

The Enthroned King

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Introduction

Last week Jon helped us step back and look at the book of Acts as a whole. He introduced us to its author, its purpose, its historical setting, and some of the major themes that Luke develops throughout the book. This morning we begin working through the text itself.

These opening verses establish the central truth that governs the entire book. The risen Christ continues his saving reign from heaven through his Spirit and his church. If we misunderstand these verses, we will misunderstand the entire book.

The book of Acts is far more than a record of the first century church. It's the inspired account of the risen Christ continuing his work as he builds his kingdom. I have heard the book of Acts preached as the story of the apostles, the early church, or even the Holy Spirit. All of those themes are certainly present, but Luke's attention is fixed somewhere else.

Luke begins by directing our attention to Jesus Christ. The opening words remind us that his Gospel recorded all that Jesus began to do and teach. That single word, "began," is one of the keys to understanding this entire book. Luke's Gospel tells us what Christ began to do during his earthly ministry. Acts tells us what the risen and ascended Christ continues to do from heaven.

That changes how we read every chapter that follows. Peter will preach. Paul will travel. Churches will be planted. The gospel will spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and ultimately toward the ends of the earth. Yet behind every one of those events stands the ascended Christ directing his church according to his perfect purpose.

The book of Acts is not the story of Christ's absence. It's the story of Christ's present reign. As we work through these opening verses, I want us to see that the ascension did not mark the end of Christ's ministry. It marked the beginning of his heavenly ministry as the enthroned King who continues to build his church, advance his kingdom, and accomplish his saving purposes until he returns in glory.

So, to tie everything together into what we should expect as we preach through Acts...

Acts is not just the history of the early church. It is the next chapter in God's unfolding plan of redemption that began in Genesis, was promised by the prophets, inaugurated by Christ, and now advances through the reign of the ascended King.

Sermon Text: Acts 1:1-11

Call: “*The grass withers and the flower fades,*”

Response: “*But the word of the Lord endures forever.*”

1. Christ Continues His Work (v1-3)

1.1 Luke connects his two volumes. (v1-2)

In verse 1 the first thing Luke does is remind his readers that Acts is not a standalone book. It's the second volume of a single work. The first volume is the Gospel of Luke. Together, Luke and Acts tell one continuous story.

Luke also writes both books to the same man, Theophilus. In the Gospel, he calls him "most excellent Theophilus," suggesting he was likely a man of prominence or public office. Luke's desire is that Theophilus would have certainty concerning the things he had been taught.

As Luke summarizes his first volume, listen carefully to what he says in **verse 1**,

"...I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach..."

That word "began" is one of the keys to understanding the entire book of Acts. If you underline words in your Bible, this is one worth underlining!

Luke does not say his Gospel records everything Jesus did and taught. He says it records what Jesus began to do and teach. Luke expects us to draw the obvious conclusion that Acts records what Jesus continues to do and teach.

What's interesting here to me is what Luke does not say. He does not say the apostles continued Christ's work. He says Christ continues his own work. The apostles are instruments. The church is an instrument. The Holy Spirit is the divine power. But the primary actor throughout Acts is still Jesus himself.

That completely changes how we read this book. Over the coming months, we'll read about preaching, missionary journeys, church planting, persecution, conversions, and the spread of the Gospel throughout the Roman world.

But Luke wants us to see that behind every sermon, every conversion, every missionary journey, and every church planted stands the risen Christ continuing his work.

There's something else in verse 1 that deserves our attention. Luke doesn't simply say Jesus taught. He says Jesus did and taught.

Christianity is not merely instruction about salvation. It's salvation accomplished by the Savior. Jesus did not simply explain the kingdom. He established it through his perfect life, his atoning death, his victorious resurrection, and now his ascension. His words reveal salvation, and his works accomplish it.

I don't want us ever to separate Christ's teaching from Christ's saving work. Christianity is not just something we learn. It's a life we receive from Christ and then live for Christ. Jesus both did and taught, and his people are called to proclaim his truth and walk in obedience to it.

Christ's life reminds us that doctrine and duty belong together. He did, and he taught. What we believe shapes how we live, and how we live reveals what we truly believe. Sound doctrine always bears the fruit of holy living, and holy living puts the beauty of sound doctrine on display.

Luke then continues into **verse 2**, where we can see that even before Christ ascends, he is preparing his apostles for the work that lies ahead. He gives them his final instructions through the Holy Spirit before ascending into heaven. The same Spirit who directed Christ's earthly ministry would soon empower the apostles for theirs.

Luke also reminds us that these men were "the apostles whom he had chosen." They did not appoint themselves. Christ appointed them. These men occupy a unique and unrepeatable office in redemptive history. As Paul later writes in Ephesians 2:20, the church is "built on the

foundation of the apostles and prophets". Foundations are laid once. You don't keep laying the foundation of a building. Once the foundation is complete, you build upon it. There are no apostles today in this New Testament sense. The apostles laid the foundation of Christ's church through their inspired teaching, and we continue to build upon that foundation today through the Scriptures they left us.

Having connected these two volumes together in verses 1 and 2, Luke now turns our attention to the risen Christ himself.

1.2 Jesus is still acting. (v3)

Do you see what Luke is emphasizing in **verse 3**? Jesus is still acting.

He isn't passive after his resurrection. He isn't simply waiting to ascend into heaven. The risen Christ is actively ministering to his disciples in at least three ways. Luke tells us that he presented himself alive, appeared to them over forty days, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God.

First, Luke says,

"He presented himself alive...by many proofs."

Christianity has never asked people to believe in the resurrection without evidence. Our faith is not a leap into the dark. It is confidence grounded in historical events that God accomplished in space and time. Over the course of forty days, he repeatedly showed himself alive. He ate with his disciples. He walked with them. He spoke with them. He invited Thomas to touch his wounds. Again and again, Jesus gave undeniable evidence that he had truly conquered sin, Satan, and death.

The apostles would spend the rest of their lives preaching the resurrection because they knew it was true. They had seen the risen Christ with their own eyes. Their faith rested upon historical fact, not wishful thinking or religious experience.

The same is true for us today. While we have not seen Christ physically, we possess the inspired testimony of those who did. Our faith rests upon the trustworthy Word of God and the historical reality of Christ's resurrection.

Luke was a meticulous historian. So now, our faith is not built upon inspirational stories or religious feelings. It is rooted in real history. Luke tells us that he investigated everything carefully, interviewed eyewitnesses, and wrote an orderly account so that his readers could have certainty. The events of Acts happened in real cities, before real governors, during real reigns of kings and emperors. Our faith is not grounded in speculation but in historical fact. The Christ who died, rose, ascended, and now reigns is the same Christ who acted in history, and Luke records those acts with remarkable precision.

Luke then tells us that Jesus appeared to them,

"...during forty days..."

Those forty days were not simply a waiting period between the resurrection and ascension. They were forty days of preparation by the risen King.

Jesus wasn't idle. He was preparing his apostles for the work that lay ahead. He strengthened their faith, corrected their misunderstandings, encouraged them, and equipped them for the work ahead. All of this should remind us that real, faithful ministry rarely happens by accident.

Jesus spent years preparing these men before the cross, and even after his resurrection, he continued preparing them. The church should follow that same pattern. Faithful pastors, elders, teachers, missionaries, and ministry leaders don't simply appear overnight. Christ prepares those he calls, and his church should faithfully disciple, instruct, encourage, and equip the next generation for ministry.

Finally, Luke tells us what Jesus spent those forty days teaching.

"...speaking about the kingdom of God."

That detail is not included by accident. The kingdom of God is one of Luke's great themes throughout Acts. The book creates a huge inclusio by beginning with Christ teaching about

the kingdom, and it ending with Paul preaching the kingdom in Rome. Everything in between shows how the risen King extends his reign through the preaching of the Gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the faithful witness of his church.

The kingdom had already been inaugurated during Christ's earthly ministry. Now the risen Christ is preparing his apostles for its expansion to the ends of the earth. The rest of Acts records the beginning of that glorious advance under the reign of the ascended King.

During those forty days, Luke gives us one particular scene that prepares us for everything that follows. While Jesus was gathered with his apostles, he gave them an unexpected command.

2. Christ Prepares His Witnesses (v4-5)

2.1 They must wait. (v4)

Luke continues in **verse 4**,

"And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father..."

Notice that Jesus doesn't make this a suggestion. He ordered them.

Before they preached, before they planted churches, before they carried the Gospel to the nations.

They were to wait.

That probably wasn't what the apostles expected. After forty days with the risen Christ, they may have been eager to begin the mission. Instead, Jesus tells them to remain exactly where they are until the Father sends what he has promised.

Why Jerusalem? Why not return home? Why not go back to your former work until the Father sends the Spirit?

Think about the significance of that city.

Jerusalem was the city that rejected its Messiah. It was the place where Jesus was mocked, condemned, and crucified. Now Christ had ordained that it would become the birthplace of his church. The city that witnessed his humiliation would also witness his exaltation as he poured out the Holy Spirit upon his people. Just as Isaiah had prophesied in chapter 2 verse 3, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem".

Here again, we see the wisdom of God. He delights in displaying his grace where man's sin appears greatest. Jerusalem becomes the fountainhead from which the Gospel spreads.

But the command to wait teaches us something else too!

Before the apostles could carry out Christ's mission, they first had to learn dependence upon Christ. They had to learn that the mission could never be accomplished in their own strength. They didn't determine the timing. They didn't determine the method. Faithful servants obey their Master.

The same principle remains true for us today.

But, we are not waiting for another Pentecost. Pentecost was a unique event in redemptive history that will never be repeated. But we are just as dependent upon the Holy Spirit as the apostles were. Every sermon preached, every Gospel conversation, every act of discipleship, every faithful parent, every elder, every missionary, every counselor, and every believer depends upon the strength that God provides.

The temptation today is not to wait for another Pentecost. It's to trust methods instead of the Spirit. We are often tempted to think bigger budgets, better technology, better marketing, or better personalities will build Christ's church. Jesus says otherwise.

The church does not advance through clever programs, marketing strategies, or human ingenuity. Christ builds his church through the faithful proclamation of his Word and the powerful work of his Spirit. Our responsibility is not to manufacture results. Our responsibility is to obey Christ faithfully and trust him to accomplish what only he can do.

2.2 The Spirit is coming. (v5)

Jesus then continues in **verse 5** by identifying the Father's promise. The gift they were waiting for was the Holy Spirit.

John's baptism with water pointed people to the coming Messiah and called them to repentance in preparation for his coming. Now the Messiah himself declares that, in just a few days, he will baptize his apostles with the Holy Spirit, empowering them for the mission that lay ahead. No amount of personal zeal or natural ability that could accomplish what only the Spirit of God could do.

We can also note that Jesus does not tell them the exact day. He simply says, "not many days from now." Once again, he teaches his disciples to trust his promise without demanding his timetable. Their responsibility was not to know the day. Their responsibility was to trust the Lord who had made the promise. The same is true for us. God calls us to trust his promises, obey his Word, and leave the timing of his purposes in his hands.

Everything Jesus had promised was about to happen. The Spirit was coming. But before the mission began, Luke lets us see that the disciples still misunderstood something important.

3. Christ Defines His Mission (v6-8)

3.1 The disciples misunderstand. (v6)

Luke tells us in **verse 6** that an honest question was asked. It certainly was an honest question, but it reveals that the apostles still had more to learn.

Their question wasn't wrong because they expected the kingdom. The Old Testament repeatedly promised that the Messiah would reign on David's throne and establish an

everlasting kingdom. They were right to believe those promises. Notice that Jesus never corrects their expectation of the kingdom. He corrects their expectation of its timing.

They expected the kingdom to be restored immediately through the visible restoration of Israel. They were looking for an earthly throne in Jerusalem.

But God had something even greater in view.

Before Christ would reign visibly over a renewed creation, he would first reign from heaven. Before the kingdom would be consummated, it would be proclaimed. Before every knee bows in submission, the Gospel must first go to every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.

The apostles were asking whether the end had come.

Jesus was about to show them that the next great event in God's plan was not the restoration of an earthly kingdom, but the worldwide expansion of his heavenly kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel.

Even here, we are reminded how patient Christ is with his people. He does not rebuke the apostles for expecting God's kingdom. Instead, he gently corrects their understanding and directs their attention to the mission that lay immediately before them.

3.2 Jesus redirects them. (v7)

Jesus answers them in **verse 7**, but notice what Jesus does not say.

He does not tell them that the kingdom will never come. He does not rebuke them for believing the Old Testament promises. Instead, he redirects their attention.

Their question is focused on when. Their question is about timing.

Jesus shifts their attention to what. Jesus will redirect them to their task.

The timing of God's redemptive plan belongs to the Father alone. It has been fixed by his sovereign authority, not by human calculation.

The apostles were not called to decipher God's calendar. They were called to obey God's commission. That is a lesson every generation of Christians needs to hear.

We are often fascinated by the things God has not revealed while neglecting the things he has clearly commanded. We want to know tomorrow's secrets when Christ has already given us today's assignment.

As Calvin wisely observed, much of our sinful curiosity grows out of either idleness or distrust. We become idle when we neglect the work God has already given us. We become distrustful when we doubt God's wisdom in withholding information from us.

Christ answers both problems. His promises strengthen our faith, and his commands occupy our hands.

There is one other thing I want us to notice before leaving this verse.

Jesus does not actually leave the apostles without an answer. He simply refuses to answer their question in the way they expected.

The answer is about to unfold before their very eyes.

In just a few moments, Luke will record Christ's ascension into heaven. That event explains the next event of God's redemptive plan. Rather than establishing an earthly throne in Jerusalem, the Messiah will ascend to the Father, receive the kingdom promised to him, and reign from heaven as the Gospel advances to the nations.

We'll see that more clearly in just a few moments.

3.3 The kingdom advances. (v8)

Jesus now gives the answer the apostles truly needed in **verse 8**.

Notice that Jesus doesn't answer their question about when the kingdom would come. Instead, he tells them how the kingdom will advance.

It won't advance through political conquest.

It won't advance by military strength.

It won't advance by restoring Israel's national kingdom.

Jesus teaches them that it will advance through the faithful proclamation of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is the mission Christ gives his church.

We also can't leave verse 8 without looking at the kind of power Jesus promises.

The Holy Spirit certainly worked miracles through the apostles, but the emphasis here is not miracle working power. It's power for Gospel witness. The Spirit comes so that Christ's people might faithfully proclaim the risen King. The focus here is not spectacular displays of power (leg lengthening, or healing arthritis). The focus is the faithful proclamation of Christ. Throughout Acts, miracles authenticate the apostolic message, but they never replace it. The central work of the Spirit is to empower Christ's witnesses to proclaim the risen King.

In verse 8, we also see Christ's command with Christ's promise. He commands his witnesses to go, and he promises the Spirit will accomplish what he commands.

And the rest of the book of Acts is the unfolding of that promise. Every chapter reminds us that Christ always keeps his promises.

Just before leaving verse 8, we should notice the progression.

Jerusalem.

Judea.

Samaria.

The ends of the earth.

This is way more than a list of locations. It's the geographic outline of the entire book of Acts. Luke records the Gospel moving outward exactly as Christ promised. Beginning in Jerusalem, the message spreads throughout Judea, crosses into Samaria, and eventually reaches the nations.

That same mission continues today.

Christ still advances his kingdom in exactly the same way. Not through earthly power, political influence, or human wisdom, or fantastic miracles, but through the faithful proclamation of his Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The kingdom advances as Christ is proclaimed. The ascended King is still at work, and he always keeps his promises.

But, before the apostles can carry this message to the nations, something else must happen first. The King must take his throne.

4. Christ Ascends To His Throne (v9-11)

Luke now records for us one of the most important events in all of redemptive history in **verse 9**.

Most Christians think of the ascension as the moment Jesus (bodily) left the earth, and that is certainly true.

But Luke wants us to see something far greater. The ascension is not merely Christ's departure. It's Christ's coronation.

Remember the question the disciples had just asked. "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Jesus began to answer their question with his words. Now he answers it with an event.

The disciples expected an earthly throne in Jerusalem, and instead, Jesus ascended to receive a heavenly throne.

This is where Daniel's prophecy in chapter 7 becomes so important.

Daniel writes,

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man..."

Look carefully where the Son of Man is going.

He is not coming down to earth.

He is coming to the Ancient of Days.

That is a detail many Christians overlook. Daniel is not describing Christ's return to earth. He is describing Christ's ascension into heaven. Both passages describe the Son of Man coming with clouds, not descending from heaven to earth, but approaching the Father to receive authority. The direction of movement is the same. Luke is describing the event Daniel foresaw.

There, in Daniel 7, it says he is given,

"dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him."

That is exactly what Luke is recording.

Jesus ascends into heaven, the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days, and the Messiah receives the everlasting dominion God promised throughout the Old Testament.

(Psalm 2, Psalm 110, Isaiah 9, the Davidic Covenant, and Daniel 7)

From that heavenly throne, he now reigns over all creation.

Psalm 110 says the same thing.

"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."

The risen Christ is not waiting to become King. He is reigning now. That changes how we read the entire book of Acts.

Daniel 7 shows the Son receiving the kingdom. Psalm 110 shows the King reigning from the Father's right hand. Together, they explain what the ascension means. Christ is reigning now. Everything that has been promised in this chapter now begins to unfold because the King is on his throne.

The ascension is not just about where Jesus went. It explains what Jesus is doing. Daniel 7 shows the Son of Man receiving his kingdom. Psalm 110 shows him seated at the Father's right hand. Acts 2 will show him pouring out the promised Spirit. These are not separate events. They are different perspectives on the same royal enthronement.

Acts is not primarily the story of the apostles.

It's not primarily the story of the church.

It's the story of the enthroned Christ extending his reign through the power of the Holy Spirit and the faithful witness of his church.

Everything that follows in this book flows from this moment.

4.2 Heaven interprets. (v10)

Luke then tells us in **verse 10** that "two men" stood by them. Although they are introduced as "two men, there is little doubt that these are angels. All throughout Luke's writings, angels regularly appear in human form and are described in similar language. Their appearance, their heavenly message, and the timing of their arrival all make their identity clear.

More important than who they are is why they have come.

God does not leave the apostles to interpret the ascension for themselves. He immediately sends heavenly messengers to explain what they have just witnessed.

The ascension was not Christ abandoning his church. It was Christ taking his throne.

He had appointed his apostles, instructed them, commissioned them, and promised them the Holy Spirit. The ascended Christ would continue to govern his church from heaven through the very means he had established.

Heaven now prepares to explain that glorious reality in verse 11.

4.3 The King will return. (v11)

In **verse 11**, the angels were not rebuking the disciples for loving Christ or for being captivated by what they had just witnessed. Instead, they gently redirected the disciples' attention by reminding them that Christ's ascension was not the end of the story. The same Jesus who had visibly and bodily ascended into heaven would one day visibly and bodily return in glory.

That promise was not given just to satisfy the disciples' curiosity about the future.

It was given to shape the way they would live until that future arrived.

I want to enthusiastically point out that the angels (gently) turn the disciples from standing still to moving forward. The proper response to Christ's ascension is not idly gazing into heaven but faithfully being on mission.

The church now lives between Christ's ascension and Christ's return. During that time, we don't know Christ by bodily sight, but by faith through the ministry of his Word and Spirit. We don't become consumed with trying to calculate the day of his return. Instead, we devote ourselves to the mission he has already given us, faithfully proclaiming the Gospel, making disciples, and serving our reigning King until he comes again.

The promise of Christ's return has always been one of the great hopes of the Christian life. It strengthens weary believers, encourages perseverance through suffering, promotes holiness, and reminds us that no act of faithful service is ever overlooked by our King.

The One who now reigns from the Father's right hand will one day return to judge the living and the dead, fully establish his kingdom, and make all things new.

Now, at the end of our text, we can see that Luke begins the book of Acts by fixing our eyes on two great realities.

Christ is reigning now, and Christ is coming again.

Everything that takes place between those two great events, Christ's ascension and Christ's return, is the story of the ascended King continuing his work through the power of the Holy Spirit as he gathers his people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation to the glory of God the Father.

5. Application And Call To Christ

These truths are not simply meant to help us understand the book of Acts. They are meant to shape the way we live tomorrow. If Christ is reigning now, continuing his work through his church, and one day returning in glory, then Awakening Church, tomorrow is not an ordinary day.

Tomorrow is another day to faithfully serve our reigning King.

Tomorrow is another day to proclaim the Gospel.

Tomorrow is another day to make disciples.

Tomorrow is another day to love our families, serve our church, and glorify Christ in whatever he has called us to do.

Every day is another opportunity to participate in the work that the enthroned King is still accomplishing through his people.

Awakening Church, because Christ reigns, there are no ordinary days.

Every sunrise is another opportunity to joyfully join the work the ascended King is accomplishing through his church until the day we see him face to face.

Will your tomorrow look like Christ is King?

Let's end our time this morning with three points from the text we just walked through.

Point 1. CHRIST REIGNS (Submit to him)

If you belong to Christ this morning, then live tomorrow as a servant of your reigning King. Don't become distracted by endless speculation about what God has chosen not to reveal. Give yourself to what Christ has clearly commanded. Walk in holiness, love your neighbor, proclaim the Gospel, and trust the Spirit to use your ordinary faithfulness.

Point 2. CHRIST SENDS (Participate in his mission)

Awakening Church, never forget how Christ has chosen to advance his kingdom. He has not called us to entertain the world, imitate the culture, or trust in worldly methods. He has called us to faithfully preach his Word, make disciples, pray, love one another, and trust the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is building his church, and he has graciously invited us to participate in that work.

Point 3. CHRIST RETURNS (Live faithfully in light of his coming)

Finally, if you are here today and you have never trusted in Jesus Christ, understand what this passage has shown us. The One who ascended into heaven is reigning today, and that same Jesus will one day return.

When he comes again, he will not return to suffer for sin a second time.

He will return as the righteous Judge of the living and the dead.

Today, however, the Gospel is freely proclaimed. The King who will one day judge sinners now invites sinners to come to him in repentance and faith. Turn from your sin (repent). Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (believe). Receive the forgiveness that he purchased by his death and resurrection, and become a joyful citizen of the kingdom that will never end.

6. Questions For Study

Please be encouraged to use these questions for reflection throughout the week and Awakening discipleship group discussions.

1. How does seeing Acts as the continuing work of the ascended Christ change the way you read the book and the way you think about your own daily life and ministry?
2. In what ways are you tempted to become more concerned with questions God has not revealed than with faithfully obeying what Christ has already commanded?
3. Jesus promised that his kingdom advances through the power of the Holy Spirit and the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. How should that truth shape the way we think about evangelism, discipleship, and the ministry of the local church?
4. Since Christ is reigning now and will one day return, what areas of your life need to come into greater submission to his authority? Is there any sin you need to confess or any act of obedience you have been neglecting?
5. This week, what specific opportunity has Christ given you to participate in his ongoing work by serving others, proclaiming the Gospel, encouraging another believer, or making a disciple? How can your discipleship group pray for you to be faithful?

Questions for small children during family devotion:

Please be encouraged to use these questions in family devotion throughout the week, especially for young minds learning about Christ.

1. Where is Jesus now?

Parent guided answer: Jesus is alive and reigns in heaven at the Father's right hand. He is King over all things and continues to care for and build his church.

2. What did Jesus tell his followers to do?

Parent guided answer: Jesus told his followers to tell other people about him. We call this sharing the Gospel and making disciples.

3. Who helps Christians obey Jesus?

Parent guided answer: The Holy Spirit lives in every believer and gives us the strength to love Christ, obey his Word, and tell others about him.

4. Is Jesus coming back one day?

Parent guided answer: Yes. Jesus promised that he will return just as he ascended into heaven. When he comes again, he will make all things new and reign forever.

5. How can you serve King Jesus this week?

Parent guided answer: Encourage your child to think of one practical way to obey Christ, such as praying, obeying parents, showing kindness, telling someone about Jesus, helping another person, or reading God's Word together.