

AUGUST 10, 2025

SERIES 3: LAST THINGS

UNTIL HE COMES

LESSON 3.2

FOCUS VERSE

Acts 1:7

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

LESSON TEXT

Acts 1:4–11

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God has a plan for us in the end time.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will follow God's plan for my life.

Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Lesson Text and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Share a time when you were surprised by an exciting opportunity.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. THE KINGDOM NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

A. The Disciples Misunderstood the Kingdom

» *As you talk to unchurched people, what ideas do they have about what will happen in the future?*

B. The Disciples Asked about the Restoration of Israel

» *What is the most confusing part of prophecy for you? What are you doing to better understand?*

C. Jesus Promised the Holy Spirit Outpouring

» *How has God's Spirit empowered you to witness to others?*

D. I Will Remember God's Plan for Israel

» *Those on the Mount of Olives were a bit confused in their priorities. In what ways do Christians get sidetracked from God's plan for us?*

II. JESUS' PROMISE TO RETURN

A. The Rapture and Second Coming (V)

B. When Jesus Ascended, Angels Promised His Return

C. I Will Witness as I Watch

» *What can you do today to help others be ready for that day when Jesus returns for His church?*

Internalizing the Message (I)

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us to understand His grander plan for us
- For God to help us witness as we watch for His return for us

LESSON CONNECTION

Jameel said, “I will have the large fries with that order, Mr. Franklin.” Mr. Franklin asked the lady at the counter, “And may I have a number seven with large fries, please.” Four minutes later, he picked up their tray, and they headed to an open booth in the fast-food restaurant.

“So, why me?” asked Jameel. “Of all your students, why am I the only one who gets asked to lunch?” “That’s a good question,” Mr. Franklin replied. “I want to talk to you about a special opportunity next fall.” Jameel hoped he made marching band again. He loved playing trumpet and honing his skills for jazz band.

“You are one of the best trumpeters I have ever had in jazz band. Really none better, but I do not want you to do that anymore.” Jameel was crestfallen. He loved music. He loved marching band. He loved jazz band. Mr. Franklin was his hero. “Mr. Franklin, did I do something wrong? Don’t you want to teach me anymore?” Jameel asked.

“You didn’t do anything wrong, but I don’t think I am going to be your teacher this fall.” What was happening? Jameel asked as a tear was forming, “Are you moving away?” Mr. Franklin shook his head. “No. I will still be here. What do you think of going to a charter school starting in the fall semester.” Jameel seemed even more disappointed. “Well, uh . . . you see, Mr. Franklin, my family doesn’t have extra money to spend.”

“But it wouldn’t cost you anything. It’s close to home and they specialize in music. Not only will they help you be the best trumpeter in the city, but you can pick up the keyboard as well and learn a lot about music theory.” Jameel was flattered but he wondered why they would want *him*. Mr. Franklin continued, “I called them about you. The director of the music program is a good friend of mine. If you are interested, you are guaranteed a place. Just about everyone who goes there gets a scholarship to a university after high school. You could probably get a free ride.”

“But what about my other friends in the music program? Can they come too?” Mr. Franklin anticipated his question. “You practice more than any of my other students. You are dedicated to developing the gifts you have. This plan is for you, and it is a good one. Talk to your mom and let me know by Monday.”

“I don’t know anyone there, and you wouldn’t be my teacher. So I don’t think I would like it.” Mr. Franklin answered, “I will personally take you over there and introduce you to everyone. You have my cell number and can call me anytime. I will support you in every way possible. Think about it and let me know by Monday.”

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE KINGDOM NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

A. The Disciples Misunderstood the Kingdom

After Jesus rose from the grave, the disciples were excited about their future. Like Jameel, they were looking forward to life as they

understood it, yet God was planning something else that was not part of their lived experience. They remembered bits and pieces about Jesus' promise for the future, but as they thought about how things should come to pass, their concept of God's timing was really tangled.

In some ways we can hardly blame the disciples because life was moving quite fast. Acts 1:3 explains Jesus showed Himself alive after His suffering on the cross and His resurrection "by many infallible proofs." He miraculously appeared to them; no less than ten of these appearances are recorded in Scripture. Paul recorded one list and mentioned Jesus appeared sometimes to individuals and sometimes to groups (I Corinthians 15:4–6). His sudden appearance behind closed doors was nothing short of miraculous. On more than one occasion when Jesus appeared, His followers did not recognize Him right away. Somehow He was at one moment unknown and then suddenly understood in a way they never expected.

As you talk to unchurched people, what ideas do they have about what will happen in the future?

We do not know all the specifics about miracles Jesus might have worked, but we do know some of them. He not only provided a fish fry, but He reprised the miracle of a multitude of fish appearing in Peter's net. Jesus could appear in the evening, morning, or at twilight. Nothing prevented His appearance. And He spoke often about the kingdom of God, but what He said was hard to grasp since He often spoke in parables.

It did not help that His audience was bound by some of the same preconceptions of the future that Jews generally had. At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people had a general timeline of the future in their minds. There was the present age and the age to come. For the Jews, the coming age was the same as the kingdom of God, and they had a lot of preconceptions about it. No doubt that is why they asked Jesus when He was going to establish His kingdom. The issue was not that Jesus wasn't teaching them, it was just that it was . . . well, all so new.

B. The Disciples Asked about the Restoration of Israel

At this point one of the disciples asked Jesus a question, proving the disciples were still clueless. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). On one level, their confusion is understandable. There are indeed incredible prophecies about the Messiah and the kingdom of God. Isaiah spoke of a future time when Israel will live in peace and prosperity. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

Moreover, Jesus Himself indicated the apostles would be involved in leading such a kingdom. So real was this promise to them that the mother of James and John asked Jesus whether it would be possible for one son to sit on Jesus' right side and the other to sit on His left side in the kingdom of God (Matthew 20:20–22). Indeed, a similar promise is given to us in the church (Revelation 1:6; 2:26).

What is the most confusing part of prophecy for you? What are you doing to better understand?

C. Jesus' Promised the Holy Spirit Outpouring

While many of those promises are for later, this promise was for now. Right before Jesus' ascension on the Mount of Olives, He gave His followers an immediate command to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). He then gave a more specific time frame: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). In just a few days, Jesus would fill them all with His Holy Spirit.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus wanted His closest to be concerned about one thing. Concerning Israel and the kingdom, He taught: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). This should not have been their immediate concern. Jesus then explained what should be their focus. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of

the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In our opening story, Jameel was not sure he wanted special treatment from Mr. Franklin. He was concerned about his classmates. Mr. Franklin told him, in so many words, this was not really his concern. That did not mean Jameel should not remain friends with them or care about them. Likewise, Jesus wanted His disciples to be concerned about a singular focus: wait for the Holy Ghost.

We learn more about the future of the Jewish people in the epistles, especially Romans 9–11. We learn more about the Kingdom age in the Book of Revelation. John told of a thousand-year period when Satan will be bound, when there will be peace on earth, and so on. There is good reason to believe that in the Great Tribulation prior to this subsequent Kingdom age, the Jewish people will discover Jesus really is their Messiah and will become part of the kingdom of God.

How has God’s Spirit empowered you to witness to others?

D. I Will Remember God’s Plan for Israel

The disciples were all about the nation of Israel, but we as Christians can have the opposite problem when it comes to the Jewish people. We might wrongly think God has no future plans for them or has forgotten Israel. Perhaps He has simply judged them for rejecting Him, or maybe He has replaced Israel with the church. But none of these scenarios are true. In the Book of Acts, God did not abandon the Jewish people and turn from them. On the Day of Pentecost, Jewish people were the first to receive the Holy Ghost. The apostles did not abandon the Temple or despise Jewish customs.

Yet the promise of the Holy Ghost extended beyond the Jews and was opened to the Gentiles. Right before Jesus ascended, He promised the gospel would travel through their witness throughout all Judea, to the Samaritans, and ultimately, “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Peter likewise promised the Holy Spirit would not only be poured out on the recipients on the Day of Pentecost and on their children, but to “all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). Now entrance in the kingdom of God does not come from keeping Jewish law; it comes through the gospel.

Those on the Mount of Olives were a bit confused in their priorities. In what ways do Christians get sidetracked from God’s plan for us?

II. JESUS’ PROMISE TO RETURN

A. The Rapture and Second Coming

Throughout the Bible, we read of the Messiah’s coming. Certainly God came in flesh in Bethlehem to redeem us from our sins. Scholars consider that His first coming, but what of the Rapture and the Second Coming? Although neither of those terms are explicitly found in Scripture, both of those world-changing events are referenced all throughout. Varied views abound, but the Rapture and the Second Coming refer to different events and for different reasons. The disciples appeared to have no knowledge of the Rapture, or the catching away of the church, so Jesus likely referred to His Second Coming to earth during His Olivet Discourse.

However, the church is looking forward to His appearing in the clouds. Paul beautifully wrote of it in I Thessalonians 4:16–18:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

In the Rapture, Jesus will come in the air to catch away His church, and we will meet Him in the clouds. In the Second Coming—which we read in detail in Revelation 19—Jesus will come to the earth to fight for Israel and defeat the Antichrist and his armies before Jesus sets up His physical reign on earth. John wrote of Jesus’ Second Coming to earth in Revelation 1:7: “every eye shall see him” on that day, and what a day that will be.

Teacher Option: *A supplemental video is available in the Resource Kit. (V)*

B. When Jesus Ascended, Angels Promised His Return

Immediately after Jesus told those on the Mount of Olives they would be witnesses once they were filled with the Holy Ghost, something amazing happened. The Bible declares: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). We do not know how much warning the group had before they saw Jesus ascend that day, but the language is sudden; it seems the group was bewildered as they looked skyward. Still, God had an additional promise for them. The narrative continues, “And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10–11).

C. I Will Witness as I Watch

The words of Jesus on the Mount of Olives were not simply an instruction to those present then. We are part of the group that has been filled with the Holy Spirit. By personal experience, we can testify that Jesus is indeed risen from the dead, He is alive, and He is alive in us.

Jesus’ resurrection brims with another application for us as well. Just as Jesus ascended into Heaven, He will likewise return in the same way. He is coming for His people. He is coming in the clouds for His church; He is coming to the earth to fight for His people, Israel. His return is our blessed hope, and until He returns, we live as witnesses to others about Him. Let us share the gospel with them. Share our testimonies with them. Share our lives with them, and by God’s grace, go to Heaven with them.

What can you do today to help others be ready for that day when Jesus returns for His church?

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

A supplemental image is available in the Resource Kit. (I)

In their book, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches*, Peter Greer and Chris Horst warn against “mission drift.” They insist it is something leaders, charities, and even churches face. Most often in the beginning of a new venture, the mission was clear. It was stated, internalized, and overtly part of the culture. Yet over the course of time, things change. It is similar to someone sailing a great distance but not checking the compass; or someone driving along the highway, not quite paying attention, and drifting into another lane. It usually happens little by little.

Mission drift is even more marked when it has to do with values. It is possible for individuals or churches to forget why they do what they do, what they define as success, and what they define as failure. It is quite possible even to forget why we exist. It happened in Atlanta. A man there was thumbing through the yellow pages and found on the outskirts of the city a restaurant called the “Church of God Grill.” Curiosity got the better of him and he made his way there. It was in a poorer section of town, and the restaurant was a bit run down in appearance. But the parking lot was full, which was a good sign.

The man asked someone in line if the food was good. “Best barbeque chicken in Georgia,” came the response. Sure enough, the food was delicious, and the ambiance was wonderful. While the outside looked like an old country church, the inside had booths where he sat on what appeared to be shortened pews.

“What’s the story on this restaurant?” he asked a gentleman who seemed to be in charge. “I’ve been here since the beginning,” the man responded. “This wasn’t always a restaurant. It was a mission. To pay the bills, we started selling chicken dinners after the Sunday service. It was a big hit and helped a lot financially. But in order to have enough time to fill orders, we cut back on the church

services. Attendance dwindled while the demand for barbequed chicken increased. After a bit we closed the church, but we kept the chicken dinners coming. That is why we call the restaurant ‘Church of God Grill.’”

Jesus told the disciples their mission. After they were filled with the Spirit in Jerusalem, they were to do two things. First, they were to witness. Second, they were to watch for His return. And witness they did. First in Jerusalem, and then when persecution came, they witnessed throughout Judaea and Samaria and then to the rest of the Mediterranean world.

They never stopped watching for Jesus’ return nor measuring the mission of their lives by the directives of Jesus. Those directives have not changed from their day to ours. We are called to witness and to watch. Let us live this day with that glorious day in our view.

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us to understand His grander plan for us
- For God to help us witness as we watch for His return for us