

INTRODUCTION

1. Thank Aaron

Pastor Aaron isn't here today but I still want to say thank you for letting me preach on the hottest day of the year!

2. Share about Myself

It's crazy to say out loud, but this is actually the first time since moving up to the church in February that I have been able to preach in person. I and my family love being here and being a part of Sound City.

3. Thank SCBC & Pray

I know that it has been a trying time for everyone, and so Church, I want to thank you and encourage you by saying that you have really done an outstanding job of staying nimble. Even this past week as we have received new guidelines about gathering together and how that means we don't have to RSVP but are wanting everyone to check-in, you have done great. It has been a tremendous encouragement to me and the staff to have a church that trusts it's leadership so much and I'm really grateful for it. Now, allow me to pray as we begin our acts series.

4. Analogy of the importance of Acts

Today we begin a new sermon series in the book of Acts. As a church we have spent a lot of time in the OT and some short series and in order to have a balanced biblical diet we are moving back into the NT.

I am excited about this series because no book in the Bible explains the grass-roots movement of Christianity as well as Acts does. It is the second of Luke's two accounts. We know this from the reference to Theophilus, who probably funded Luke's writing Luke-Acts is a major work making up 1/4th of the NT. In fact, if we didn't have Acts we would have all sorts of questions.

a. Movies

Imagine if you had never seen Star Wars Episode 4, A New Hope and the Empire Strikes Back but you saw the rest of the movies? You would be saying, "What happened"? Who is this Luke kid and what is a Death Star?

Or what if you only saw Rocky 1 and 4 but not 2 or 3?...Well that doesn't work because they are all the same! All joking aside it is the same with the Bible. If all we have are the Gospels and Epistles, then we are left with a multitude of questions.

b. The Bible

In the Gospels we see Jesus, a homeless, poor, carpenter from an obscure town rise up to be religious criminal who his disciples believed came back to life. But in the Epistles, we see cult worship practices popping up all over the known world worshipping him as King, even in the heart of Rome! And here are some other questions:

- Why are the Apostles/believers so bold in the face of death?
- Why are Gentiles now worshipping/eating/living with Jews?

- What happened to the Apostle James?
- Who is Paul?
- What is Christianity and what does it believe?
- How did this new religion take over the known world in a matter of decades?

The Book of Acts answers all of these questions for us.

5. Central Purpose of Acts

But what is the central purpose of Acts? Theologians and Scholars have different answers. Another way the question is asked is in relation to the title of the book. This is partly due to the fact that even by the second century there were different ways to identify the book. So, whose acts are these?

- The Acts of the Apostles
- The Acts of the Witnesses
- The Acts of the Holy Spirit
- The Acts of the Word

What is the right answer? If I can channel my inner Aaron Gray for a second- the answer is, YES! The answer is yes to all of these things because God is the one who is at work in the book of Acts.

- The Acts of God

As Commenter Darrell Bock puts it,

Bock, 3

The title highlights the role of witnesses in the book, but the apostolic band is not the central character of Acts. Rather, God's activity stands at the core of the account. Acts narrates God's work in establishing the church through Jesus's activity.

Bock, 56¹

God acts constantly in Acts: in the distribution of the Spirit in Acts 2, in miraculous activity through the apostles in Acts 3, in judgment in Acts 5, in the vindication of Stephen in Acts 7, in leading Philip in Acts 8, in Saul's conversion in Acts 9, in taking Peter to Cornelius in Acts 10, in calling for mission by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 and empowering them throughout the mission (Acts 13:2; 14:27), in guiding the church at the council in Acts 15, in leading Paul in mission in Acts 16–19, in empowering Paul in his work in Acts 16–21 (Acts 21:14–16), and in protecting Paul as he heads to Rome in Acts 27–28. God is Savior in Acts (Green 1998).

So, God is at work in Acts. And the first 'Act' that we see in the book of Acts is the Ascension. This is a doctrine and element of the gospel that is absolutely essential, but it is often neglected. When was the last time you did a bible study on the ascension? Think about it in relation to Acts. This is the very first domino as Luke records it. After the Ascension everything in Acts happens. Why? It is because if Jesus is not King, then

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007). Exported from Logos Bible Software, 6:06 PM August 8, 2020.

he does not have the authority. But Acts shows us clearly that he is the ascended king, and that is our main point for today.

a. Main Point & Points

Main Point: Jesus is King, ascended and enthroned.

Moreover, there are at least 3 reasons we see the ascension matters for believers in this text. They are:

- 1) The ascension intensifies a clash of kingdoms (v.3,6)
- 2) The ascension marks the Holy Spirit's coming (v.2,4-5,8)
- 3) The ascension ensures the descension (v.11)

1) The Ascension Intensifies a Clash of Kingdoms

Main Point: Jesus is King, ascended and enthroned.

The first reason matters is that it intensifies a clash of kingdoms. The disciples understood this to a degree.

Acts 1:3,6

³ After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the **kingdom** of God.

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you restoring the **kingdom** to Israel at this time?"

What is the Kingdom? Broadly speaking it is life with God under the rule of God. What the disciples didn't realize was that this was a kingdom that didn't work like an earthly kingdom. Jesus launched the kingdom in enemy territory in the incarnation and it will be fulfilled when Christ returns at the end of the age.

We learn two things about the kingdom at the beginning of acts:

- 1) Jesus' agenda is to bring the Kingdom of God to earth. He will not stop speaking about this kingdom before or after his death. He is bent on this purpose, and we should be as well.
- 2) The disciples misunderstand the Kingdom. They have in mind an earthly kingdom but Jesus teaches that his kingdom is also spiritual. They saw the kingdom as involving mainly flesh and blood and nations and clans. This is too simplistic of an understanding. Above all realities there is the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Darkness, or the Devil, and it is not merely fleshly.

Question: how much of your and my talk is 'Kingdom' talk. Are we as concerned with Jesus' Kingdom as we should be or are we more focused on temporary matters?

Another election season is coming up. Christians can be involved in politics for the glory of God. But are you/I more preoccupied with this year's candidate or Jesus' Kingdom agenda?

SUMMARY:

As a believer you must know that we are at war. But take heart for we are on the winning side! In fact, what we will see in Acts is the beautiful truth that God converts his enemies and recruits them to be loyal subjects who are sustained by grace.

2) The Ascension Marks the Holy Spirit's Coming

Main Point: Jesus is King, ascended and enthroned.

The second reason the ascension matters is because it marks the Spirit's coming.

Acts 1:2,4-5,8

² until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the **Holy Spirit** to the apostles he had chosen.

⁴ While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the **Holy Spirit** in a few days."

⁸ But you will receive power when the **Holy Spirit** has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Believer's in Jesus would not be able to please or honor God if it were not for the Spirit at work in our lives. Three points stand out.

- 1) The Spirit is necessary for our instruction. Without the Holy Spirit we could not even receive the Lord's commands. Have you ever read the gospels? Most of the disciples contribution sounds like, "Ohhhhhh, now we understand." But they didn't!
- 2) The Spirit is necessary for our animation. Believers in Jesus are people who are not supposed to be filled with wine but the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). The play on words is to suggest that we should be intoxicated by the Holy Spirit to do what He wants. It almost sounds like Jesus is saying, "Wait! Don't go out there on your own or you will mess it up!
- 3) The Spirit is necessary for our continuation. We simply do not have the power to bring God's kingdom to earth or obey him. Every morning we wake up as a Christian we wake up because of the Spirit's power in us. Every time you decide not to look at porn, or love your neighbor, or share the gospel, or read your Bible you do it because of the Spirit's power.

SUMMARY:

We desperately need the Holy Spirit to instruct us in the ways of Jesus, animate our lives for God's glory, and empower us for his purposes. And without the Ascension, none of it would be.

3) The Ascension Ensures the Descension

Main Point: Jesus is King, ascended and enthroned.

The third and last reason the ascension matters is that it ensures the descension. The angles confirmed this.

Acts 1:11

11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."

There were undoubtedly many mixed feelings as the disciples listened to Jesus' last words saw him ascend. Wonder, admiration, excitement, sadness, confusion, hope, love. Whether in the book or the movies do you remember that scene at the end of the Lord of the Rings where the hobbits are parting ways with Gandalf, Bilbo, and Frodo? It's extraordinarily bittersweet! I imagine it was kind of like that. Their friend, mentor, master, savior, and God was leaving them. Why? It was so that the Holy Spirit would come and indwell all of his brothers and sisters, yes, but something else as well. Jesus could not return if he did not leave.

One day, King Jesus will return with the host of heaven to make God's Kingdom fully realized. He will come to reward and judge. I love how Darrell Bock talks about Luke's view the end times (eschatology) in Acts.

Boch, 71

Luke's view of the end is simple. It will come. With it will come an accounting that Jesus will perform on behalf of God. This is the flip side of God's role as Creator. God is also Judge. All are responsible to God and will give an account to God. When the Lord will come is not a matter of concern for believers. Their task is the mission.

It is a bit removed from us, but we all have some picture in mind of what a king ascending his throne looks like. To this audience it would have been the event of a lifetime. And we see this in the OT. Everyone is assembled, gifts are given, and a long drawn out process ensues of the king making his procession to sit on his throne. The wonderful truth about Jesus' ascension, though, is that he is King of the universe. An earthly King would ascend to his throne which sat higher than anyone else signifying that there was no authority above him. But Jesus ascends to his throne in the heavens!

What qualifies Jesus for this role? As we will see in Acts, it was his death on behalf of sinners. In the OT something that marked the ascension of kings, particularly in the Israelite tradition, was blood. Thousands of animals were offered when a new king took the throne. Why? Even the King had to appease God's wrath against him and the nation. But when Jesus ascends, there is no blood, there is no sacrifice. Why? Jesus already shed his blood as the sacrifice. Jesus' sacrifice qualifies him as King. Here's how the Apostles talk about it.

Acts 2:32,38

³² “God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear.

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Jesus has won the right to rule. He didn't need to. But as fully God and Man who paid the sinner's debt, he is King eternal.

SUMMARY:

Jesus will descend because he ascended. It's a promise. Jesus will not leave his bride standing at the altar. The king will return. We can also respond by confessing that we are not the King. So much of our lives is bound up in making the world revolve around us, but it doesn't. The world revolves around Jesus, so let's forsake setting up our own kingdoms and submit to his.

CONCLUSION

Main Point: Jesus is King, ascended and enthroned.

Church, let's live life under Jesus' good rule. If you are afraid, he can encourage. If you are hurting, he can heal. If you are anxious, he can calm. If you are weak, he is strong.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Family, praise God for sending Jesus to be our King. As we live under his rule here are some things we have going on.

1. Golf scramble 8/29 scbc.do/golf
 2. Student Movie night 8/28
 3. Building help scbc.do/building | STAY AND HELP | Foot on the brake and gas
- **Prayer Team

Benediction and Closing Prayer

From 1 Timothy 6:15-16 (CSB)

He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power.

Amen.