

The Promise Of Power

Acts 1

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I want to read the first three verses of Acts. It starts, in verse one, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion,” or His death, “by many infallible proofs, being seen of them,” that is, His apostles and disciples, “forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

When you start a new series in a book like this, you are kind of overwhelmed. It's like, where do you start? Where do you begin? There is so much information that we can delve into, but let me give you just a simple basic introduction. It will not be exhaustive because over the next many weeks as we go through the book I'm going to constantly bring out the background and the setting of the text that we're looking at. I'd like to place the book of Acts in its position in the New Testament. What I mean by that is, the New Testament has three basic categories: History, Epistles, and Prophecy. Within those three divisions, they could be divided up into a lot of other groups. We could spend some time on that (and I want to do that), but we have Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts are history. Then we have the epistles, whether they be what is called the Pauline epistles, the general epistles, or the epistles of John, they are letters of doctrine. They are instruction to Christians, and without them the New Testament would be greatly lacking. It caps it off in the book of Revelation (we're all familiar with). It is a book of prophecy.

Whenever you study the Bible, you need to understand the Bible comes in different kinds of literature. A lot of people don't think about that. Based on the type of literature (the term we use is genre, the type of genre or literature) that you're studying will determine how you interpret that text. In the Old Testament we have History, Poetry (which we don't have in the New Testament), and Prophecy as well, but when you're reading the Bible you need to ask yourself, Is this history? Is it doctrine? Is it didactic? Is it epistles? or Is it prophecy? Based on that is how you would interpret. That doesn't mean that you veer away from what is known as the literal method of interpreting the Bible. That's called the historical, grammatical, theological principle of just taking it for what it is—the setting in the context, the history, the grammar, the geography, the language that's being used—you need to bridge that language gap, the geographical gap, the time gap, all of those.

When we come to the book of Acts we're in History, and we need to remember that all the way through our series. It doesn't mean that Acts does not contain doctrine, it does. It records sermons that are preached that are didactic or have doctrinal teaching content. There are a lot of important doctrines we are going to learn as we go through the book of Acts, but let me give you a very, very important principle in interpreting historical literature in the Bible. This is what it is, history must always be interpreted through the lens of the doctrine or the epistles. It's almost

as though when reading the history you take the epistles and put them on like glasses, filtering that through. You ask, "Why?" Because, generally speaking, history is just stating the historical facts. It's not interpreting or explaining them.

We have to determine if what we read is normative for the Church today. What we read about in the book of Acts, is it supposed to be happening today? Is it supposed to be practiced today? Are we supposed to be doing it today? You can't just take a blanket statement and say, "Well, it happened in Acts so it should happen today." There will be things that we'll read about in Acts that God was doing then that He is not necessarily doing today. Does that mean He can't do them? No. God is sovereign and God is omnipotent and God can do whatever He wants to. As the general rule, God's not working...at that time in history God did this, in our time in history, God does this; so we have to interpret the history through the lens of the epistles. I'm going to develop that as we go through. That doesn't mean that this whole series on the book of Acts is going to be dry or academic and so forth. It's important that we rightly handle the Word as we interpret it, but it is a book of history and I wanted you to note that. It's the history and the growth of the first-century Church.

The human author is Dr. Luke. You say, "Well, who is Dr. Luke?" Dr. Luke is the writer of the third gospel—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—they are known as what's called synoptic gospels. The word "synoptic" means to see together. They pretty much see the life of Christ the same. John's gospel breaks away from those synoptic gospels presenting Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Luke is an interesting character. He is the only New Testament author that is a Gentile (he wasn't a Jew), and he was a physician. Actually, he'll use (and I'll bring it up when we go through) medical terminology in some of the words that he used. He also uses what is considered to be just really classical Greek. He uses classical Greek in the writing of his gospel and in the book of Acts, but he was a traveling companion of Paul the apostle. He was writing a lot of the book of Acts from firsthand experience. You'll find in the book of Acts (and I'll point them out when we get there. We don't actually get there until chapter 16) what we call the "we" sections of Acts. You say, "What do you mean "we" sections? Does that mean little tiny sections?" No. He uses the personal pronoun in the second person. He refers to himself as traveling with Paul. Whenever you're reading the narrative and it says, "We left here," and "we went here," and "we did this," and "we did that," the author is traveling with Paul. Paul had him as a traveling companion. Many feel that he was actually his personal physician, attending to and traveling with Paul; and while Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years, it's believed that Luke was there with him. Luke gathered the information, talked to eye witnesses, interviewed Paul and others, and the book of Acts closes with Paul's first imprisonment. Luke was there with him at that time.

The date for the book of Acts is around AD 62 (give or take a year or two, but it's around AD 62, early 60s). If it had been written later (as many liberal scholars believe it would be) then no doubt he would've mentioned Paul's second imprisonment, his martyrdom, also maybe mentioned the fact that Rome was burnt by Caesar Nero in 64 AD, and he would've mentioned

the persecution that ensued upon the early Church and Christians.

The theme of the book of Acts, its theme and purpose, is very, very simple. It is the record of the birth, the growth, and the expansion of the Church. It's the beginning of the Church. It's the genesis of the Church and its growth, so it's the birth of the Church. We'll get that in chapter 2, (and don't miss next week because chapter 2...if we get to chapter 2, we're still in the introduction right now, but if we get to chapter 2) is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. It's the birthday of the Church. We're going to talk about the coming of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the Church, the baptism of the Holy Spirit forming the body of Christ, and a lot of important truths and doctrines that we're going to learn. If I were to give a title separate from the one I'm using—the Gospel of the Spirit—I would give it the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. That's what the book covers. The gospel goes from Jerusalem to Rome. It's a record of the expansion and the growth of the first Church. It started with 120 on the day of Pentecost. Then 3,000 souls were added to the Church, so they had 3,120 until we are here today, and it's a continuing work that God is doing in the Church and in the world today—saving people and bringing them into the body of Christ. Its theme and purpose is the growth and the development of the Church going from Jerusalem all the way and ends in the Roman capital, the city of Rome.

In the first three verses that we just read we have the introduction to the book, and I want to look at it with you. Beginning in verse 1, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” I’m going to be real simple here. The “former treatise” is the gospel of Luke. Actually, Luke wrote one book—he wrote his gospel and the book of Acts. You might think of them as being volumes 1 and 2. They are both addressed to this man named Theophilus. He actually says, “The former treatise,” or *logos*, the word, “have I made, O Theophilus.” The recipient of this book and the gospel of Luke is a man by the name of Theophilus. That name means, “lover of God” or “beloved of God,” as some translations have. Some feel that it's not really an individual but rather the people of God, the lovers of God—that he's writing to Christians who love God—but it seems better to believe and interpret the idea that Theophilus was an individual by the way that it is phrased and worded.

It seems to be that he is writing to Theophilus, but one of the theories is that Luke was actually a slave and Theophilus was his master. You say, “Well, what do you mean by that? I thought he was a doctor?” He was. In the ancient world many slaves were educated individuals. I mentioned that as I talked about slavery from Colossians a couple of weeks ago. They were highly educated, and the very wealthy would actually buy a physician. Now, can you imagine that? “Hey, I went and bought me a doctor, and I've got him at home.” You say, “That'd be pretty handy to have your own physician, and have him working for you rather than you paying him this exorbitant rate.” You'd have your own physician. It's possible that Theophilus was actually his master. He commissioned, supported, and financially paid for Luke to go on these journeys to write the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. That's what he's referring to when he says, “the former treatise have I made, O Theophilus.” Notice the phrase, “of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” Notice He began and He's still doing that, so I believe that Acts is an open book—God's Spirit is still working.

The book of Luke ends with His resurrection and great commission and ascension back to heaven. Luke opens up the book of Acts with the same beginning—Christ has ascended into heaven and commissioned his disciples to go out and to preach the gospel. Notice that he wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach, and verse 2, “Until the day in which he was taken up.” What’s that referring to? That’s referring to what is called the ascension. It’s easy to put to memory (and you ought to do this). The birth of Christ is called the incarnation. Then we have the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and the exaltation. If you want to put it in a nice little package, Jesus Christ was incarnate (we have the incarnation), God became a man. He came into the world through the womb of the virgin Mary. Then we have the crucifixion. Jesus died on the cross voluntarily—a substitutionary death for the sins of the world. He was buried, and what happened three days later? He rose from the dead, right? I mean that’s shouting words there, “Hallelujah!” We wouldn’t be here tonight if Jesus Christ didn’t rise from the dead. Amen?

Do you know that every day for the Christian is resurrection day? It really is! Every day is resurrection day. You wake up and say, “I’m alive because Jesus Christ rose from the dead!” Amen? He died, He was buried, and He rose from the dead. When He rose from the dead, He rose in the same body that He was crucified in but now it is glorified. It is transformed. It is metamorphosized. He came out of the grave in a resurrected body, He ascended into heaven, He’s exalted at the right hand of God the Father, and He ever lives to say, “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” No other religious leader has done these things. No other guru or ascended master or religious leader came from heaven as God, took on human flesh, died the substitutionary death for man’s sin, rose again from the dead, then ascended back into heaven and lives to save, and (we’re going to see in Acts 1) He’s coming again to set up His Kingdom. Amen? What a glorious truth that is!

“Until the day in which he was taken up,” verse 2, “after that he through the Holy Ghost,” and that’s what we are going to find is one of the key themes of the book of Acts—the Holy Spirit. That’s why we called it: The Gospel of the Spirit. Some have changed the title of the book to: The Acts of the Spirit, or The Acts of the Spirit Through the Apostles. It’s all about the work of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, gave “commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.” What are the commandments He gave them? They are called the great commission. (This is a classroom tonight. I’m putting you to the test.) You say, “I’m tired! I come Wednesday night for you to teach. I want you to stop asking me questions.” It’s called the great commission not the great suggestion. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” everyone under heaven. Every place that you can go, you share the gospel of Jesus Christ. He gave them that commandment, and that’s what we have in the end of the former treatise, Luke’s gospel. Then notice verse 3, “To whom also he shewed himself,” after Jesus rose from the dead He showed Himself. This is what is called the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ. “...alive after his passion,” or death on the Cross. How? “by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days,” take note of that number, “and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

There was about 40 days after the resurrection of Christ when Jesus (listen carefully) appeared

and disappeared and then reappeared and disappeared and appeared and reappeared and disappeared. What we're going to have recorded for us in Acts 1 is Jesus leaving until He comes back now in His Second Coming. For 40 days Jesus would appear and then disappear. He would appear and disappear. They got kind of used to that. They were thinking He was going to set up the Kingdom, but no. Jesus is going to ascend back into heaven and tell them to wait for the promise of the Father—the Holy Spirit—so that they would be empowered to go out and to preach the gospel to be His witnesses, and He would come back (even for us it's still yet future) in His Second Coming when He'll set up His Kingdom.

Between the ascension and the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, there are 10 more days. These dates aren't just arbitrary timings I want to give you, they are important. I want you to get this. Jesus rose from the dead. He was crucified at Passover and three days later rose from the dead—40 days and another 10 days takes you up to what's called the Feast of Pentecost. That's what happened in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit arrived. He arrived during the Jewish Feast of Pentecost (which means fifty). It's 50 days after the Passover. So, there was only a period of 10 days that they were without the Lord's resurrection appearances, but for this 40 days He proved Himself alive. He ate with them. He talked with them. They touched Him. They felt Him. Remember Thomas said, "I'm not going to believe unless I see Him with my own eyes and reach out and touch Him with my hands." All of the sudden BOOM Jesus is standing in the room and looks at Thomas and says, "Thomas, come here just a minute." It's a paraphrase. Thomas is thinking, Oh man! I'm so busted! Thomas actually said, "My Lord and My God." I imagine from the response of Thomas that he fell on his knees and just worshipped Jesus, "My Lord and My God." Jesus said, "Thomas, blessed art thou for you believe but blessed are those who haven't seen and do believe." For 40 days He appeared to them—on the road to Damascus He appeared to Cleopas and the others who were walking back from Jerusalem, different times on the Sea of Galilee, many different appearances of Jesus—but the resurrection of Jesus Christ is affirmed by His post-resurrection appearances, and Luke is an historian of the first-rate recording that in his gospel and here in the book of Acts, but he was "... speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Beginning in verse 4, it says, "And, being assembled together with them," so here's Jesus with His disciples, it's been 40 days since He rose from the dead and He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father," catch that phrase, "promise of the Father," "which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with," which could be translated "in" or "by," the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The "promise of the Father" Jesus promised in John's gospel in what is called the Upper Room Discourse. If you're taking notes, John 13-17, and we preached on that here at Revival. It's a marvelous section of Scripture. It's the Holy of Holies of Scripture where Jesus took His disciples into this upper room before He went to the Cross and talked to them about important things. It starts in chapter 13, when He got down on His knees and washed their feet, John 13.

In John 14-16, Jesus promised them something. Do you know what He promised them? He said, "I'm going to go away but I'm going to promise you the Holy Spirit is going to come to you.

He is going to be sent by the Father, and so He says another Comforter will come to you. He used the word "Comforter." He's calling the Holy Spirit a Comforter. It's a Greek word *parakletos* which literally means one who comes alongside of you to comfort, strengthen, and encourage you. What a beautiful concept. He says, "I'm going to be leaving you. I'm going to go back to heaven with My Father, but shortly thereafter the Holy Spirit is going to come, and He is going to abide with you forever. He'll never depart from you. He will lead, guide, and direct you into all truth, and He'll be with you. So, we would have this abiding presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is God. He is the third member or person in the Godhead. You say, "Well, what do you mean by that?" The Bible teaches there is one God and that one God is triune. We have the word trinity from that concept or triunity. He is God the Father, He is God the Son, and He is God the Holy Spirit. You say, "I don't understand." Welcome to the club. I don't either, but I love it! Isn't God amazing! If I could understand God, something would be wrong because I have a pea brain. If God were so tiny that I could understand Him, we're all in big trouble. God is greater than we could ever fathom or comprehend, and all that we can know about God is as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. Remember way back in the book of Genesis God said, "Let us make man in our image?" Who was God talking to? He was talking in the Godhead. God the Father was talking to God the Son and God the Son was talking to God the Holy Spirit. You say, "Aren't there three Gods?" No. There is only one God. You say, "Well, I don't understand." I told you—it's awesome! You won't understand. God in three persons—how wonderful! The only way that we can describe it is that God is one in essence but He's three in persons—one essence, three persons. All three of the Godhead members are divine, and they all have the same divine attributes. So, Jesus—God the Son—would go back to heaven. We don't have Jesus walking around, but we have His presence in the Holy Spirit. God is come to us to abide with us and to live with us.

Do you know that the Holy Spirit lives inside your heart as a Christian? If you go home tonight (you live alone and no one is in the house with you), you're not alone. Jesus is with you. If you're driving home in the car by yourself, you're not by yourself the Lord is with you. Amen? You're never alone! That's a glorious truth, and how wonderful that is! He walks with me and He talks with me and He fellowships with me and I'm never alone. He has promised to abide with me. The moment you were born again the Holy Spirit came to live inside of you. You became the temple of the Holy Spirit, and I don't believe He ever moves out. Once He moves in He doesn't move out. He can be grieved. He can be quenched, but He cannot be quenched or grieved away. He said, "I will abide with you forever." That's the promise that is mentioned there in verse 4. He gave that promise, "but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me," John 14-16, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." I told you that would be 10 days, that's why he says, "not many days hence."

Verse 5 will be fulfilled in Acts 2 when they all are in one accord in one place on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came, and they were all filled and spoke with tongues as the Spirit

gave them utterance. There was the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and there were little flames of fire over their heads. The Bible calls them little cloven tongues of fire. I believe that what happened at that moment was the Church was born—the body of Christ was formed. I want you to write down a cross reference to this verse 5. Write down 1 Corinthians 12:13. We're going to talk more about it next Wednesday night, but remember when I started tonight I said that you interpret history through the lens of the epistles? That's why I gave you 1 Corinthians 12:13. What does it say? It says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." I believe every Christian has been baptized by, with, and in the Holy Spirit. It's the work of the Holy Spirit—the moment of salvation—taking you out of Adam, where there is sin and condemnation, and transferring you into Jesus Christ. That's the work of the Holy Spirit—taking you out of the old life and placing you into the new life in Jesus Christ. That's what I believe happened in Acts 2 as well as them being filled with the Holy Spirit. We're going to talk about the baptism and the filling of the Holy Spirit as we get into the second chapter, but here He's telling that John ceremonially baptized you in water but you're going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

I want you to make another little note. The word "with" is a little Greek word *en*. It's the same word used in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where it is actually translated "by." Don't you know that we've all been baptized "by" the Spirit into one body. It could be translated "with," "in," or "by." I just want to bring that to your attention, and I'll explain more why next Wednesday night. We've been baptized in, with, or by the Holy Spirit. It's a work of the Spirit and "not many days hence."

In verse 6, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him," Jesus, "saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 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," His own dynamis, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses," we get our word "martyrs" from that martyr, "unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This is an awesome, awesome little episode here as Jesus is with His disciples. He tells them to wait in Jerusalem. "Don't go preaching yet. Don't go off on missionary work yet. Don't go off ministering yet. You wait in Jerusalem. You get together and pray because you've got to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. You can't go in your own power." Now that the Holy Spirit has come, Acts 2, (we live after Acts 2) we don't have to tarry anymore on the Holy Spirit.

In the good old days, (I grew up in a Pentecostal church) they would have "tarrying" services where you'd wait for the Holy Ghost. Why are we waiting for the Holy Ghost? He came two thousand years ago. "We need a doooooose of the Ghoooooost—wait till you get Him." If you're a Christian, you've got Him! I'll tell you what the question is: Does He have you? That's the question! You know, Christians will go around bragging, "I got the Holy Ghost! I got the Holy Ghost! I got the Holy Ghost!" My question is: Does the Holy Ghost got you, Buckaroo! It's one thing to have Him all nice and neat and bottled up in your own little compartment, but does He have you? Does He have your tongue? Does He have your feet? Does He have your hands? Does He have your heart? Does the Holy Ghost control you? That's the question tonight. It's not, "I got the Spirit! I got the Spirit!" It's not how high you jump when you get the Holy Spirit,

it's how straight you walk after you hit the ground. That's what it's all about! It's so very important. There is no need to tarry or to wait anymore because He has already come.

They asked a question, and I want you to see that (verse 6). As they're standing now (and we're going to discover), they're standing on what's called the Mount of Olives. (In February, we're going to Israel. We have almost 100 people from our church going to Israel in February. And it's going to be awesome because we're going to stand in this spot. We're going to stand on Mount Olivet. It's less than a mile east of the city of Jerusalem, and we're going to look to the west and see the Golden Gate and the Dome of the Rock and the old city, but we're going to see what Jesus would've seen—not the same buildings, but He would've seen Herod's Temple in its golden splendor—but we're going to be in that same spot that Jesus is going to now ascend into heaven. It's the same spot Jesus is going to come back to in His Second Coming.) The disciples asked Him, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" What are they asking? Very simply, again, a lot can be said but I'm trying to keep it simple. They're asking Him, "Will you sit on the throne of David as our Messiah and bring in the Messianic Kingdom, what is also known as the Davidic Kingdom. Why? Because in the Old Testament God promised David that through his seed, his lineage, the Messiah would come.

Remember when David wanted to build God a temple and Nathan the prophet said, "Great idea! Go for it, David!" Then, Nathan went home and God said to Nathan, "Why'd you tell him yes when you didn't check with Me first? David can't build the temple. He's been a man of war. He's got blood on his hands. He can't build the temple, but his son, Solomon, will do that. He's a man of peace. So, you gotta go back, Nathan, and you gotta tell David, 'Sorry, you can't build God a temple.'" It was kind of a bad news good news thing. "David, sorry. I forgot to check with the Lord. I got home and He said, No." David said, "Awww, shucks! I'm disappointed." "But He did tell me something," he said, "God will build you a house." Is that cool or what? "You can't build Me a house, but I'll build you a house." What He meant by that was through your lineage, through your genealogy, through your seed, one of your great, great, great grandchildren is going to be the Savior of the world. Can you dig that?

My wife sent me a picture of our new grandson today. He's about four months and he is awesome! I was just staring at how cool...I was looking at him like, This kid is so cool. I wonder what he's going to look like when he's a teenager. Anyway, I'm looking at my grandson and can you imagine looking at your child thinking, This child is the Savior of the world. He's the Redeemer of all mankind! He's the King of Kings. He's the Lord of Lords!

When David realized what God was going to do for him, David sat down and was speechless. He thought, Oh God! That's amazing! How good You've been to me! He just began to worship God. So, all through the life of Jesus they were calling Him Son of David, have mercy on me. They believed He was the Messiah. His own disciples, now that Jesus was crucified, were devastated, "Our hopes have been dashed. We thought He was the Savior," but He rose from the dead so their hopes were rekindled. They didn't realize the kingdom would be postponed now over two thousand years, and they wanted it to happen right now. "Come, Lord Jesus. Set up Your kingdom. Wipe out the Romans. Bring in peace and everlasting righteousness." What

they were asking was, “Is this the Second Coming?” What they were asking was, “Is this now when You will set up Your Kingdom?” All the Old Testament prophesied about the coming of Messiah and the Kingdom Age when He would reign upon earth and righteousness would cover the earth as waters cover the seas. “Will You restore the Kingdom to Israel?” What did Jesus say to them? “It is not for you to know the times of the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”

I want to bring something up. Jesus didn’t correct and tell them, “No such thing as a literal Kingdom coming.” Jesus didn’t straighten them out and say, “You guys are all messed up. There’s no Kingdom coming. We’re going to start the Church. The Church is going to be the kingdom now, and there will be no future for the nation of Israel—no literal Kingdom.” He didn’t straighten them out. All He did was tell them, “It’s not for you to know the time.” I say this because a lot of Christians disagree as to whether or not there will be a literal thousand years—by the way, this Kingdom that they were looking for is what is called the Millennium because it’s a thousand years. You can read about it in the book of Revelation 20 when Satan is bound for a thousand years after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ reigns in righteousness. Jesus said, “It’s not for you to know the times.” He was going to actually say, “Because there’s a task for you. There’s a job for you. There’s a ministry for you. You have to go into all the world and preach the gospel. You have to be filled with the Holy Spirit’s power. You have to go out and win people to Me. You have to build the Church as the Spirit works through you.” He says, “It is not for you to know the times...but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses,” you’ll be martyrs. Many of them would die. Actually, all the apostles would die save John. They would all be martyred.

I want you to notice very closely in your Bible, “...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” This is an outline for the book of Acts. The Church will expand first from Jerusalem, then into Judea and Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the earth, the city of Rome. This is how it breaks down. In Jerusalem, their witness is chapters 1-7. In Judea and Samaria would cover chapters 8-12 of the book of Acts, and the uttermost parts of the earth will cover chapters 13-28. You might also say that chapters 1-12 cover the ministry of Peter, and chapters 13-28 cover the ministry of Paul. Many break the book of Acts into two groups. First the life and ministry of Peter and then the life and ministry of Paul. He is known as Saul of Tarsus. He’s converted and then he goes out. We’re going to get the life story of Paul the apostle, and it’s going to shed a lot of light on the letters he wrote. You’ll understand him a lot better. You might throw Phillip the evangelist in between them but primarily Peter and then the ministry of Paul.

We personally, as Christians, are to be filled and empowered with the Holy Spirit and to be His witnesses. Our witness is to be first our “Jerusalem” our home, our community. Our witness is to then go out into the surrounding areas. We are to pray for people in the United States and outlining areas, and then we should all be involved in missions—praying and giving and serving—doing what we can to support the gospel going into the uttermost parts of the earth.

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up,” here’s the actual

record, historical account of Jesus' ascension, "and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel," these are angels, "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus," and I love this, "which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Now, we're not going to get through the whole chapter tonight, unfortunately, I'm going to wrap this up; but this is kind of a can you dig it section of the Bible. They're standing on the Mount of Olives and the Bible says while they beheld Him He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Jesus literally, physically, bodily just began to ascend up into heaven. Now, that doesn't mean that He physically, bodily just kept going and going and going and going—that heaven is a literal destination out beyond the farthest star and if we put an astronaut in a rocket and shot him really far that he would actually BOOM hit the golden gates. This is just terminology that we have that when He did physically, bodily ascend into heaven and a cloud, I believe, of shekinah glory received Him out of their sight, that He actually went into a whole new dimension. It's called heaven. It's not a physical destination beyond the stars, but it's a whole new dimension. He went to heaven.

Do you know heaven is a real place? It actually exists, and do you know that if you're a Christian you're actually going to go there someday? That's why you should read about it, sing about it, anticipate it, because you're going to live there a long time.

They're standing on the Mount of Olives and Jesus just goes, Jeeeeeet. (I don't know if it sounded like that, so I'm doing my Jesus movie and that's my sound effects for the ascension, you know, Jeeeeeeeet right up into heaven.) They're standing there just rubbernecking. They're just like, "Whooooaaaa! Did you see that?! Whooooaaaa! That was amazing! That was insane! That was awesome!" Then, all of a sudden, two angels are standing there. "You men of Galilee, why are you standing there gazing into the heavens?" Now, with a little sanctified humor I'm thinking, Give them a break! You would be staring into the heavens too! If you just saw Jesus go up into heaven you'd be staring up into heaven. The inference is actually, "You have a job to do. Didn't Jesus say to go to Jerusalem and to wait, that you'll receive the promise of the Father, and you'll be witnesses unto Me into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth?" The angel actually said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go," what does that mean?

He's actually telling them about the Second Coming, and he's telling them some important things. He's telling them when Jesus Christ comes back in the Second Coming that He's coming physically, He's coming visibly, He's coming bodily, and He's coming gloriously! The Bible says, "Behold, He comes with clouds and every eye will see Him." When Jesus came the first time, He was God veiled in flesh, He went unrecognized. Only the lowly shepherds (awakened by the angels) and the wise men came to acknowledge that He was the King born among us, but when Jesus Christ comes back the second time the Bible says, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." He'll come gloriously! He'll come powerfully! He'll come wonderfully! He

came the first time as a lamb to suffer and die. He's coming back as the lion of the tribe of Judah to conquer and to reign in righteousness and power and majesty and glory! Read about it in Revelation 19. His eyes are like a flame of fire. His hair is white as wool. His feet are like polished brass, and out of his mouth comes a sharp two-edged sword. He smites the nations, and guess who comes with Him? We do. Amen? Man, that's going to be amazing! We come to be magnified with Him. We come to be the manifested sons of God. We will be in our glorified bodies, and we will be riding white horses. He'll establish His Kingdom, and we'll reign with Him. It will be glorious!

Now, the same power available to this early Church is available to us—the same Holy Spirit, the same ascended Lord, the same glorious Lord. The Lord of power, the promise of power, is all available to us to be filled and to go out. We have the same mission. Jesus Christ is coming. Amen? We're to tell other people about Him. I believe with all my heart that we're living in the last days. The world is getting worse every day, darker every day. It's amazing how fast just the darkness has escalated in our culture and in the world around us today. There's only one hope for this hopeless world and that's Jesus Christ. The only hope for this hopeless world is the angel's message, "This same Jesus that you saw go, He's coming back again." I believe the Bible teaches and so I believe, that Christ will come back literally, visibly, bodily, and He will come back to earth just as He left. We'll see Him and reign with Him. What a glorious hope that is! Amen? Let's pray.