

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
 - money and possessions
 - rule and reign
 - authority and power
 - recognition and prestige
 - the material and physical
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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. ■*