together “Jesus, Our Savior.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You that Jesus did not leave us alone. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to help us obey Jesus and live on mission. Give us wisdom and courage to be a part of fulfilling the Great Commission. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story