

# The Story 2026

## *The Church*

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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So in the linear structure of time, there are three tenses. You're aware of these. You have the past tense, that which has already happened. You have the present tense, that which is happening currently, and you have the future tense, that which has not happened yet. I wanted to show you a video that hopefully will work this morning that will help you understand how these tenses work and how time works. And so if you recognize this movie, you and I can laugh about it later.

I'm not going to share with you what it is, but it is a PG movie. And I watched it when I was a teenager. So I don't remember much about it. So don't judge me. But I do remember this scene, all right? To understand time. Here we go. Fast much too early. Prepare to fast forward. Preparing to fast forward. Fast forward. Fast forwarding, sir.

No, no, no, go past this. Pass this part. In fact, never play this again. Try here. Stop.

What am I looking at? When does this happen in the movie? Now. You're looking at now, sir. Everything that happens now is happening now. What happened to then? We passed then. When? Just now. Wear it now now. Go back to then. When? Now. Now? Now. I can't. Why? We missed it. When? Just now. When will then be now? Soon. Makes sense, right? You guys all understand now. Did you know that actually you and I keep track on our calendars based roughly on the life of one man?

Did you know that? Our calendars are based on the life of Jesus Christ. It's how we keep track of time. We have had the time before Jesus, we have the time during Jesus, and we have the time after Jesus. This one man, whether you're religious or not, whether you grew up in the church or not, our time is judged by this man's life because he was so impactful in history. Even those who don't want to believe in Jesus as the Messiah still keep track of their calendars by His life.

But instead of looking at it BC and AD, they look at it as BCE, before Common Era, and CE, the Common Era. But I just want to remind them, just because you changed the names doesn't mean that you're still not keeping track of your calendar by his life, right? It's all based on the life of Jesus. He was that impactful. And I want you to know that our Bibles also are separated into different times, these different timeframes. The Old Testament is all before Jesus.

The gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are during the time of Jesus, and from Acts to Revelation are the times after Jesus. And so for the last few weeks, we have been giving you a review, an overview of the Bible in order to see the larger story of Scripture and of Christianity. And so if you have not been here just to recap week number one, we spent time in Genesis, and we talked about creation, that God created everything.

In week two, we talked about the fall, Adam and Eve's sin and bring sin into our world. Week three, we talked about God choosing a specific people, the Israelites, and He says, "It's through this people I am going to reveal myself to the world." And this led all the way up then to Jesus. Week four, we talked about the giving of the land

to the Israelites. And then last week, we talked about Jesus stepping into His creation, that point in the story that our calendars are divided because that was a main hinge point in our story.

And that leads us to this week, the sixth week in our series, where we are going to enter this current age known as the Age of the Church, just as God used the Israelites leading up to Christ's first coming to prepare the way for Him and to lead people to Him. So now, God is going to use the church to prepare people for Jesus' Second Coming. This is the part of the story that you and I are in.

In each of these stages, God is going to use something to draw people back to Himself. Again, in the first stage, the Old Testament, he used the Israelites. In the second stage, he used Jesus, God in the flesh. And in the third stage, God is using us the church. And the goal of all of this is to bring all of creation, you and I included, back to the way things were supposed to be like they were in the garden.

And so today we are going to talk about the church, this part of God's master plan of how He was going to reveal Himself to the world. And just as a heads up, I know when we looked at the people of Israel, we saw that they made a lot of mistakes. They turned away from God. They didn't do a perfect job in representing God to the world. I just hope that you and I don't have a proud heart because as the church, we also are not perfect, right?

We make just as many mistakes as the Israelites did, even though we have the Holy Spirit, which is something that they did not have. And so we're going to look at this story as this begins in Acts chapter 1. So if you open your Bibles with me, again, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts. That's where we're at in the story. If you get to Romans, you've gone too far. Acts chapter 1:1. And while you're turning there, I will pray for God to bless our time. Heavenly Father, we come before You.

We again thank You for Your Word, the Scriptures that You have given to us that share this large story of what is taking place in the world in which we live so that we can make sense of the things that are happening, and we can understand our part that You have given to us to play in the greater story.

Father, as you desire to draw us back to You, to draw us close to You, Father, I pray that we would be obedient, that we would live our lives in such a way that we would be a mirror that reflects your image. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Just a very brief introduction, as I'm reading the book of Acts, the author of the Book of Acts is Luke, the same one that wrote the Gospel of Luke.

And it actually is a continuation. The two go together. Luke and Acts are all part of the same story. As Luke is writing to this man named Theophilus, in the Gospel of Luke, he's writing about the story of Jesus. And then in Acts, he's going to write about the beginning of the church. And so I want to make that connection for you as we start in Acts 1:1. Luke says, "In my former book, referring to the Gospel of Luke, Theophilus, "I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles that he had chosen.

After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them, Luke tells us, over a period of 40 days. And during that time, He spoke about the kingdom of God. On one specific occasion, Luke says, "While He was eating with them, He gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So here in this continuation, Luke is telling us that after the resurrection, now we're jumping into the book of Acts, after Jesus' resurrection, while the disciples were still in Jerusalem, because remember, they were celebrating the Passover. They were celebrating this feast. That's when Jesus was crucified, and that's when He was resurrected. During this period of 40 days, Jesus continued to reveal Himself to His followers to prove that He was still alive.

This is the very location where everything took place. They are still there, and 40 days earlier, Jesus had been crucified. Now, what I enjoy about this part of the story is the fact that there is some reality here, that if

somebody could have shown the dead body of Jesus, the entire movement would have stopped. This is where the disciples are. This is where it took place. They are still in Jerusalem.

And in one of these meetings, as Jesus revealed Himself to His followers, He tells His apostles to stay there, stay in Jerusalem, which is probably the last place they wanted to be, because this is where they crucified Jesus. And now He tells them, "I want you to stay here." And of course, they could be next. And so we will see later in the book of Acts that they are hiding because they are unsure what the religious leaders are going to do to them. And so Jesus tells them to wait in Jerusalem until the gift that He has promised comes.

And this is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now let's put ourselves in the minds of the disciples. They've been following this leader. They believe He's the Messiah. He's been crucified. They've had these visions of Him, seeing Him come back to life. They've met with Him. We'll even see that they eat together. And this is the question that's on their mind. Look at Acts chapter 1:6. "Then they gathered around Him.

They gathered around Jesus and they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" The disciples were still stuck on the idea, just like the religious leaders, as they were interpreting all of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, who He was going to be, what was going to happen when He came. They were still concerned about the kingdoms of this world. They were still concerned that Jesus was going to restore Israel to a nation again, that He was going to free the Israelites from Roman bondage.

Even after the resurrection, this is still what they are expecting to happen. But we will see that Jesus had something much bigger in mind than just restoring the nation of Israel to world prominence. So in verses 7 and 8, Jesus says to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Jesus gives them and us His final command until He returns.

This is what we are supposed to do. We are to be witnesses of who Jesus is to the entire world. The kingdom of God is supposed to spread amongst us. It's supposed to spread into all the kingdoms of this world. And do you know who represents the kingdom of God? It's the church. We do. We represent this kingdom that he was calling into this world. And so the church is supposed to witness to the world of who Jesus is and His kingdom is going to break into our world.

The church is supposed to infiltrate all of society, everything we do. We'll talk more in a little bit about what this kingdom of God is that is breaking into our world and what it looks like. But it doesn't have geographical boundaries like worldly kingdoms do. And so as we bring this kingdom, the church, it is supposed to break into this world. And so I have another video that I want to share with you. It's a funny video that describes what the church really is.

People often say to me, they say, "Jay, John, you know what do you do?" And it's always very difficult to know what to say. Because if I say to you that I'm a reverend, which I am, that conjures up certain images in people's minds as to what I might be. So I like to be a little bit creative in telling people what I do.

I sat next to this lady on an airplane at Heathrow Airport, and I said, "Hello?" And she said, "Well, hello." And I said, "Where are you going?" And she says, "I'm going to Singapore." Then she said to me, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to Australia." I said, "What do you do?" So she told me.

Then she said, "What do you do?" And I said, "Well, I work for a global enterprise." She said, "Do you?" I said, "Yes, I do." I said, "We've got outlets in nearly every country of the world." She said, "Have you?" I said, "Yes, we have." I said, "We've got hospitals and hospices and homeless shelters." I said, "We do marriage work.

We've got orphanages. We've got feeding programs, educational programs." I said, "We do all sorts of justice and reconciliation things." I said, "Basically, we look after people from birth to death, and we deal in the area of

behavioral alteration." She went, "Wow!" And it was so loud, her wow, loads of people turned around and looked at us.

She says, "What's it called?" I said, "It's called the church." Have you ever thought about the church that way? That's what we're part of. I mean, we are part of this global enterprise. We truly are. This kingdom of God has been breaking into this world for 2,000 years, and you and I get to be a part of that.

As we continue in the story in Acts chapter 2, starting in verse 1, we are going to see the receiving of the Spirit and the birth of this church of which you and I are a part. Acts chapter 2 verse 1, "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place, speaking of the disciples. And of course, we know they were all together in one place huddled in this room with the doors closed because they were scared for their lives. Even after seeing the resurrected Jesus, they were still concerned about what was going to happen.

They had no idea. And so in verse 2, Luke tells us, suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that came and rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. And so we begin the age of the church, and it's going to start with a bang. The church is going to start with this amazing story that takes place.

Here we have these early believers. They all receive the Holy Spirit at the same time. And through the power of the Spirit, Luke tells us that they begin to speak in languages that they have not studied and that they do not know. This is one of the ways that you can speak in tongues. Being able to speak a language that you've never studied or don't even comprehend. And why would they speak in all these different languages? Well, Luke goes on to tell us that conveniently, because it is the festival of weeks, all of these Jewish people are back in Jerusalem now from all over the region.

And so they speak different languages. And so these apostles are going to stand up and they are going to speak in these languages the native tongue of the individuals that are there so that they can hear the good news of Jesus. The scene was actually so crazy that Luke tells us some in the crowd begin to mock them and claim that they have drunk too much because they hear them speaking and they don't know all these other languages as well. And so they think some of these guys are just babbling, just making things up.

Now, just as a side note to the story, the fact that we have this in Acts chapter 2, that these men who were huddled in a room, afraid for their very lives, were willing to stand up in front of a crowd in Jerusalem, the exact spot where Jesus was crucified just 50 days earlier and proclaimed that Jesus was alive and He was the Messiah is one of the greatest proofs we have of the resurrection.

There's no way that these ordinary men would have stand up and risked their lives and gone from being huddled and fearful in a room to standing up in the very place where Jesus was crucified and proclaim Jesus is the Messiah. There's no way. In Acts 2:14, Luke goes on to tell us that then Peter stood up with the eleven. He raised his voice and he addressed the crowd, saying, "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you.

Listen carefully to what I say." So Peter stands up and gives this amazing sermon. You can read it later this afternoon in Acts chapter 2, proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah. He goes back to their Old Testament Scriptures and proves that God made this Jesus who they just crucified, both Lord and Christ. Can you imagine how concerning and difficult that would be to hear as a Jewish person? Wait a second. The Messiah we've been waiting for, we just had him killed.

What are we supposed to do now? The Word tells us that the people were cut to the heart. They were cut to the heart. It was something that the Spirit was working. And they asked Peter after he was done, "How are we supposed to respond? What are we supposed to do?" And Peter says to them, "Repent and be baptized in the

name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." What was their response supposed to be? It was supposed to be repentance.

It was supposed to be asking for forgiveness and then being baptized in the name of Jesus, proclaiming Him as your Lord and Savior, the same message that we still have today. It truly is amazing. And so then in Acts 2:41, Luke tells us, "Those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day." That's a pretty good church service, isn't it? 3,000 people make the proclamation, "Yes, we believe Jesus is the Messiah. Yes, we believe that He is Lord.

He is the one that we have been waiting for." And so the church begins there in Acts chapter 2. The church begins with a bang. And so what is this church supposed to look like? Now you have 3,000 followers plus those originals. So maybe 3,500 people that are this church and have this belief and they're living here. What is the church supposed to do? How are we supposed to advance this kingdom of God that Jesus talked to us about? Well, fortunately, we have the answer. We don't have to find the answer.

The early church discovered this. Acts chapter 2:42. This is what the early church looked like. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship. They also devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and the signs that were performed by the apostles. Luke tells us that all the believers were together, and they had everything in common, selling their possessions and goods they gave to anyone as they had need. And every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Here we see what the church is supposed to look like. This is what the church is supposed to look like. It doesn't matter if the church is here in America, if the church is halfway around the world, this is what the church is supposed to do. It's what they are supposed to look like. Spend time studying the Word of God.

Spend time in prayer asking God for His guidance. Spend time fellowshiping, building relationships and connections. Wonders and signs. Miracles should be taking place amongst us. We should have a spirit of generosity and care, sharing meals together. And yes, I know encourage is spelled wrong, all right? We should be encouraging each other, loving each other, lifting each other up, sharing the truth, sharing who Jesus is to the world around us, and inviting people to join us.

In the early church, there were people added to their family every single day. These are the marching orders that have been given to us until he returns. This is to be our focus. This is what the church has been doing for the last 2,000 years, or at least what we are supposed to be doing. There are oftentimes in church history and even in our own time where the enemy allows us to get our focus off of where it should be. And we get sidetracked forgetting that this is our responsibility.

This is what it means to be obedient to God right now. Did you guys know that we are living in the end times? Were you guys aware of that? Now, granted, it's been for the last 2,000 years. But scripturally, we've been living in the end times. Once Jesus came, that was the beginning of the end times. And so now you and I, as this kingdom of God is advancing, are waiting for what Scripture would call the last days. And we'll talk more about that next week as to what it means to be living in the last days and what that is going to look like and how we are supposed to prepare for that.

But as you read through the rest of the story of Acts, it's about the spreading of this new kingdom, the kingdom of God. And so you have Paul and you have Peter and you have others that are traveling around the known world at that time, sharing about Jesus, that He is the Messiah, sharing about this new kingdom that is going to come and planting churches and this great missionary movement in the book of Acts. They literally follow the

examples and the words that Jesus gave saying you're going to travel from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the world and tell people about Jesus.

And so today, you and I continue and follow in that command. Did you know church that we are living in exciting times? Did you guys know that? We have an opportunity before us to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to point others towards Him. As we read through the story in Scripture, we are living in Act 4 of a five-act play. That's where we're at right now. We're over halfway through the story. The first act was creation. The second act was the time before Jesus' first coming.

The third act was the time of Jesus in the flesh. The fourth act in which we are now is the time preparing for Jesus' second coming. Did you know that? That's where we're at. We are preparing for the second coming of Jesus, and the final act is the last days. And so we need to be asking ourselves the question, are we living with an appropriate perspective? Do we live our lives recognizing that in this grand story that God has, that we are in act four of a five-act play?

And do we recognize that the kingdom of God is not measured by land acquired, it is measured by souls converted. Isn't that great? It's not like the kingdoms of this world where you're going out and trying to conquer land and expand your territory in that way. In the age of the church, which we now live, our goal is not to build more buildings or acquire more land. Our goal is to share the truth of Jesus with others in hopes that they will surrender to Him. That's how we advance the Kingdom of God.

That's right. The beautiful part about the kingdom of God versus the kingdoms of this world is that it follows you wherever you go. This kingdom is not bound by geographical fake lines that exist or by buildings that exist. We take this kingdom of God with us because we are the kingdom of God. That is what the church is. Notice when Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray, He said that as you pray, you should say, "Your kingdom come, your will be done." When we pray that prayer, we are asking God to bring His kingdom here, to expand His kingdom in this world, to break into our world, and to continue the growth.

Do you guys recognize that we are a church plant? We are a church plant from that first church in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. Isn't it amazing to think about the fact that here we are in Angola, Indiana, the United States of America, halfway around the world, and yet you and I are here because of that movement of God that started 2,000 years ago with those faithful followers of Jesus. We exist because of them and because of their story. And so my prayer is that you and I, as the baton has been handed to us, that we would continue to be faithful with the command that God has given.

That we would pray that His kingdom would break into our world and that He would expand His kingdom here, not in geographical lines, but with people. And so my desire for you is that you would make this your personal prayer because every one of us has an individual responsibility as a follower of Jesus to be sharing the good news. Also, that we would make it the specific prayer of our church, that here in our community, that we would pray not for bigger buildings or not for more land, but that we would pray for more people to come to know Him.

Not even just part of our church, but part of the larger church in which we exist. It doesn't need to be a part of Fairview Missionary Church. We are simply one piece in this huge kingdom of God that exists. May we make that our prayer and our desire. And as always, as we talk about this kingdom of God and being a part of the family of Christ surrendering to Him, if you're here this morning and this whole thing, you're lost. You're like, "Pastor, I don't have any idea what you're talking about." You can come to know Jesus personally. That's how you join the family of Christ.

You proclaim Him as Lord, just as those first Jewish people in Jerusalem had to repent of their sins for making mistakes and doing things wrong, that's what you need to do. You simply confess before God, "I'm a sinner. I need your forgiveness. I need your grace. I need your mercy. I make mistakes every day. But today I want to

proclaim you as my Lord and Savior. I want to invite you into my heart and into my life. I want to be a part of this kingdom.

For those of you that are here that have already made Jesus your Lord, I pray that you and I would be obedient to His command, to continue to be His hands and His feet, and to love others well, and to share about who Jesus is as we desire to expand His kingdom. As always, the altars are open. There'll be people that would love to pray with you on either side of the sanctuary this morning. They'll stay a little after. If you don't want to come during closing song, that's fine. Just love to pray with you. It doesn't even have to be about this. It can be about whatever you have going on in your life.

But we do live in interesting times. And next week, we're going to talk about the last days. And if you think I'm going to give you a specific timeline, don't come to church, all right? Not giving you a specific timeline. But we will talk about those last days. And I will tell you, as things progress in Scripture, you seem to have, as we look at history, long periods of time where life just goes on. But then when God steps in, things happen quick. That is a truth that we cannot avoid. So when He steps in, things will happen quick.

But we know the end. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, thank You for Your goodness to us. Thank You that Your kingdom is ever expanding, whether we can see it with our eyes or not, that you are still today drawing people to yourself, calling people to you to be a part of your family, to be a part of this kingdom.

God, may we not get sidetracked by the things of this world that can shine for a little bit, but may our focus be on you help us to love others well, help us to be obedient to your commands. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.