

Hermeneutics: Breaking Down a Passage
Acts 1:8

Understanding a biblical passage is vital to your faith. If you do not observe the details of the passage well, you will arrive to an inaccurate interpretation, which will affect the application of God’s word in your life. Here is an example of breaking down a passage to enable a good observation of the text and understanding of the passage. Acts 1:8 is the focus of the study; but, Acts 1:6-7 is included for some context.

6) So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7) He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:6-8, ESV)

But

you will receive power

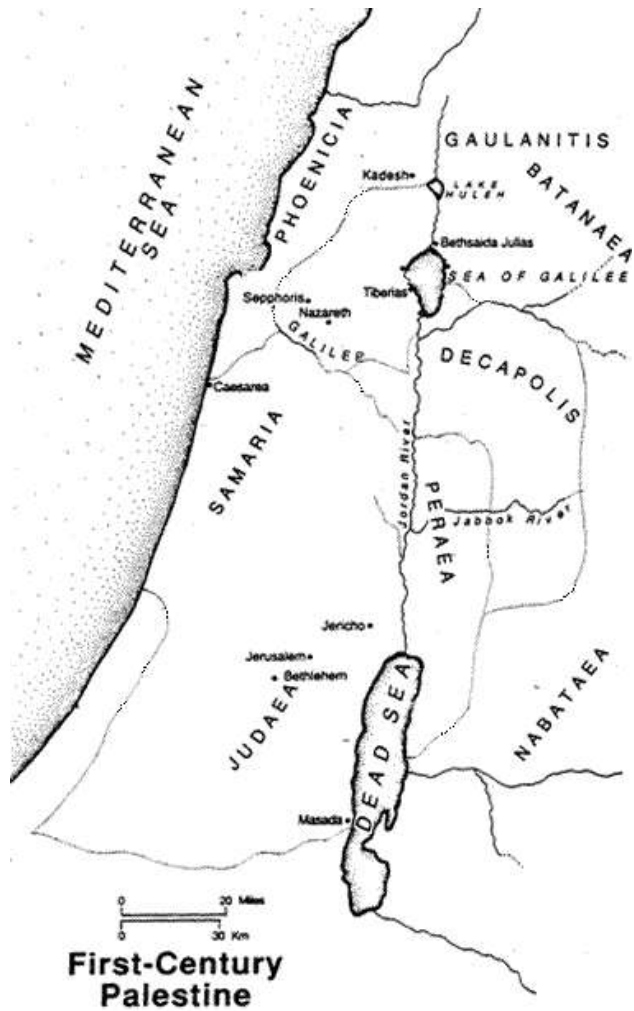
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Teacher Notes

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In this exercise, divide the class into small groups that work together on the terms and conjugations. Encourage their observation of the passage by asking questions. After some time, have the groups come together to share their observations.

But

This conjugation suggests a contrast. It forces the reader to see what was said earlier. The disciples were wondering when Jesus was going to restore the kingdom of God soon. The conjugation "but" indicates that the answer is no and that they have work to do.

you will receive power

What kind of power is this? Is this political power? Military power? Supernatural power?

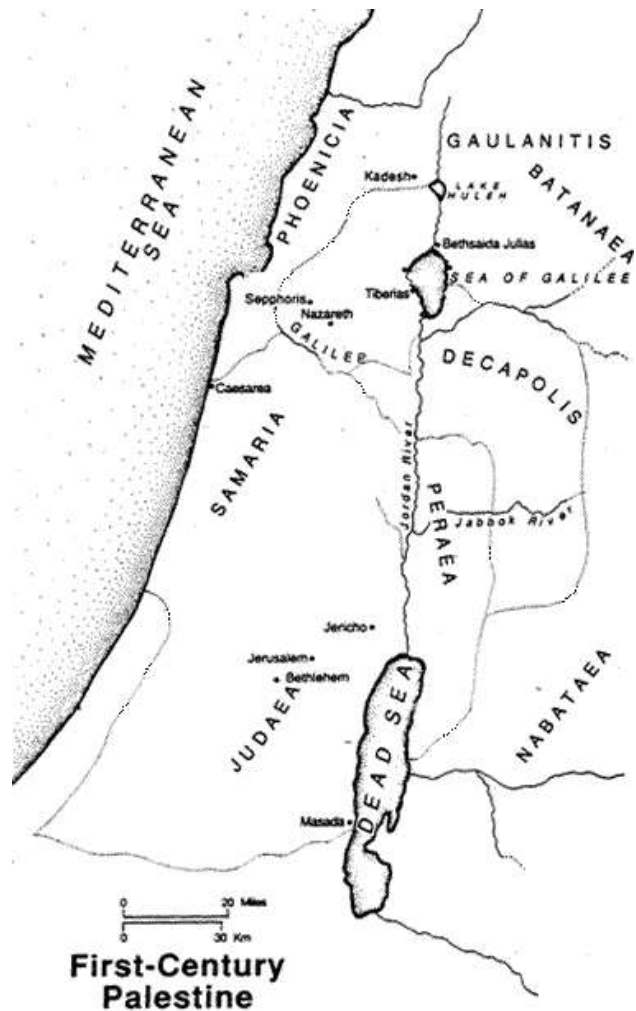
Did the disciples ever receive any power? Matthew 10 records when the disciples received the authority over unclean spirits and to heal every disease and affliction. It's likely they knew this was supernatural.

when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,

"When" indicates when the disciples receive power. Could this be familiar to the disciples?

During the Last Supper, Jesus said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:20)

For the Old Testament Believer, the New Covenant was introduced by the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah who spoke of God bestowing the Holy Spirit in the Believer (Ezek 36:25-28; Isa 59:21)



and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem

Encourage the student to understand the geography of the biblical passage by using a Bible atlas. Jerusalem is a city.

and in all Judea

Jerusalem is a city in the region of Judea and is the southern part of Israel.

and Samaria

What is known about Samaria? Consider using a Bible dictionary!

Samaria is the region next to Judea. When the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom Israel (2 Ki 17:24), they brought in foreigners from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim who intermarried with Jews left in Samaria. This caused a widespread worship of foreign gods and strained the relationship between Jews and Samaritans (Luke 9:52-54; 10:25-37). Jews would avoid and bypass Samaria by crossing the Jordan river when they traveled between Judea and Galilee.

and to the end of the earth.

Do you notice some sort of geographical progression? How would you summarize this progression?

Jesus directed the disciples to start their witness at home, then their local region, including the undesirable parts, and then the world.