



“Ready, Set, Wait!”

Acts 1:1-11

6/8/2025

Speaker: Pastor Drew Hunsley

Anaheim Hills, CA | RockCC.com

20:59

All Right. Hopefully you've already taken care of this. But if you are new or you have been sleeping over the last couple of weeks or whatever it might be, we are jumping into the book of Acts this week. And if you didn't grab your scripture journal, I'm going to stand here and just stall for about 30 seconds while you run into the bookstore and grab your book and make it back in here. So, we are jumping into Acts, chapter 1, verse 1, this morning. And as we do so, we are picking up a story that left off at the end of the Gospel of Luke. So, doctor, Luke is the same author between the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. And Luke ends the story of that Gospel of Luke.

21:41

He ends it with kind of talking about the end of Jesus life and his return to heaven. The story of Luke tells us stories about Jesus' life and ministry and resurrection. It tells us about the appearances that he made to some of his followers in the days following his resurrection. But he kind of leaves off with this statement that Jesus had given the disciples an instruction and then he had returned to heaven. And so, as we pick up the story in Acts, he gives us just a little bit of overlap. He gives us a summary of the 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and his departure. And then he gives us Jesus final words, Jesus final statement before he departs from the earth and returns to heaven, returns to the presence of the Father.

22:32

And in this story, in this passage that we're going to look at this morning, we are going to be quickly introduced to a key character, really the key character who plays the primary role in the book of Acts, because the Holy Spirit is the power by which all of the incredible miracles, all of the incredible feats that happen throughout the book of Acts, he is the one who supplies the power for all of those things to happen. We make it all the way to verse 2 before we see the Holy Spirit show up. And then the Holy Spirit is going to be mentioned and promised a little bit further down in verse 5 and in verse 8 in our passage this morning.

23:09

So we're going to get started this morning by reading through our passage together, and we're going to look at where we're heading, and then we're going to go back and kind of pick

it apart a little bit. So, if you have your Bible, you've made your way to Acts chapter 1, I want to invite you to read verse 1 through verse 11 with me. I'll read and you can follow along in your copy or on the screens. Acts, chapter 1, it begins it says in the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

23:45

And he presented himself alive to them after his suffering, by many proofs appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, you have heard from me. For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. And so when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said to them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

24:27

And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. When he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. These are the words of the Lord. Would you pray with me, Church as we get started. God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the privilege of being able to dive into a new book.

25:07

As we get to examine more clearly these early beginnings of the church as the Holy Spirit was working in powerful and incredible ways. God, such a special and significant time in history. God, so instructive for us as we consider the book of Acts. So, as we dive in this morning, as we get started with this first passage, we pray that you would speak. God, that you would give us ears to hear what you have to say. And God, that you would use your word to convict us, to challenge us, and to call us to obedience. We give this time to you. We pray that you would use it. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen. All right.

25:46

Well, as we dive into our passage, what we're going to see, the first little section in verses 1 through 5, is Jesus is essentially preparing the troops. As we pick up the story in Acts, we see Luke's summary of what he's written about up to this point. In the first two verses, he addresses Theophilus and he talks about the first book that he had written, Luke to Theophilus. And so the book here in Acts is addressed to this man. This is really all we know of Theophilus, is that he was the one who received Luke's writing in the Gospel of Luke and now again in the Acts of the Apostles. And so he's the same recipient. It seems possible. Some people have kind of speculated that Theophilus may have been some sort of a benefactor or a supporter of Luke's work and ministry.

26:34

While he would have been called out like this, but that's not specified. All we really know is that Luke addresses these letters to him and says, Theophilus, pay attention, right? Everybody loves being called out in church, right? If I were to start looking around and

saying, Nick, pay attention, Andrew, pay attention, people are going to start getting nervous and kind of stop paying. There's no eye contact. That comes when you start calling people's names out, right? So Theophilus is the recipient of this letter. But in verses 1 and 2, we see the events that are being described here. They're talking about the Gospel of Luke. They're describing all that Jesus did as he passed along his commands and his teaching.

27:14

It says, in the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. Continues in verse 3. And it tells us that Jesus presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs appearing to them during the 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God. This is essentially a summary of Jesus post resurrection ministry. Jesus spent 40 days between the time that he was crucified, and he was resurrected. On that Easter Sunday. We see that Jesus spent 40 days showing up and walking around and being seen and talking with people and sharing with his disciples, his followers. He was proving to them that he really had come back to life.

28:08

He presented himself as alive by many proofs. You may think of, I think of the story of Thomas, right? Everybody loves Thomas, Doubting Thomas, as some people affectionately refer to him. He was the one that said, I won't believe that Jesus has been resurrected until I can see him with my own eyes, until I can stick my fingers in the holes in his hands and his side. Thomas didn't believe that Jesus had been resurrected, but Jesus spent these 40 days walking around and revealing that he truly had come back to life, that he really was who he said he was, that he really had done what he had said he had done. It tells us in verse 3 that Jesus presented himself alive by many proofs.

28:52

He was giving them evidence that the resurrection was true, that he really was who he said he was. But in Luke chapter 24 we have a clear story describing what Jesus was doing as he was presenting himself to them. We see in Luke 24, in the final pages of Luke's first letter, Jesus appears to two men on the day of his resurrection. These men were on their way. They were walking on the road heading to the town of Emmaus. And Jesus shows up and appears next to them. And it tells us that Jesus teaches them about how the prophecies and the Old Testament scriptures, how all of the Old Testament was pointing to him. Luke 24. Let me read just a few verses. Verses 25 through 27, it says that Jesus said to these men he was walking with.

29:42

O foolish ones and slow of heart. To believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He, Jesus interpreted to these men and all the scriptures the things that were concerning himself. He was telling them that everything that had led them to this point, that it was all about him, that it was all fulfilled in him. Now I understand how egocentric and narcissistic that sounds, right? Everything was about me. I've heard some people tell me that before. You probably met some of those same people. Everything's about me, right? Well, Jesus is saying it and it's actually true. Everything was about him.

30:25

All of the prophecies, all of the signs, even the sacrificial system that the Jews had been practicing for generation after generation, that animals must be killed so that sin could be

forgiven, that even the sacrificial system from their forefathers, everything pointed to Jesus. Everything pointed to that moment when Jesus would lay down his life at Calvary and would usher in a new era in human history. Luke 24, verse 45, it even tells us that Jesus opened the disciples' minds to understand these same things that the scriptures had been pointing to him. In Luke 24 verse 45 it says that Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and it continues on to talk about how Jesus taught them in these different areas. This is what Jesus was doing in the days between his resurrection and now...

31:21

We pick up the story 40 days later as we are at the day of his departure. Jesus was preparing them for life without him. These men had spent the last three or so years of their lives following Jesus, hanging on his every word, everything that Jesus did, everywhere that Jesus went, these men were just following along like little ducklings, just listening, watching, waiting. What was Jesus going to do next? Tells us that these 40 days that Jesus spent with them, he was preparing them for life without him. And 40 days is actually a fairly common time of preparation. We see this same amount of time at other places in Scripture.

32:04

You may remember back in the book of Exodus, Moses spent 40 days on the mountain on Mount Sinai, receiving the law and being prepared to go down the mountain and to lead God's people, the nation of Israel. You may remember in 1 Kings, chapter 19, there was a prophet named Elijah who spent 40 days of his journey. He went to Horeb and he prepared for continued ministry as he spent 40 days away in preparation. You may remember at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, In Luke, chapter 4, Jesus spent 40 days right before he began his earthly ministry. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, fasting and preparing himself for what God had for him to do. Jesus is preparing the disciples here in these 40 days.

32:53

He was teaching them, speaking to them about how the kingdom of God was going to come, how the kingdom was going to be ushered in, and how Jesus was the foundation that all of this was going to be built upon. He was giving them the mission to go out and to establish his kingdom. And he's telling them, guys, the ministry, the work that you've been prepared to do, it's about to begin. There's more to come on that in verse 8. We continue through our passage. In verses 4 and 5, it tells us that while they were staying together, while Jesus was staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, you heard from me.

33:37

For John baptized with water, John the Baptist, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. In these verses, Jesus issues a direct command to his disciples. He tells them, stay in Jerusalem. You don't get to go anywhere. You're not going to do anything until the Holy Spirit shows up and empowers you for the work that I have for you to do. So they waited. Says it was probably about 10 days that they sit around. And Jesus tells them, just stay here. Wait, help is on the way. It kind of reminded me of an old Robin Williams movie, right? Help is on the way, dearie. As he runs across the restaurant. Anybody remembers that? Just, I don't know. That's just a Fun. That's what was in my head this week. I don't know. Sorry. Help is on the way.

34:27

Jesus is telling the disciples, just wait here. Help is coming. I have to imagine that this wait, it

felt like it took forever for these disciples. Does anybody remember what Christmas Eve felt like when you were a kid? How just those few hours of we have to fall asleep so that Christmas morning will come and you just got to go to sleep, right? But you lay there staring at the ceiling, counting dots on the ceiling or marks on the wall or whatever it might be. It felt like it took forever for Christmas Eve to pass. It felt like weeks for that one day to pass, right? We're so excited about something that we just can't wait. And it feels like time just crawls on. These disciples had to patiently wait. Jesus tells them, just stay here in Jerusalem. Stay here and wait.

35:18

Help is on the way. The disciples had to patiently wait. And by doing so, they were acknowledging, but maybe explicitly, but certainly implied as we see them pausing and waiting. God had given them work to do. Jesus had told them, this is the mission that you're going to be about. And he is going to tell them a little more clearly in just a couple of verses. But you're going to go and you're going to take the news of the gospel, you're going to take news of the resurrection out into the world, but don't go yet. You have to wait here. And by waiting, they were essentially, they were acknowledging their need. They were acknowledging the fact that they weren't capable of going and doing this on their own. They needed the helper that Jesus had promised them.

36:03

They obeyed the command of Jesus, and by doing so, they were preparing to be obedient in everything that Jesus had given them. So Jesus is preparing the troops in verses 1 through 5. Now in verses 6 through 8, we see some men who were commissioned for the mission. Verse 6, we see Jesus was with the disciples in these final moments. And the disciples asked Jesus what is actually a fairly reasonable question. Verse 6, it says, when they had come together, the disciples asked Jesus, lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Jesus doesn't rebuke them in their question about the restoration of the kingdom.

36:46

It seems like a reasonable question to me because over the last 40 days, it tells us that Jesus had spent 40 days talking to them about the kingdom of God, telling them what the kingdom was going to be like, how it was going to come, and how the pieces were going to fit together. Jesus had spent all this time talking about how his death and resurrection changed the status quo. And so, to me, their question seems reasonable. But Jesus redirects their misunderstanding of this topic. Because it seems likely to me that these men probably still assume the same assumptions that we saw from them weeks earlier, months earlier, as they were focused on how Jesus coming, the coming of the Messiah, what was that going to look like? They assumed that the Romans were going to be overthrown.

37:36

They assumed that the Jews were going to be restored to power in the region, that they were going to establish an earthly kingdom like they had seen from David and the other kings that had come in generations past. They were focused on national Israel, but the kingdom of God is not just focused on national Israel. The people of God and the kingdom of God refers to the Lord's reign and rule. And that includes all regions, that includes all people groups, that includes people from every tribe and every nation and every tongue. This is not about a localized group of people with borders and political hierarchy and all those types of things. The kingdom is established in the lives of men and women who know and follow King Jesus through the power of the gospel.

38:30

This is what the kingdom was going to be, and this is what Jesus was trying to tell them. But the disciples still have this misunderstanding. Jesus now is it time for us to pick up our swords and to fight. The disciple's focus was on the consummation. It was on the completion of this process, the consummation of the kingdom, the victory that they had been waiting for. But they're misfiring because they're thinking of this as a decisive event. The kingdom is coming. That means that everything is going to be done and the book is going to be closed. But the kingdom, Jesus is telling them, is in the process of being restored, that it is going to continue to spread, that the news of Jesus kingdom is going to reach the corners of the world. But they didn't fully understand that yet.

39:21

That's going to be outlined as Jesus continues to answer in verses 7 and 8. Because in verse 7 we see the only pointed correction that Jesus actually does offer them. And he pointedly tells them regarding their desire to know the day and the time of the consummation of the kingdom. Jesus is today the day. In verse 7, he looks at them and says, it's not for you to know the time or the season that the Father has fixed by his own authority. Telling them, you don't get to know that we are beginning the process of the kingdom coming, but you don't get to know the day that process is completed. Can I just use this as a brief reminder for you, because I...

40:02

I've not lived for quite as long as some people have, but I have seen time after time after time, people make these estimations, they make these predictions. And whenever you see someone, hear someone talking on the radio or TV or whatever it might be, someone who has figured it out regarding the return of Christ and the end of days, can I just assure you of one thing? You can disregard that. Because there is one thing that we know for sure when we hear that whatever day that is that they're predicting, I always remember the one from 10, 15 years ago. Because they predicted May 21st was the day that the world was going to end. That was my birthday, so I remember that date specifically. If you're late in getting me my present, that's okay. We accept late presents.

40:47

But whenever you see someone like that says, today is the day, we figured it. They were hanging billboards and stuff, right? But we know that if they have made that prediction, that definitely is not going to be the day. That's the one thing that we can know for sure. Matthew 24:36. Jesus talking about this, he says, concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. So whenever you hear someone, whether it's John Hagee, whether it's Harold Camping, whether it's Pat Robertson, I looked this up. There's a long list of names that I could have read. All the people that said, I figured it out. This is the day.

41:27

Whenever one of those guys declare that they have figured it out and determined the day that Jesus is going to return, they might even hang up billboards, right? Anybody recognize that? You can disregard it and just get back to work, right? Jesus has given us some instructions. And, by the way, bonus billboard that I found for you. After that billboard came down, somebody decided to take out another one that simply said, well, that was awkward. And then reminds everybody of, no one knows the day and no one knows the hour. I got a chuckle out of that as I was searching, so I figured I'd include that one in there for you. But

the point of this whole passage is in verse 8.

42:06

As we come to verse 8 now, Jesus turns their attention not to knowing the day or the hour, not to knowing the specifics and the details of when it's going to happen. But Jesus turns their attention to the mission at hand. Because in verse 8, he says, guys, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Jesus commanded the disciples to be his witnesses. That's a term that word witnesses is used almost 40 times in the book of Acts. So, what does that mean? What does it mean to be a witness? Right. Christians talk about witnessing often, but what does that actually mean?

42:53

Well, a witness is simply defined as seeing an event take place or someone having knowledge of from personal observation or experience. That's how Oxford Languages simply defines what a witness is. These men are tasked with the responsibility of being witnesses, of sharing what they have experienced in Jesus' life, in Jesus' ministry, in his teaching, in his death and his resurrection, what they have seen and heard and experienced with their own senses. Jesus is telling them, go and tell others what you have seen.

43:32

We make witnessing as Christians, we make witnessing out to be such a huge overwhelming task that it terrifies us that we look at this in our own minds and we think that we have to learn some new method that if I don't memorize these six steps, I can't go tell someone about Jesus because I'm going to forget one of them and then they're going to go to hell and it's all going to be my fault. We have to say everything just right. That's kind of what runs through our minds. As I have conversations with people, as I myself look at having these conversations, I get nervous and I think, well, I have to do everything just right.

44:11

But the point of being a witness, as Jesus is commanding here, is simply to go and to share all that God has done in your life, all that you have seen and heard and experienced of Him. Being a witness is possible when you are regularly engaging with the Lord in your daily life. Someone who hasn't seen or heard or experienced Jesus isn't able to go and to be a witness because you don't have those details for yourself. If you ask me to come and to share my experience as a witness of some event that happened, tell us your personal experiences of what it was like living through World War II, I don't know. I don't have any of those experiences. Right. We can't witness to something that we don't know that we haven't experienced.

44:59

But if you ask me what was it like the day that you got married, I can tell you all about it. It I can tell you all about the details of where were and what happened and what things were going on during that day. What the problems were that arose because everybody's got problems that pop up on the morning of the wedding, right? I can tell you all about those things because I was there, because I personally experienced it. That was. That was my life. That was my experience that I got to witness firsthand. Being a witness for Jesus is possible when we are regularly engaging with him, and we spend time with Him. Beyond regularly engaging with Him. There is also one other really, really important element of this whole command that Jesus gives us in this task of witnessing.

45:48

Where does verse 8 say that the power to witness comes from? Verse 8. Let's read it again. Says that you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He says you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. This is not a task for us to muscle up and to take on our own. Right? It doesn't matter how broad your shoulders are. It doesn't matter how tough you think you are. The pull yourself up by your bootstraps type guy. We still can't accomplish this on our own. This is not a task for you to take on in your own strength. The men who. Let's just take a step back for a minute, right? The men who walked with Jesus.

46:35

The men who knew whether or not Jesus snored. The men who knew what type of fish Jesus liked the most. The men who spent all of their life with him for these three years. Those men were not prepared to go out and to do this in their own strength. Jesus looks at them and he says, no, no, guys, here's the job that you're going to do. But wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes. But for some reason, some of us think, I can't do that. Of course not. Right? Of course you can't. If they couldn't. Of course I can't. Of course you can't. We're not strong enough. We are not capable of doing this in our own power, in our own strength. The disciples weren't capable of completing this mission on their own.

47:20

Seems like we would be wise to remember that we are incapable of doing the job on our own as well. The Spirit is the power source for the entire book of Acts. All of the incredible things that we're going to see happen, the miracles that we see take place. The spreading of the Gospel from this small little ragtag group of guys that was hiding in a room in Jerusalem just a few weeks earlier is going to go and turn the world upside down. It's not because the fishermen were well trained. It's not because the tax collector had some powerful influence that he was going to go and exert. The Holy Spirit is the power source for the entire book of Acts.

48:04

While we're going to see some isolated events, some non-reproducible events happen in this historical account in the book of Acts, telling us about a specific time in history when God was doing some incredible things. It's important for us to remember that the same power that is available to the disciples in the book of Acts, the same God who was at work then is at work in us and is at work all around us. God hasn't changed. The power that was available to them is the power that is available to us. And God is able to accomplish the same things today that he was able to accomplish back then. God is at work.

48:46

And the same power that lives inside of those who believe and follow Jesus today is the same power that resides in Peter and John and Paul and the others that we're going to read about in this book. You know, thinking about this idea of going and witnessing in our own strength reminded me of a story of George Whitefield. George Whitefield was a British minister who lived in the 1700s. He played a key role in the First Great Awakening. The story is told that George Whitefield would go through town and he would wake everyone up screaming and hollering at and banging on doors. He wanted to wake people up so that they could come hear him preach at 5am we're going to start that new ministry next week. But this morning it was 9am, right?

49:35

Whitefield's going through town just making a racket, calling people to come and to listen to him preach. On this one morning there was a man named David Hume. Hume was a Scottish philosopher. He was a skeptic. He didn't buy in. But he was seen waking up and heading to go hear Whitefield preach one morning. And there was another man aware of who Hume was, aware of his skepticism, aware of his beliefs, sees him going to hear George Whitefield and this man approaches Hume and he comments, I thought you didn't believe in the gospel. And Hume's response to the man was, I don't, but he does. There was something compelling about George Whitefield and it was his passion for the gospel.

50:23

It was the fact that he cared so deeply about what he was saying that people wanted to come and listen even though it didn't make any sense to them. The power of the gospel goes in spite of human logic, in spite of reason, in spite of all of these things that can get in the way. Whitefield's passion and conviction compelled Hume to get up early and to come and listen. That compelling case wasn't made by logic. It wasn't made by sound arguments. Whitefield was a man who knew what he believed and he played his role as a witness with compelling passion. He would not be held back. But those types of moments are not accomplished by someone just putting together a really well reasoned argument. There's a line where hard work gets us to. And then we're just stuck Christians. We are limited.

51:23

We are utterly incapable of accomplishing anything of spiritual, eternal significance apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. In those moments, I can stand here and preach the best message that I have ever preached and it can fall on deaf ears. If the Holy Spirit is not at work in your heart and your mind, causing you to be convicted to receive the truth of the gospel. If you're not receptive through the power of the Holy Spirit, it doesn't matter what I say, or it doesn't matter what you say to someone else. If the Holy Spirit is not at work, you're not going to accomplish what you set out and want to accomplish. The Holy Spirit is the essential cog in this whole conversation. So, what was the mission that Jesus was giving these disciples to do?

52:08

He tells them to be witnesses and to take the news of Jesus' life and Jesus' teachings and his death and his resurrection. He tells them to take the Word, and he starts to draw these concentric circles that are going out from where they were located in Jerusalem. He tells them to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes. But then he tells them that you will be witnesses in Jerusalem. That was the city where they were located. That was their local context. The city where Jesus was crucified. The city where so many of Jesus' miracles and his teachings had taken place. This was local. We need to take the gospel across the street. He tells them that you will be my witnesses in Judea and Samaria. The circles start to go out a little bit further. Judea was their, it was their social. Right.

53:02

It was their territory that was surrounding Jerusalem. Kind of a somewhat local context, but not exactly across the street. It was the southern tribes of Israel. Samaria is going out a little bit further. If you remember your ancient Israeli geography, you'll remember the northern tribes and the southern tribes, right? The northern tribes and the southern tribes were separated by a region called Samaria. We're essentially talking about central California here. Right. We're working our way out. The circles are getting a little bit bigger. So, Samaria is. He's telling them, no, the gospel is going to continue to spread, not just across the street, not

just SoCal, but the message is going to go. And we're even going to start working our way up towards the weird people in Northern California. Right. Sorry. If we've got any Northern Cal people in the room.

53:54

Then he says, you're going to be my witnesses even to the ends of the earth, to the surrounding countries and even parts of the world that they didn't know existed yet. Right, that's us. Places that they didn't know were even there. The message of the gospel is going to go forth road after road, town after town, county after county, city after city, state after state, country after country. The message of the gospel was going to go forth. This expanding witness is essentially the outline that we're going to see throughout the book of Acts. Right. The first 7 chapters tell us about the ministry that's happening in Jerusalem. Then some really interesting events. Persecution steps in and causes the Christians to scatter out of Jerusalem. And so, we start to see Judea and Samaria and then Paul's missionary journeys.

54:43

He's taking the message of the gospel even to the ends of the earth. That's the outline that we see in the book of Acts. And with that, Jesus has given them the mission. Jesus' work here is done. And so off he goes. Verses 9 through 11, up and away. Verse 9. Having accomplished the work that the Father had given Jesus to do, it tells us in verse 9 that Jesus returned to heaven. Verse 9 it says that when Jesus had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. Seems relatively straightforward, doesn't it? Jesus gave the disciples their marching orders, and then in a moment he leaves them, flies away in a cloud takes him from their sight. Don't miss the detail there.

55:37

I want to remind you, back in the book of Exodus, as the nation of Israel was rescued from Egypt, they take off running as slaves. What was it that was leading them through the wilderness? It was a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud during the day. God's presence was symbolized by the cloud that was leading the nation of Israel. When the cloud would stop in a specific location, would set down camp. That's where the Israelites were to set up the tabernacle. They were to set up camp and to stay there in the presence of God. That was symbolized by this cloud. In Isaiah's vision further on in the Old Testament, we see this picture. He has this vision of God entering in and filling the temple with his presence. And how does it describe God coming and entering in?

56:26

There was a cloud of smoke that entered into the temple as Isaiah found himself in the presence of God. As Jesus is taken away from the presence of the disciples in this moment, he's taken away from them, and he's taken into a cloud. He's taken into the presence of God. Verse 9 tells us that up and away Jesus goes. As he said these things, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. Verses 10 and 11. Now we have these two kind of understated but essential verses in this passage. Really valuable here. Let me read these verses. Verses 10 and 11. It says, while they were gazing, the disciples gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes. They said, men of Galilee. Why do you stand looking into heaven?

57:13

This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw

him go into heaven. The disciples are just standing there staring. You see him still? Anybody ever watched a balloon fly away? Right. It's kind of an interesting, fascinating thing. You watch it and watch, and eventually it's just gone, right? Guess we got a cloud that came by and took Jesus somewhere in this process. But they're standing there staring at the sky, trying to figure out where did Jesus go? And all of a sudden, at the end of the line, they're all standing there watching, and all of a sudden they're looking up and these two angels are standing there next to them. They rebuke them. Why are you standing here looking at the sky? He's coming back.

57:59

They don't describe when, they don't describe how, they don't describe any of the details of what's going to surround Jesus's return. The message is simple that these angels give to the disciples, but the implications of that message are profound. And say, Jesus is coming back. You won't know when, you won't know where, but he is coming, and you should be prepared. Don't just stand there staring at the sky until he comes back. Get to work. There's this understated, kind of unstated, but implied statement of why are you standing there looking into heaven? Jesus just told you to go and to be his witnesses. Why are you just standing here staring at the sky? Get to work. There was no extensive teaching offered by these angels, but there is a simple correction that's offered.

58:50

Don't just stand there, looking forward to Jesus' return is an understandable, even appropriate response for the Christian. We should be excited at the fact that Jesus is going to return one day. We should be excited that all these people's wrongs, all the ugly, all the evil that we see in the world, that all of those things are going to be made right. It is a good thing for us to look forward to Jesus' return. But if we simply sit here putting up billboards and looking to the sky and not doing anything but just standing here staring, is today the day? No, not today. You think it's tomorrow? I don't know. Let's just stand here staring, right? If that's the posture in our Christianity, we have missed the mission.

59:40

The point of this is not that they would just stand there and wait for Jesus to return. We cannot, as Christians, just simply stand around staring at the sky like these disciples were. The remainder of the book of Acts shows us a collection of stories. Christians who are motivated and empowered to change the world. While the return of Christ is certainly an important reality, it is not meant to paralyze us. It's meant to motivate us. It's meant to create excitement. It's meant to create action in us. The king is coming back. So don't get caught waiting only to be found standing around staring at the sky when he returns. Get busy. Be about the work. Be about the mission that he has given us. And when he returns, be found faithfully doing the things that he told us to do.

01:00:37

So here we have the beginning of this story, the beginning of the book of Acts. We have this challenge that carries through the remainder of the book as story after story, chapter after chapter. Jesus has laid the foundations for the kingdom. He leaves the mission and the message of hope that's going to go out into the world. He leaves all of these things in the hands of his disciples. And he tells them, go, get to work. Not without some help. Don't go do it until the helper comes. Wait in Jerusalem. It's going to be a week or two and then help is on the way. Wait for the helper who was going to come and the Holy Spirit that empowered those early believers.

01:01:23

That early church is the same spirit that lives inside of us today in a world that is searching for purpose, searching for a cause to devote themselves to. The Book of Acts and the mission of the early church shows us how we can make our lives count, shows us what it looks like for people to give everything that they have to a cause that is bigger than themselves. People who are willing to lay aside their comfort, willing to lay aside their resources that we're going to see in a few chapters, willing to lay down their own lives, extending their lives, expanding their comfort was not the focus of these men and women who were taking the good news of Jesus out into the world. The cause was greater than themselves. The cause was greater than whatever would just focus on them.

01:02:23

But we live in such a narcissistic place that we think everything's about us, right? That I need to be more comfortable, that I need to be well cared for, that I just need to have all of my needs met. But that's not what we see here. The book of Acts is clear. The book of Acts shows us how to make our lives count. And it was people who were willing to say, I don't care if my life is long. I care if my life matters. We see people martyred for their faith. We see people laying down their lives. We see people laying down their comforts. We see the Apostle Paul traveling around and doing all these things and saying, I don't care if you put me in jail. I don't care if you kill me.

01:03:05

Because if I'm gone, I'm with Jesus, and I'm cool with that. But if I'm here, I've got work to do. So tie me to a soldier and put me in jail. That's cool. We'll sing in jail. We'll have a worship night. Tie me to somebody and tell me I can't leave. That's cool. That means they can't leave me either. I'm going to tell them about Jesus. We see people who are willing to lay aside the things that were focused on them to focus their lives on Him. Our mission is clear. The power to accomplish it is ours. And the time is now. Acts, chapter 1, verse 8. The same message that Jesus gives to the disciples is the same message that Jesus gives to us this morning. Acts, chapter 1, verse 8. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

01:03:56

That happens for all of us, not at Pentecost, but at the day of salvation. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, we shall be his witnesses. Locally, nationally, globally. The world needs to hear what Jesus has to offer. And it's the church's job to take it to them. Let's get to work. The video that we use, the graphic. I love these graphics, right? These are the coolest ones that I've, that I think we've had here at the church since I've been here. But the little bumper video that we use at the beginning of the sermon, it talks about all these things that happen through the Book of Acts. And then it finishes with, and now it's your turn.

01:04:46

Now it's my turn. We play a role in this story. Acts has this weird ending where it doesn't actually really end that clearly, it's because the mission isn't over. The mission continues. The mission continues in my life and in your life. So, as we go, let's be witnesses. Let's be bold. Let's tell people about what Jesus has done in our lives. Let's be excited to take the message to our Jerusalem and our Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth. As we wrap up, the prayer team is going to be down here at the front. They would love to pray with you

about whatever you've got going on. We have our prayer wall out the back doors. If you look to the right and you need prayer and don't want to come talk to somebody, that's okay.

01:05:31

You can come write it down back there and leave it in our prayer wall. Our prayer team prays for those every single Monday night. But as we finish up, I'd like to just pray for us as we close. Would you pray with me, church? God, we thank you for the exciting new season, the exciting message that we're going to be able to dive into in the book of Acts. God, we pray that as we enter into this study, God, we pray that the message of Acts would ring true in our lives. God, we want to pray for boldness in our witness, that we as Christians would not be someone who is content just hiding our candle under a bushel. God help us to shine. God, we pray that we would.

01:06:15

That we would go and that we would boldly be witnesses in our local context, in our national and even potentially an international context. God, that we would take the good news that you have come into the world to save sinners, that we would take that out into the world. God, we pray for boldness in our mission. We pray for power that as you promised, the Holy Spirit would come and would empower these disciples to go and to accomplish the mission. God, we pray that we would realize that in our lives that the Holy Spirit is available to us, that we would not try to do this in our own power and our own strength. But, God, that in your power and in your strength, we would realize that nothing is impossible for you. God, Give us boldness in our witness.

01:07:00

And God, we want to pray that we as a church, that the compelling community of a church that in a place where the world will know that we belong to you by our love for one another. God, we pray that our community would compel people to ask what's different? How is it that in a world that is so defined by conflict and arguments and disagreements and things that we don't like about each other. God, we pray that we as a church would stand firmly on the love that you have given to us. That we would love one another and that we would love the world. God, that we would take your message of salvation. That you have come into the world to save broken people like me, like all of us.

01:07:47

God, we pray that you would prepare us, that you would empower us and that you would commission us to go out and to accomplish the work that you have for us in this community and around the world. God, we thank you for Jesus, we thank you for the message of the gospel, that we can be saved. And God, we thank you for the Holy Spirit who empowers us to go and to be your witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Use us in your work. We love you. It's in Jesus name. Amen.