

JESUS' MINISTRY ON EARTH

ACTS 01:01–05

Introduction

Note the words “my former book” or treatise. Luke was referring back to his gospel. He was now writing to the same man to whom he had written his gospel, Theophilus. He was reminding Theophilus that in his gospel he had covered the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. Note the word “began.” Jesus’ life and work on earth was only the beginning. Although He is in heaven, He *continues* to work and minister through the presence of the Spirit in the hearts and lives of believers. The book of Acts could well be called...

- the acts (works and teachings) of believers; or
- the acts (works and teachings) of Christ; or
- the acts (works and teachings) of the Holy Spirit.

Very briefly, Luke was saying that the life of Jesus Christ continues on. The book of Acts is the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ. Verses 1-5 are a summary of the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, a summary of the ministry of Christ covered in Acts.

- I. Luke wrote to Theophilus — reminded him of the gospel, that is, of Jesus’ ministry (v. 1).
- II. Jesus’ work and teaching (vv. 1-2).
- III. Jesus’ death and resurrection (v. 3).
- IV. Jesus’ promise of the kingdom (v. 3).
- V. Jesus’ promise of the Spirit (vv. 4-5).

I. Acts 01:01 Theophilus

Luke wrote to Theophilus, reminding him of the former gospel which he had written, the gospel which covered the life and ministry of Jesus.

Who is Theophilus? We are not told, but note several facts.

1. Theophilus is called “most excellent Theophilus” in the *Gospel of Luke* (Lk. 1:3). The words, “most excellent Theophilus,” are a title of rank and honour. It is the same title used of Felix and Festus, two high ranking Roman officials (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:27). Theophilus must have been a Roman official of high rank.
2. Theophilus was a personal friend of Luke, close enough to correspond with Luke about the Lord Jesus. He was either a man interested in knowing the truth about Christ or else a new convert who needed to be grounded in Christ. Perhaps Luke himself had led Theophilus to Christ.

Note: Luke did not address Theophilus as “most excellent” in Acts. The title is dropped. Why? There are three possibilities.

- a. Luke and Theophilus were close friends, close enough to be on a first name basis.
- b. Theophilus had either retired or been removed from office between the writing of Luke and Acts.
- c. Theophilus, having grown in Christ, had grown so loving and humble he did not want his title used among his Christian friends, not in times of personal communication and fellowship.

Thought 1: There is a great lesson in this thought, a lesson on love and humility so needed by the world and among God's people (see Mt. 23:7-12).

3. Theophilus lived outside Palestine, somewhere away from Luke.
4. Theophilus was a man of education and culture. His title and the fact that the Gospel of Luke and Acts are addressed to him point toward his being educated and cultured.
5. The name Theophilus means "loved by God" or "the friend of God."

Thought 1. Theophilus was a man who sought to grow and mature in the Lord. Imagine! Luke and Acts were written to him! Two of the greatest books ever written! And why? Because he had such a deep hunger to know the Lord, to learn all he could about the Lord. What a legacy and testimony — to be known as a man who so hungered to know the Lord that God had two of the greatest books ever written addressed to him! May we all develop a hunger to learn all we can about the Lord and Saviour of the universe.

II. *Acts 01:01–02 Ministry of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' ministry on earth began with His work and teaching. Note the subject of this first chapter, "The Great Days of Expectation." The works and teachings of Christ launched these days. Jesus Christ brought the greatest expectation to earth imaginable to man; in fact, He brought the only hope man has of surviving...

- of conquering the sin and shame of the earth: its hatred, killing, maiming, selfishness, bitterness, division.
- of conquering the death and hell of man's destiny: his dread, fear, insecurity, ignorance and baseless hope of what lies beyond the grave.

As stated, Jesus Christ brought the only hope man has of surviving. He taught men how to live together in peace and how they should live before God. Note three significant things.

1. Christ worked and taught until He was "taken up," that is, until He ascended back into heaven. He was faithful, using all He had for God until His life upon earth was completed.

Thought 1. The believer is to use his gifts for God until he enters heaven. There is no retirement from seeking to reach a world sunk so desperately in need.

John 4:35 “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

John 9:4 “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

1 Cor 4:2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

1 Cor 6:20 You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

1 Pet 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

2 Tim 1:6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Tim 1:4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.

Eccl 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

2. Christ worked and taught “through the Holy Spirit.” While He was on earth in the flesh, Christ was totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit. He had to surrender Himself and to make Himself available to the Spirit.

Thought 1. Just think! If Christ was so dependent upon the Spirit of God, how much more are we! How much more do we need to make ourselves available to Him, available for His gifts and power!

Acts 1:8 “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.”

Rom 8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Eph 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

1 John 2:27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him.

3. Christ gave and taught His commandments to those whom He had *chosen*, His apostles. He taught throngs of people, but He zeroed in on the apostles. His whole mission depended upon them. They were to be the first who would carry His message to the world after His departure. If they failed, his mission would fail; if they

succeeded, His mission would succeed. He had to concentrate upon them; to drill His commandments into them so that they in turn could teach His commandments.

Thought 1. Note a critical fact: every believer is the chosen servant of God to carry on the mission of Christ. Every believer is to be proclaiming the glorious message of hope to a world lost and doomed to death.

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

Mat 28:19-20 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Acts 1:8 *"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."*

III. Acts 01:03 Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Jesus' ministry on earth was climaxed in His passion and resurrection (see Acts 17:3; 26:23). The word *suffering* (pathein) means passion; it refers to the sufferings or death of Christ. His death and resurrection assured the salvation of man.

=> By death He paid the penalty for man's sin.

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

=> By arising from the dead He conquered death for man and now makes available a new life of power for the believer.

Rom 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

1 Cor 15:20-23 *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Eph 1:19-20 *And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

Eph 2:4-10 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Note the two proofs of salvation.

1. Jesus *showed* (paristemi), presented Himself alive to these men. There are ten resurrection appearances of Jesus recorded in the New Testament (see *Resurrection, Jesus Christ*, Acts 1:3). However, there were apparently many more that are not recorded (see Jn. 20:30-31; 21:25).
2. Jesus gave many infallible proofs of His resurrection. (See Acts 10:40-41)
 - a. The word *proofs* (tekmeriois) means positive proof; infallible proof; convincing proof; sure signs and ways.
 - b. The infallible, positive proofs and appearances went on for *forty days*.

ACTS 01:03 RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. Acts 01:03

Jesus appeared at least ten times after His resurrection before He ascended into heaven. There were apparently many more appearances not recorded (see Jn. 20:30-31; 21:25).

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9-11; Jn.20:11-18).
2. He appeared to the women running to tell the disciples about the empty tomb (Mt.28:8-10)
3. He appeared to Peter, probably to assure him of his restoration (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5).

4. He appeared to the two Emmaus disciples sometime in the early evening (Mk. 16:12; Lk. 24:13-42).
5. He appeared to the disciples with Thomas absent (Mk. 16:14; Lk.24:36-43; Jn. 20:19-25).
6. One week later, He appeared to the disciples who had gone fishing (Jn. 20).
7. He appeared to 500 believers (1 Cor. 15:6).
8. He appeared to the apostles (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18).
9. He appeared to James, the Lord's half-brother (1 Cor. 15:7).
10. He appeared to the believers at His ascension (Mk. 16:19-20; Lk. 24:44-53; Acts 1:3-12).

It should be remembered that since Jesus' ascension He has appeared at least two other times.

1. He appeared to Stephen at his martyrdom (Acts 7:55-56).
2. He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3f). □

IV. Acts 01:03 Kingdom of God

Jesus' ministry on earth was to proclaim the great hope of man, the promise of the Kingdom of God. (See *Kingdom of God*, Mt. 19:23-24.) Note: the Kingdom of God is the focus of His message even after His resurrection. Man's only hope for survival is the Kingdom of God.

V. Acts 01:04–05 The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Jesus' ministry on earth was to proclaim the great promise to believers, the promise of the Holy Spirit. God knew and Christ proclaimed that no man could live and witness for God, not in *the arm of the flesh*. No man or group of men were powerful enough to live for God or to convince others of *the foolishness of the gospel*...

- that love is more powerful than might.
- that God's Son actually came to earth as a man.
- That God's Son died but was raised from the dead, conquering death.
- that the cross is the way men are saved from sin, death and hell.
- that man can be *born again*, literally born again and made into a new creature by *believing* in Jesus.
- that man can live forever by being born again through belief in Jesus.

Christ knew that man needed a supernatural power, the power of God Himself. He knew that the very presence of God's Spirit had to *enter into* the very heart of man and...

- impart the divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4).
- recreate his being completely (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:9-10).
- live within his body, giving the believer the power to control his life for God and to courageously proclaim the gospel to a world that would consider it foolishness and often react in violence.

In these two verses, Christ is sharing how the apostles (and all succeeding believers) are to receive the Holy Spirit in all His fullness and power.

1. They are to “wait for the gift my Father promised, “ *wait in prayer* for the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Note the phrase “the gift my Father promised.” The idea is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the *supreme gift* of God to the believer. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God Himself, and God promises to give His Spirit to the believer.

Mat 3:11 *“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”*

John 14:16-17 *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

Acts 1:8 *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.”*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Luke 24:49 *“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

Isa 32:15 *Till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest.*

Isa 44:3 *For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.*

Joel 2:28 *‘And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.’*

Zec 2:10 *“Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you,” declares the Lord. (See Holy Spirit, Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4)*

- b. The believer must *wait* in prayer to receive the Holy Spirit. *Waiting, centring and focusing* one’s attention upon God is another way of saying, believing, trusting and focusing one’s life upon God. If a person will *wait* upon God — if he will learn to *wait* more and more — he will...

- gain more and more awareness and consciousness of the Spirit's presence and power.
- gain more and more knowledge of the Spirit Himself, how He lives and works within the believer's heart and life.
- learn how to surrender more and more of his life to the Spirit's control and witness.
- experience more and more of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Note: the fruit of the Spirit is borne only as the believer is *filled* with the Spirit. Being filled is a command. Believers are not automatically filled. Too many believers walk around in the flesh and sinful nature, totally unconscious of the Spirit's presence and will.

Luke 11:13 *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Eph 5:18 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

2. Believers have to hear about the promise of the Spirit before they can receive Him. A believer cannot sit with a wandering or preoccupied mind and be filled with the Spirit of God; he cannot expect to be filled with the presence of God and never centre his mind upon the things of God. The believer has to hear and focus his attention upon, hunger and thirst for the things of God. He has to centre his life upon God's Spirit in order to receive the promise of the Spirit.

Rom 8:5-6 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

1 Cor 2:12 *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

3. Then, believers will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Note: this baptism is not water baptism, not the kind of water baptism John used. It is the baptism brought by Christ Himself when the believer is converted or saved, the immersion of the believer into the Spirit of God and of the Spirit into the believer. (See Mt. 3:11. See *Pentecost*, Acts 2:1-4.)

(See notes, Jn. 14:15-26; 16:7-15; see Rom. 8:1-17 for the person and Work of the Holy Spirit. Christ clearly outlined both His Person and Work.) ■

JESUS' LAST DAY ON EARTH

ACTS 01:06–11

Introduction

This was Jesus' last day on earth. What He did is a most powerful and critical message for believers.

- I. The disciples came together again (v. 6).
- II. Scene 1: Jesus promised the kingdom (vv. 6-7).
- III. Scene 2: Jesus assigned the believers' great task — the great commission (v. 8).
- IV. Scene 3: Jesus ascended before the disciples' very eyes (v. 9).
- V. Scene 4: the prophecy of Jesus' return (vv. 10-11).

I. Acts 01:06 *Gathering of the Disciples*

The disciples came together again. This is apparently a different occasion, a specific time planned by Christ when He would ascend back into heaven. He must have arranged for the apostles to gather all the disciples together (over five hundred) at one location. What He had to announce would be a momentous occasion (see 1 Cor. 15:6).

II. Acts 01:06–07 *Promise of the Kingdom*

The first scene — Jesus promised the kingdom. Picture the scene: over five hundred disciples stood in some remote spot, probably on the top of a mountain. They surrounded Christ. One of the disciples asked Christ a revealing question: “Was He now going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Was that the reason He had called everyone together, the reason for His stressing the importance of the meeting so much?”

The revealing thing is this: the disciples were still thinking in terms of an earthly, physical Messiah, of a physical and material rule and reign for themselves and their nation, Israel. (See *Messiah*, Mt. 1:18.)

We must always remember this: Christ *is going to set up His kingdom on earth*. There is a future aspect to His kingdom as well as a present rule and reign in human hearts. His rule and reign will be done on earth. The Lord's prayer assures this (see Mt. 6:10). Christ promised the apostles they would sit upon thrones judging the people of Israel. He also promised believers they would receive a hundredfold and rule over the world. (See notes, Mt. 19:27-30; Lk. 16:10-12; Rev. 14:13; 21:24-27.) But the concern of the believer is not to be a reward, not to be a carnal craving for...

- position and influence
 - authority and power
 - money and possessions
 - recognition and prestige
 - rule and reign
 - the material and physical
-

The believer's concern is to be service and ministry, proclaiming the glorious salvation of Christ and meeting the cry of a world buried in desperate needs. Christ is direct, rebuking those who wish to pry into the timing of the Lord's return and the setting up of His kingdom upon earth. Christ had said that even He did not know when He was to return and set up the kingdom. He rebuked the question...

- "It is not for you to know."
- "The Father has set [the times] by His own authority."

Thought 1. Believers are not to be focusing upon prophecy and the setting of dates. They are not to be craving for release from this world and for the heavenly positions of authority. What believers are to do is to look for Jesus' return and long for heaven. But even this — even the love of Jesus' return — is not to get in the way of the believer's task, the task Christ discusses in the next point. What is the task? It is the task of witnessing. Believers are to focus upon witnessing, upon sharing the glorious gospel of salvation with the world.

Mark 13:32 *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*

John 13:7 *Jesus replied. "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

John 16:12 *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear."*

1 Cor 13:12 *Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

Rev 5:3 *But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.*

III. Acts 01:08 The Great Commission: Witnessing with Power

The second scene — Jesus assigned the believers' great task, the great commission. Note three significant factors:

1. The believer's equipping power was to be the Holy Spirit. The disciples had asked about the kingdom, the positions of leadership and authority Christ had promised. The point is critical and to be noted with all diligence. They were to receive power, but not the power of this earth, not the power of...

- position
- fame
- recognition
- wealth
- supervision
- politics

Their power was to be spiritual and supernatural. It was to be the very power...

- of God Himself,
- of the Supreme Being of the universe,
- of His presence,
- of His Spirit

God's very own Spirit was to dwell within the heart and life of the believer. No greater power could ever be possessed by anyone. This is clearly seen: once the early disciples experienced the coming of God's Spirit into their being, they *never again asked* about earthly power. Experiencing the presence and power of God within their lives was the summit, the supreme experience of their lives. Nothing else was ever needed. It is this for which the human heart craves, and once God's Spirit truly dwells within a person, that person is supremely fulfilled and satisfied. Nothing else can ever satisfy — not position or authority, recognition or fame — not if the person has truly received the Spirit of God into his heart and life.

The point is this: the believer is given a task by God, a mission to carry out on earth. However, the believer does not have the power to carry out that task. The power of God Himself, of His Spirit, is needed. Therefore, Christ promises, "You will receive power *when* the Holy Spirit comes on you." Both the Spirit of God and His power are promised. But take note: the Holy Spirit comes upon believers as an *equipping power*. The major purpose for His coming is to *equip* the believer to carry out his task for God.

2. The believer's task is a great one: to tell people about God. The disciples had asked about the coming of the kingdom, just when the kingdom would come. When would believers be gathered and cloistered together in the fellowship and worship of God, free from worldly injustices and sin? Again, Christ had promised the kingdom, a day when He would gather all believers together in perfect fellowship and service of God. He promised a day when believers would be freed from the world, from its sin and shame, death and hell. But again, note: now is *not the time* to be cloistered together...
 - in heaven
 - in the eternal kingdom of God
 - in Christian societies
 - in the church

Now is *not the time* for believers to be reveling in the love and fellowship, the enjoyment and comfort of each other. This is the crux of what Christ is saying. It *is time* for...

- WITNESSING TO THE LOST
- BEARING WITNESS TO THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD AND CHRIST

Witnessing about Christ, sharing the glorious salvation found in Him, is the great task of the believer. This is understandable, clearly seen, for no greater truth exists in all the universe. Man can now live forever; man can now be delivered from sin, death and hell. Just think about it! The perfect cure...

- for sin has been secured
- for death is known
- for hell now exists

There is no reason for the world — no reason for any person — to suffer any longer under the weight and bondage of...

- selfishness and hoarding
- war and power
- fear and anguish
- killing and maiming
- guilt and shame
- bitterness and hatred
- emptiness and loneliness
- inadequate supply and hunger
- insecurity and low self-esteem
- ignorance and the unknown

(God have mercy upon all who know the cure and keep silent! No greater indictment against a person exists.)

Now note several points.

- a. The word “you”: it is the believer who is to witness. It is the believer who knows the cure, the truth of salvation.
 - b. The words “my witnesses”: Christ is the message, not a man’s ideas, not even the idea of religion. “Christ crucified” is the believer’s testimony (1 Cor. 1:23. See 1 Cor. 1:18, 24; Gal. 6:14.)
 - c. The word *witness* (Greek, *martyrs*): this is the same word as martyr. The believer is to be so committed to reaching men that he is ready to die as a martyr if need be. (See *Witnessing*, Acts 1:8.)
 - d. The word *witness*: this is not a command. Rather, it is a natural result of the Holy Spirit within a person. So is power. The Lord says very simply that a Spirit-filled person has power and becomes a witness for Him throughout the world. This is important, for it makes power and witnessing trademarks of Christian believers. A genuine believer possesses both the Spirit and power in his life and becomes by nature a witness for the Lord.
3. The believer’s method: Jesus gives the method that the believer is to follow in his witness and for the spread of the gospel.
 - a. The believer is to witness where he is (Jerusalem) and move progressively outward (Judea and Samaria) until he is having a part in reaching the ends of the earth. Every believer...
 - is to go as far as he can personally go
 - is to give as sacrificially as he can for others to go
 - is to use and support every means he can to reach the world
 - b. The believer is to witness where he is first, see to it that Christ is well known throughout his home and community before moving on. But once Christ is well known, the believer is to move out, ever pressing outward from where he is. His first witness is to be...
 - in Jerusalem: where he is, his home and local community. (See *Home Evangelism*, Lk. 9:4.)

- in all Judea: other communities and areas and cities and states. Note the words “all Judea.”
- in Samaria: other states and provinces where people are antagonistic. There was bitter hatred between the Jews and Samaritans. Yet Christ tells His witnesses to carry the message of salvation even to their enemies. (See *Samaritans*, Lk. 10:33.)
- to the ends of the earth: to the unknown countries and regions of the world.

A critical point is this: the believer is to see that each area receives the message of Christ. He is to stay there and reach out. But once the area knows the message, the message is to be carried out into another area.

Thought 1. What a difference world evangelization would experience if each believer would simply do what Christ says.

ACTS 01:08 WITNESSING

“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.” Acts 1:08

The word “witness” in the book of Acts is forceful, revealing the duty of the believer.

Acts 1:8 “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.”

Acts 2:32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

Acts 2:40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

Acts 3:15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

Acts 4:33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

Acts 5:32 “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Acts 8:25 When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Acts 10:39-43 “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all

the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Acts 13:31 *And for many days he was seen by those who had travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.*

Acts 14:3 *So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.*

Acts 18:5 *When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

Acts 20:21 -24 *I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.*

Acts 22:18 *And saw the Lord speaking. ‘Quick!’ he said to me. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’*

Acts 22:20 *‘And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’*

Acts 23:11 *The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”*

Acts 26:16 *‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.’*

Acts 26:22 *But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen.*

Acts 28:23 *They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. □*

IV. Acts 01:09 Ascension of Jesus Christ

The third scene. Jesus ascended before the disciples' very eyes. Note Jesus' last words on earth (Acts 1:8). His concern was reaching the world for God. Now note what happened. Immediately after speaking the words, the most dramatic event began to happen. Jesus Christ began to slowly arise from the earth, ascending ever upward toward the sky above. The disciples were shocked and spellbound, gazing at the spectacular sight. They were beholding one of the most dramatic and phenomenal events ever experienced:

=> the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

=> the return of God's Son into heaven, into the spiritual world and dimension of being.

Note the words *before their very eyes* (v. 9, bleponton) and *they were looking intently* (atenizontes esan). The Lord ascended somewhat slowly in a dramatic, spectacular fashion. Why depart in this way? For the sake of the disciples. There are several significant reasons why they needed such a dramatic departure. (See *Jesus Christ, Exaltation*, Acts 2:33-36.)

1. Christ needed to dramatize and enforce His final departure. Since His resurrection He had been appearing and disappearing spontaneously, at will, as though by thought or light. This departure was to be final. He would never return again, not as He had been doing. Therefore this departure needed to be different; it needed to be impressed and enforced in the minds and consciences of the disciples once and for all.
2. Christ needed to dramatize and enforce His claim upon the disciples. This was the last time He would have to confirm His claims while on earth. He wanted the disciples to have additional confirmation, a most dramatic confirmation that He was exactly whom He claimed to be. By actually ascending upward He was proclaiming seven glorious truths beyond all question.
 - a. He is the ascended Lord. (See *Lord*, Acts 2:36.)
 - b. He is the ascended Mediator between God and man. (See notes, Jn. 10:7-8; 12:44-46; *Jesus the Way*, Jn. 14:6; *Jesus the Truth*, Jn. 14:6; *Jesus the Life*, Jn. 14:6; notes, Jn. 14:13-14; 1 Tim. 2:3-7. See Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24.)
 - c. He is the ascended Advocate of man before God. (The word *advocate* [parakleton] is the very same word used for the Holy Spirit, the Comforter [parakletos]. See *Comforter*, Jn. 14:16 for meaning. See Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.)
=> The Holy Spirit is God's Advocate on earth with men.
=> Jesus Christ is man's Advocate with God. (See note, 1 Jn. 2:1-2.)
 - d. He is the ascended Son of God, the One who came "out of" heaven to earth to save man (see notes, Jn. 3:31; 3:32-34; 6:33; 7:25-31; *Incarnation of Jesus Christ*, Jn. 8:23; note, Heb. 7:25).

- e. He is the ascended High Priest of God who makes reconciliation for the sins of men (Heb. 2:17-18. See 1 Jn. 2:1-2.)
 - f. He is the ascended High Priest who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities and delivers and succors us through all trials (Heb. 2:15-16. See Rom. 8:31-39; Heb. 2:17-18.)
 - g. He is the ascended Christ (Messiah) who makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:34; see 8:31-39).
3. Christ needed to dramatize and enforce His return to earth, that it shall take place exactly as He said. (See note, Acts 1:10-11.)
 4. Christ needed to dramatize and enforce that the disciples were not to be standing around "looking intently up into the sky." They were to get to the business at hand. They were to return to the upper room and...
 - "wait" and pray for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
 - move out witnessing to a world lost and reeling in desperate need.

Mark 16:19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

Luke 24:51 *While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.*

Acts 1:9 *After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

Heb 4:14 *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.*

Heb 9:24 *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

1 Pet 3:22 *Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

V. Acts 01:10–11 Promise of the Return of Jesus Christ

The fourth scene. There was the prophecy of Jesus' return. Note that God had two men appear, standing by the disciples. They were dressed in white clothing which is the colour of angels' clothing (see Mt. 28:3; Jn. 20:12). These two messengers from God said three significant things about Jesus' return.

1. This "same Jesus" shall return just as He left. He shall not return in some strange way, in a way that He might be unrecognized and missed. He shall return in the clouds of heaven and every eye shall "see Him" (Rev. 1:7).

Note exactly what Scripture says about how Christ ascended.

=> Acts 1:9 says a cloud *hid Him* (hupelaben). The Greek word literally means took, lifted, supported Him.

=> Luke 24:51 says He was *taken up* (anephereto) into heaven. The Greek means borne up, taken up.

=> Acts 1:2; 1:11; 1 Tim. 3:16 says He was *taken up* (anelempthe).

The point is this: it is as though the cloud *hid and took Him* (hupelaben). The cloud was apparently the Shekinah glory (see note 2, Jn. 1:14). Christ had said He would return to earth in the clouds of heaven (Mt. 24:30; 26:64; Mk. 13:26; see Rev. 1:7). Seeing such a dramatic ascension confirmed for the disciples (and for us) that Jesus' promise of returning to earth will take place just as He said.

2. This "same Jesus" is the One who will come back. He will not be different, either in Person or in attitude. He will be the same.

=> He will be the *same Jesus*, the same Lord and Saviour, the same One who came to earth to save men.

=> He will be the *same Jesus* in attitude, still loving and caring for those who follow Him.

=> He will be the *same Jesus* who promised to return and receive believers unto Himself that they may be with Him where He is (Jn. 14:2-3).

Mat 16:27 *"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."*

Mat 24:27 *"For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."*

Mat 25:31-32 *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."*

Mat 26:64 *"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Luke 12:40 *"You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."*

Luke 21:27 *"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."*

Acts 1:11 *"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*

1 Th 5:2 *For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*

1 Cor 4:5 *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.*

1 Tim 4:1 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

Heb 10:37 *For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay."*

James 5:8 *You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*

Jude 1:14-15 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*

Rev 16:15 *"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."*

3. This *same Jesus* who will return is the One who ascended into heaven. The Jesus in heaven is the same Jesus the disciples knew — the One who was their Lord and Saviour; the One who came to earth to be their close companion, their Advocate, their Mediator, their Representative before God. Therefore when He returns, He will be coming back to receive all believers unto Himself. He will be coming back that we may all be where He is (Jn. 14:2-3).

John 14:2-3 *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

1 Th 4:16-18 *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. ■*