



Today we rediscover how & why the first followers of Jesus took the Gospel to the planet in the power of the Spirit. So too, we are reminded that this ancient task is still our modern day mission.

This week we are going to see some of the greatest moments in Christian history. We will see **Christ Enthroned, Christians Empowered, and Lives Transformed**. Most of this week's reading from "The Good Book" comes from ACTS. (find our 40 week Acts Series on our website: FellowshipOfMadison.com).

Acts - History of the First Followers

Acts 1:1-3 (CSB) ¹ I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After he had suffered, he also **presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs**, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Quick Summary:

1. Jesus, after he had **suffered and died**, **presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs over a period of 40 days**.
2. Jesus was also consistently **speaking about the kingdom of God**.
 - Jesus wasn't just talking about the ultimate judgment in a far future kingdom when He returns, but a kingdom that was about to expand on the earth. The words of Jesus were about to come true: "*I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*" (Mat 16:18).
3. Jesus **was taken up** into the clouds, a spectacular and significant claim.

It's also in Acts that we see how God comes to live IN His people, by the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Leaving, Spirit Coming

John 16:7 (CSB) ...It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you. **If I go, I will send him to you.**

John 14:15-16 (CSB) "If you love me, you will keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.**

While Jesus limited Himself to being in one place at a time, the Holy Spirit would indwell (live inside of) and empower believers to spread the Kingdom all over the world!

Christians Empowered

Acts 1:8 (CSB) ⁸ But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

When the Spirit showed up, they were to **take the Gospel to the planet in the power of the Spirit**.

Christ Enthroned

Acts 1:9-11 (CSB) ⁹ After he had said this, **he was taken up** as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same **Jesus**, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.**"

This is more than just Jesus taking off into the clouds. *This was inauguration day, the moment that Jesus was enthroned and the King was crowned.*

Paul describes it like this:

Philippians 2:9-11 (CSB) ⁹ For this reason [of Jesus' obedience to die] God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that **at the name of Jesus every knee will bow** — in heaven and on earth and under the earth— ¹¹ and **every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.

* **This is the fulfillment of Daniel 7:13-14** where the Son of Man is given "*dominion and glory, and a kingdom; so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.*"

Jesus' work on earth has been accomplished and now Jesus returns to his place of glory with God the Father (see Jesus' prayer in Jn. 17:5). *Early Christians pointed to the ascension of Jesus as the fulfillment of Ps. 110:1.*¹

Psalms 110:1 (CSB) This is the declaration of the LORD [YHWH] to my Lord [ʾā·dōn]: "**Sit at my right hand** until I make your enemies your footstool."

The writer of Hebrews notes this fulfillment in Jesus as well.

Hebrews 10:11-13 (CSB) ¹¹ Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, **sat down at the right hand of God**. ¹³ He is **now waiting until his enemies are made his footstool**.

Jesus is enthroned and will return one day. Jesus came first as the sacrificial servant. Next, He will return as the Conquering King, to judge all mankind for all eternity. Every person will bow their knee & proclaim Jesus is Lord of all. But UNTIL THAT TIME, followers of Jesus were to await the coming of the Spirit (Acts 2) obey what the Lord Jesus has told them to do.

BIG TRUTH: A Disciple of Jesus DOES what Jesus SAYS.

Disciples of Jesus are to love each other and take the Gospel to the planet in the power of the Spirit.

The first followers didn't water down the message of Jesus. **They warned of God's wrath & offered God's peace** (see Acts 2:14-40). They were known for their passion for Jesus and compassion for people; and they actually lived like Jesus would return.

LIVES TRANSFORMED.

Acts 9: Read about a faithful follower of Jesus named **Ananias**, tasked with going to help **Saul** (aka Paul), a zealous Jewish pharisee who was hunting down Jews who trusted Jesus as the Messiah. Ananias was sent to heal Paul's blindness and fill him with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Despite the danger that Paul (aka Saul) represented, **Ananias did what disciples do**.

A Disciple of Jesus DOES what Jesus SAYS.

Acts 10: Read the story of **Simon Peter**, the apostle of Jesus, who had to bypass Jewish traditions and racist rules in order to obey Jesus (and go to a Gentile's house to share the good news).

Despite the danger, despite the tradition, these men did what disciples do. **A Disciple of Jesus DOES what Jesus SAYS.**

QUESTION: Are we known for what we SAY or how we OBEY?

Want to talk further? Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), or another follower of Jesus soon!

Reading Plan this Week: "The Good Book" - chapters 31-35 (Scriptures: Acts 1, 2, 9, 10; Rev 22)

* **Communion** in our Discussion Groups **Nov. 4**, just before our **Thanksgiving Meal** (bring side dish)

¹ Craig S. Keener, Acts: An Exegetical Commentary & 2: Introduction and 1:1-14:28, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012-2013), 720.