

## **The Ascension of Jesus**

### **Acts 1:1-11**

What does the ascension of Jesus produce in the life of his followers?

- I. A new community
  - A. The goal of Jesus' appearances (v. 1-3)
  - B. Why Jesus presented himself alive
- II. A new power
  - A. The power that spreads the kingdom (v. 6-8a)
  - B. The way the kingdom spreads (v. 8b)
- III. A new purpose
  - A. The continuation of Jesus' earthly ministry (v. 4-5, 9-11)
  - B. Called by God (1 Cor. 7:17)

#### **Application Guide:**

1. How should Jesus' ascension impact our perspective on gathering, both in corporate worship and in community groups? How should it shape our gathering?
2. What does it look like to testify to the resurrected and ascended Christ by the way you spend your time, the way you work, the way you spend your money, the way you treat people, the way you approach death?
3. How does the calling and commission of God to continue the earthly ministry of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit challenge your view of what it means to be a follower of Christ?

## **The Foundation of Mission**

### **Acts 1:12-26**

What is the foundation of the mission of God?

- I. Diverse community
  - A. The diversity of the disciples (v. 12-13)
  - B. The significance of twelve (Eph. 2:16)
  - C. Your highest loyalty (v. 14a)
- II. Messy sovereignty
  - A. The messiness of unbelief (v. 14b; John 7:5)
  - B. The messiness of betrayal (v. 18-19)
  - C. God's sovereignty in the mess (v. 16-17, 20, 23-26; Ps. 41:9; John 17:12)
- III. Apostolic witness
  - A. The apostolic foundation (v. 21-22; Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14)
  - B. Why apostolic witness matters

#### **Application Guide:**

1. When Christ and his kingdom isn't your highest loyalty, what is? How does this affect your relationships within the body of Christ?
2. How are you struggling to see God's sovereignty in the midst of a messy situation? How does mission get messy and how is God's sovereignty comforting in the midst of it?
3. How has a cultural moment caused you to question the Bible (God's Word)? What happens when the mission of God is founded upon a cultural moment?

## **Spirit Empowered Mission** **Acts. 2:1-13**

How does the Holy Spirit empower mission?

- I. Creates hope
  - A. The meaning of Pentecost (v. 1)
  - B. Hope and anticipation
- II. Overcomes barriers
  - A. Overcoming the language barrier (v. 3-4, 6-7, 9-10; Acts 4:13)
  - B. The barrier of fear today
- III. Breathes life
  - A. The reversal of Babel (v. 5, 6, 11; Gen. 11:1-9; John 3:17)
  - B. The life-giving breath of God (v. 2; Gen. 1:2, 2:7)

### **Application Guide:**

1. How does the connection between Pentecost and the Old Testament feasts create hope and anticipation of people coming to Christ today? In what situation do you need this hope and anticipation to replace despair and pessimism?
2. How do you experience fear as a barrier to the mission of God? What fears keep you from proclaiming Christ to those around you?
3. In what ways do you breathe life (grace of Jesus) into others? In what ways do you breathe judgment on others?

**Reality Check**  
**Acts 2:14-41**

What reality are you living in light of?

- I. A reality that has been promised
  - A. Old Testament prophecies (v. 17-20; Joel 2:28-32)
  - B. Receiving what God has promised (v. 21)
- II. A reality that is objective
  - A. Christ's power over death (v. 24-36; Ps. 16:8-11; Ps. 110:1)
  - B. The objective reality of Christ's resurrection (v. 32; 1 Cor. 15:4-6)
- III. A reality that demands a response
  - A. Rejecting Jesus (v. 23, 37, 40)
  - B. Aligning your life with the resurrected Christ (v. 38)

**Application Guide:**

1. How does the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies strengthen the reality of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension?
2. How does the objective, historic reality of Jesus' resurrection shape your understanding of faith and how it is lived out?
3. Why is behavioral sin always a rejection of Jesus at the core? How should this affect the way you repent of your sin?

## **The Spirit-Filled Church** **Acts 2:41-47**

What characterizes a Spirit-filled church?

- I. Devotion to God's word
  - A. Devotion shapes identity (v. 42a, 43a, 47a)
  - B. Devotion creates constraints (v. 42b)
  - C. The life-giving constraints of God's word
- II. Devotion to fellowship
  - A. The definition of fellowship (v. 42c, 44)
  - B. The practice of fellowship (v. 42d, 46)
  - C. The result of fellowship (v. 45, 47)

### **Application Guide:**

1. You become what you are devoted to. How have you seen this truth play out in your life?
2. How do you experience the difference between a relationship that is held together by common interests and a relationship that is held together by Jesus?
3. What is the difference between doing church and being the church? How do these two views impact generosity?

**Salvation in Christ Alone**  
**Acts 4:1-22**

What kind of salvation is offered to you in Christ?

- I. A salvation that is unique
  - A. A culture of pluralism (v. 1-2)
  - B. The claims of Jesus (v. 11-12, 20; John 14:6)
- II. A salvation that is disruptive
  - A. The Jewish authorities' response to Jesus (v. 5-7, 13; John 7:15)
  - B. Peter and John's response to Jesus
- III. A salvation that is healing
  - A. The withering control of self (v. 17-21)
  - B. The flourishing control of Christ

**Application Guide:**

1. Do you struggle with the claim that salvation only comes through Jesus Christ? Why? How do you see this struggle present in the world around you?
2. How has salvation been disruptive in your life? In other words, how is your life different because of Christ? How is your resistance to change keeping you from coming to Christ?
3. What are you seeking to control and how is this causing debilitating fear and anxiety?

**Boldness for Jesus**  
**Acts 4:23-31**

What empowers you to live boldly for Jesus?

- I. The sovereignty of the Father
  - A. The absolute power and control of the Father (v. 24, 27-28)
  - B. Responding to God's "crooked yet straight path"
- II. The victory of the Son
  - A. God's response to human rebellion (v. 25-26; Ps. 2:4-6)
  - B. Human response to Christ (v. 30; Ps. 2:10-12)
- III. The power of the Holy Spirit
  - A. The role of the Holy Spirit (v. 29, 31)
  - B. Speaking of the most important victory

**Application Guide:**

1. What crooked path does God have you on right now that you despise? What crooked path has you in a state of panic, fear, or anger?
2. Over what interruption, resistance, or hardship do you long for victory? How have you lost sight of the victory of Christ in the midst of your struggle?
3. How has your witness for Christ been virtually silenced by this interruption, resistance, or hardship?

## **Faith in a Hostile World** **Acts 5:27-42**

How do you remain faithful in a hostile world?

- I. Christ-centered view of power
  - A. Worldly power (v. 27-33; Acts 5:12,14,17; Deut. 21:23)
  - B. Godly power (v. 34-39; 1 Cor. 1:22-23; 2 Cor. 12:9-10)
- II. Christ-centered view of suffering
  - A. Worldly perspective on suffering (v. 40)
  - B. Godly perspective on suffering (v. 41-42; Mark 13:9)

### **Application Guide:**

1. What are you attempting to control? How are you using shame and fear to achieve control? How is this producing jealousy, anger, and anxiety?
2. Do you view repentance as a gift? What makes it hard for you to admit weakness? How have you experienced the power of Christ through your weakness?
3. How does the honor of suffering for Jesus transform the way you view and experience your suffering?



## **Servants of Christ**

### **Acts 6:1-7**

Through what kind of servants does Christ grow his imperfect church?

- I. Impartial servants
  - A. The universal problem of partiality (v. 1)
  - B. The unique impartiality of Christ (v. 3, 5)
- II. Holistic servants
  - A. The two-fold expression of the gospel (v. 2-4; Matt. 25:34-40)
  - B. The inseparable nature of word and deed
- III. Communal servants
  - A. Multiplication of leadership (v. 3, 6)
  - B. A variety of servants and gifts

### **Application Guide:**

1. What kind of partiality or favoritism do you need to acknowledge and repent of?  
What kind of partiality or favoritism do you see around you that needs to be addressed?
2. How has the expression of the good news of Jesus Christ in your life lost the balance of word (what you say) and deed (what you do)?
3. What are the characteristics of a church community who believes no one person has all the gifts?

**The Embrace of Christ**  
**Acts 6:8-7:1; 7:51-60**

How do you receive the embrace of Christ?

- I. Embrace your indictment
  - A. The indictment (7:37, 39, 51-53; 6:11, 14-15; Jer. 17:9)
  - B. Responding to your indictment (v. 54, 57-58)
- II. Embrace your acquittal
  - A. The acquittal (v. 55-56, 59-60; Matt. 10:32; Luke 23:34)
  - B. Responding to your acquittal

**Application Guide:**

1. “The central defect of evil is not the sin but the refusal to acknowledge it.” In what ways do you refuse to acknowledge the evil in your heart? Why do you refuse to acknowledge the evil in your heart?
2. Who or what is accusing or condemning you right now? How have you lost sight of the heavenly courtroom where Jesus stands to defend you and remind you of your acquittal (not guilty verdict)?
3. How do you relate to Christ? Do you draw near to Christ through your success or failure? Do you believe Christ draws near to you through your success or failure?

## **Coming to Christ** **Acts 8:1-25**

What do you come to Jesus for?

- I. To get what you want
  - A. Self-seeking Simon (v. 7, 9-11, 13, 18-19)
  - B. Self-seeking faith (John 2:23-24)
- II. To get what he offers
  - A. Forgiveness (v. 20-24; Mark 2:1-12)
  - B. The gift of self-denial (v. 12-13, 14-17, 20; Ezek. 36:26-27)

### **Application Guide:**

1. In what ways have you come to Jesus to get what you want? How has this left you disappointed or disillusioned?
2. How is the biggest circumstantial problem in your life right now revealing pride and unbelief in your heart? What are you not believing about Christ?
3. How have you seen the Holy Spirit change your desires? How have you experienced the gift of self-denial? What opportunities do you have to serve others rather than use others?

## **The Gospel for Outsiders** **Acts 8:26-40**

To whom does the gospel belong?

- I. Sovereign God
  - A. The guidance of the Spirit (v. 26, 29, 32, 39-40)
  - B. God's pursuit of you
- II. All kinds of people
  - A. The Ethiopian eunuch (v. 26-28; Deut. 23:1)
  - B. The gospel for outsiders
- III. Empty people
  - A. The emptiness of the eunuch (v. 30-38)
  - B. From empty to full

### **Application Guide:**

1. To whom has God sent you with the good news of Jesus? How have you been denying God's pursuit of you by attributing things to coincidence?
2. How have you felt like an outsider? What keeps your life from communicating the truth that the gospel is for all kinds of people?
3. Have you embraced your emptiness? How does your ego and pride keep you from embracing your emptiness and taking hold of Christ?

## **The Gospel for the Religious** **Acts 9:1-19**

What is revealed when Jesus Christ confronts religious people?

- I. A spiritual blindness
  - A. The pride of Saul (v. 1-2; Phil. 3:5-6; Acts 26:11)
  - B. The problem of pride
- II. A new sight
  - A. The blinding of Saul (v. 3-9)
  - B. The healing of spiritual blindness (v. 17-19; 2 Cor. 4:4-6)
- III. A new purpose
  - A. Saul's radical new purpose (v. 15-16)
  - B. Carrying Jesus' name (2 Cor. 4:7-10)

### **Application Guide:**

1. Do you have a need to be right? What happens when people don't acknowledge you are right? What are some other signs of pride?
2. How has God opened your eyes to see Jesus in a whole new way? How has this new sight helped you overcome your pride?
3. How are you carrying Jesus' name before others through your pain and brokenness? How have your tears brought the glory and beauty of the risen Christ into clearer focus?

## **The Hope of Opposition** **Acts 12:1-24**

Why is opposition a source of hope?

- I. Opposition is part of God's plan
  - A. The new wave of persecution (v. 1-4)
  - B. Expecting opposition (Mark 10:39; 1 Peter 4:12; Heb. 11:34,37)
- II. Opposition is an invitation to prayer
  - A. The praying church (v. 5, 12-17)
  - B. Communal war-time prayer
- III. Opposition accentuates God's power
  - A. Two supernatural interventions (v. 6-11, 18-24)
  - B. Salvation and judgment

### **Application Guide:**

1. How do you typically respond to opposition? How does the expectation of it being part of God's plan change the way you view it?
2. Does your prayer life resemble a war-time walkie-talkie or a domestic intercom? What opposition is inviting you into front-line prayer to experience the gracious and powerful work of God?
3. Do you tend to live in the despair of your sin and misery or in the victory of God's power over it through the work of Christ?

## **The Power of the Gospel** **Acts 13:4-12**

What is revealed when the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed?

- I. A piecemeal spirituality
  - A. The problem in Paphos (v. 4-7)
  - B. Syncretism today
- II. The unseen battle
  - A. The devil's response to the gospel (v. 8-10)
  - B. Expecting resistance
- III. The power of God
  - A. The showdown (v. 11-12)
  - B. Gospel power, not advice

### **Application Guide:**

1. How do you see piecemeal spirituality (syncretism) alive in our culture today?  
How do you see this operating (maybe subtly) in your own life?
2. How have you experienced resistance in coming to Christ or sharing Christ with others?
3. What are signs that the word of God has become advice and not power? In what situation do you need to hear the words of Christ?

## **The Resurrection of Christ** **Acts 13:26-45**

Why can't you ignore Jesus' resurrection?

- I. His resurrection is the center of history
  - A. The fulfillment of God's promises (v. 32)
  - B. The key that unlocks everything (v. 30)
- II. His resurrection declares your freedom
  - A. Declares your forgiveness (v. 38)
  - B. Declares you righteous (v. 39; Matt. 5:17)
- III. His resurrection reveals your heart
  - A. The rejection of Jesus' resurrection (v. 40-41, 45)
  - B. Losing the right to be right

### **Application Guide:**

1. Jesus' resurrection is the center of history. What are the implications of this? How should this truth impact life, work, and play?
2. What causes you to feel guilt, shame, and/or insecurity? How does Jesus' resurrection free you from these prisons?
3. When you embrace the resurrection of Jesus, you lose the right to be right. How are you functionally rejecting Jesus' resurrection by retaining the right to be right? Who do you need to forgive rather than fix?



## **Turning to the Living God** **Acts 14:8-23**

To what do you turn in time of need?

- I. Empty things
  - A. The story of Zeus and Hermes (v. 8-13)
  - B. The truth about worshipping empty things
- II. The living God
  - A. The goodness of God's forbearance (v. 14-16; Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:25)
  - B. The goodness of God's common grace (v. 17)
- III. Discerning the difference
  - A. Evidence you are turning to empty things (v. 18-19)
  - B. Evidence you are turning to the living God (v. 20-23; Rom. 8:17; Gal. 6:17)

### **Application Guide:**

1. What empty thing are you turning to in time of need and how are you sacrificing in an attempt to get that empty thing to bless you?
2. What is the evidence of God's goodness in your life? How has he been generous with you even when you don't deserve his kindness?
3. How do you typically respond to discomfort in your life? How does your response reveal the true source of your joy and identity?

## **The Grace of Christ** **Acts 15:1-11, 22-31**

How does the grace of Christ transform your relationships?

- I. Relationship to God
  - A. Salvation apart from the law (v. 1, 5, 7-11)
  - B. Your relationship to God's law (v. 28-29)
- II. Relationship to people
  - A. Relationship to self (v. 8)
  - B. Relationship to others (v. 9)

### **Application Guide:**

1. All of life is relational, whether you are relating to a person, your career, or some form of entertainment. What relationships are causing you trouble and anxiety?
2. How has your relationship with God become transactional? How are you treating God's law (his commands) as currency for a transaction rather than as a relational window into his heart?
3. How does the grace of Christ transform the way you relate to the people around you?

**Freedom!**  
**Acts 16:16-34**

How does the gospel of Jesus Christ free you from oppression?

- I. The nature of oppression
  - A. Spiritual (v. 16-19)
  - B. Cultural (v. 27)
- II. Freedom from oppression
  - A. The impotence of the powers that oppress (v. 18, 22-26)
  - B. The healing power of Christ (v. 29-33)
  - C. The healing power of Christ's body (v. 34, 40)

**Application Guide:**

1. In what ways do you objectify people or treat them like a commodity? How have you been treated like this? How is it oppressive?
2. At what cost are you avoiding shame? How is the avoidance of shame oppressing and enslaving you?
3. What person or situation do you need to bring into the presence of Jesus to find freedom from anger, anxiety, or fear?
4. How are your past wounds (how you have been sinned against) causing you to wound others? What wounds do you need Christ to wash?

## **The Word of God** **Acts 17:1-15**

How do you relate to the word of God?

- I. Word of God
  - A. Paul's definition (v. 2-3)
  - B. Jesus' definition (Luke 24:26-27)
- II. Rejection
  - A. The rejection of the Jews in Thessalonica (v. 4-9)
  - B. Using the scriptures
- III. Submission
  - A. The reception of the Jews in Berea (v. 10-15)
  - B. Submitting to the scriptures

### **Application Guide:**

1. How does seeing the Bible as one story (about the rescue mission of Christ), and not a collection of rules, principles, or examples, change the way you read it?
2. In what ways do you come to the Scriptures to find stability and support for the world you have created? Why is this ultimately a rejection of the word of God?
3. What keeps you from coming to the word of God with a willingness to have your world turned upside down? How are you resisting Jesus' will and not submitting to it?

**The Revelation of God**  
**Acts 17:16-34**

What does the gospel of Jesus Christ explain to our world?

- I. Ignorance
  - A. The philosophy of Athens (v. 16-21)
  - B. The spiritual condition of the Athenians (v. 22-29)
  - C. Stumbling around in the dark today
- II. Repentance
  - A. Revelation through the resurrection (v. 24-25, 30-31)
  - B. The resurrection demands a response (v. 32-34)

**Application Guide:**

1. How do you see “times of ignorance” manifest in your life? How do you cope with the uncertainty and difficulty of life?
2. In what ways have you lived your life as though you own it? How has this damaged you and others?
3. What is the evidence that you are responding to the resurrection of Christ? What is the evidence that you are not responding to it?

**Pressing On**  
**Acts 18:1-17**

Why can you press on when you are ready to quit?

- I. The cause of discouragement
  - A. For Paul (v. 1-4, 6; 1 Cor. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 2:17)
  - B. For you
- II. The reasons for pressing on
  - A. Christ is with you (v. 9, 10a, 5, 2 Cor. 11:9)
  - B. Christ protects you (v. 9, 10b, 12-17, John 15:2)
  - C. Christ has people for you to reach (v. 9, 10c, 8)

**Application Guide:**

1. What has you deeply discouraged and in a season where you feel like you have “hit a wall” or are ready to quit?
2. How does the promise of Jesus’ presence give you courage? As a member of his body and conduit of his grace, who do you need to encourage today?
3. How does the distinction between “hurt” and “harm” help you better understand Christ’s protection?
4. How does Jesus’ promise (“for I have many in this city who are my people”) help you continue to share the gospel when it isn’t easy or seems hopeless?

## **Gospel Transformation** **Acts 19:23-41**

What does the gospel reveal when it confronts you?

- I. What you are living for
  - A. The artisans in Ephesus (v. 23-27)
  - B. The gateway to what you are living for
- II. Why it is so easy to live for these things
  - A. The appeal of numbers (v. 27b, v. 35-36)
  - B. The appeal of emotions (v. 28, 34)
- III. A new way to live
  - A. Three kinds of people (v. 38-40, 18-19)
  - B. Spirit-empowered change

### **Application Guide:**

1. No one lives for money or wealth. Everyone lives for what money or wealth can deliver. Why do you desire more money or wealth? How does this reveal what you are living for?
2. How do the following statements make it easy for you to live for these things? “If everyone is doing it, how can it be wrong? If it feels right, how can it be wrong?”
3. Repentance is costly. What are you holding on to and refusing to turn from? What areas of your life are not surrendered to Christ?

## **Gospel Leadership** **Acts 20:17-38**

Why is gospel leadership so important?

- I. The church needs care
  - A. The reason for care
    - a. The church is precious (v. 28)
    - b. The church is under attack (v. 29-30)
  - B. The nature of care
    - a. Selfless (v. 24, 33-34)
    - b. Empathetic (v. 19, 31)
- II. The church needs Jesus
  - A. The elder's need (v. 28a)
  - B. The elder's role (v. 20-21, 27, 32)

### **Application Guide:**

1. When you think of the church of God, do you see it as valuable and precious? Why or why not? How does your answer to this question affect your relationship with the church?
2. What are some of the twisted things you see attacking the church today? How do you serve as a faithful witness to Christ in a "your truth" world?
3. How does Paul's charge to the elders of Ephesus shape your view of the elder's role? How does it increase your gratitude for their service?
4. When you stray from Christ, into which ditch do you fall in your care for others: the ditch of control or the ditch of empty principles? What opportunities do you have to bring someone before Jesus?



**Burden Bearer**  
**Acts 21:7-26**

What is your comfort in the burdens of life?

- I. Christ loves you
  - A. Paul's love for the Jews (v. 10-14; Rom. 9:1-4)
  - B. Christ's love for you (Luke 9:51; Isa. 50:7)
- II. Christ takes on your burdens
  - A. Paul takes on Jewish customs (v. 17-26; Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 9:20-23)
  - B. Christ takes on the burden of your sin (Gal. 3:13; 6:2)

**Application Guide:**

1. When you are burdened by life, where do you run for comfort?
2. Christ's love for you is disconnected from your performance. How does this bring comfort? How is this different than the performance (or conditional) love that you experience in human relationships?
3. How does Christ bearing your burden shape how you respond to the burden of your sin?
4. How does Christ bearing your burden shape how you respond to the burden of others?

**Courage**  
**Acts 22:30 – 23:22**

Where does courage come from?

- I. The power of the resurrected Christ
  - A. Jewish factions in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (v. 1-10)
  - B. Cowardice from human control
  - C. Courage from Jesus' power (v. 11; John 16:33)
- II. The promise of the resurrected Christ
  - A. The frustration of Paul's plans (v. 12-22)
  - B. The promise of the resurrected Christ (v. 11)
  - C. Courage from Christ's promises (Rom. 8:18; James 1:2-4)

**Application Guide:**

1. What situation in your life demands courage?
2. How are you seeking to find that courage through control or manipulation?  
What keeps you from trusting the power of the resurrected Christ?
3. Have you gotten to the end of your rope? Do you feel like giving up? How have you tasted the presence and goodness of Christ in the pain of your situation?