

## EXPOSITION OF ACTS

### Message #3

Acts 1:6-11

I read an account of something that happened many years ago, back in the days of D. L. Moody. Apparently some ministers were discussing the possibility of having D. L. Moody come to their city for an evangelistic crusade. One of the ministers discussing this said, “Why Moody? Does he have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?” There was a pause of silence and then one of the ministers spoke up and said this: “No, Mr. Moody does not have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit does have a monopoly on D. L. Moody.”

The thing that makes the book of Acts and the Church Age so dramatic and dynamic is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit the third member of the Trinity. He dominates Acts and has a monopoly on everything happening in the book.

At the beginning of the book of Acts, which is the book of the Bible that introduces us to the dispensation of the Church Age of Grace, we come face to face with the theological truth that **nothing can be accomplished with us or through us without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is the critical agent of this whole Grace Age program of God.

**THE POWER THAT WE NEED TO ACCOMPLISH GOD’S WILL IN OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES AND IN THE LIFE OF THIS CHURCH IS THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

This is clearly what Jesus Christ, Himself revealed to His own apostles in His final message to them. They could do nothing until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. It is important to point out that the verb “baptism” in **verse 5** (βαπτισθησεσθε) is a passive verb. What this actually means is that these apostles would be the passive recipient of the action not the cause or source of it. Those who suggest that you must beg or plead for the baptism of the Holy Spirit have never carefully studied the written Word of God, and they do not understand true Spirit baptism.

You and I need to understand this. **If we are not properly related to the Holy Spirit, we will not accomplish anything for God. On the other hand, if we are properly related to the Holy Spirit, we will accomplish everything God wants us to accomplish.**

As we come to these verses there are four inauguration actions that are critical to Church Age truth:

**INAUGURATION ACTION #1** – Luke records the apostles’ question to Jesus. **1:6**

Jesus had told these disciples that they were to go to Jerusalem and wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They responded by asking Him a question. I want you to notice that they identify Jesus Christ as Lord. They all believe He is God, the second member of the Trinity.

The question that they asked was very contextually normal and very logical. This Spirit baptism is discussed in the context of John's baptism and John had gone to Israel and told the nation to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2). These apostles have been told to wait in Jerusalem and over and over again the Scriptures reveal that God does have a kingdom program for Israel, and that one day Jerusalem will be the exalted capital of the world (Psalm 122; Isaiah 24:23). Since all of these apostles are Jewish, their response is quite natural.

When you look at **verse 6**, these Jewish apostles wanted Jesus to answer the question of whether or not this Spirit baptism would mean that this is the time of national restoration when God will establish Israel's kingdom on earth. By using the pronoun "You," these apostles believe that Jesus Christ is the One who has the authority to establish Israel's kingdom on earth. These apostles clearly believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who can set up the kingdom for Israel and they want to know if He is going to do this soon. These Jewish apostles were in Jerusalem and they were thinking about a kingdom for Israel.

These apostles were not originally focused on questions about the Church, they were not originally focused on questions about Spirit baptism, and they were not originally focused on questions about witnessing. **They were thinking about a future national restoration of the nation Israel to her kingdom.**

In view of the fact that Spirit baptism would occur soon, the apostles wondered about Israel's kingdom. The apostles are thinking something like this - if the Spirit baptism You talked about will happen soon, and this new kingdom of God Grace Age is about to be instituted, then how about Israel's kingdom on earth, will that happen soon also?

**INAUGURATION ACTION #2** – Luke records Christ's response to His apostles' question.  
**1:7-8**

There are two main final verbal responses Jesus presents to His apostles:

**(Verbal Response #1)** - The time when God will restore Israel's kingdom is My business not your business. **1:7**

This is a good point to remember in Church Age work. We have a job to do and we need to stay focused on that job and not get caught up with things in the program of God that are none of our business. Dates that God will do things are none of our business.

Notice carefully that Jesus does not deny Israel is to have a kingdom; He just says the time of all of that is not for you to know. The Church Age of Grace is not the time to focus on Israel's kingdom.

**Acts 1:7** reveals that God controls time and knows everything He will do in time and He has set and appointed things by His own Personal power and authority. God does what He wants, when He wants, and our job is not to spend our lives questioning this great God.

Every now and then some ignorant religious leader will make a prediction about when God is going to do something. Kenneth O. Gangel said, "How many Christian leaders have embarrassed themselves by announcing to the world when the Lord would return!" (*Acts*, p. 10).

It is too bad they don't read **Acts 1:7**. **If Jesus did not reveal dates to His chosen apostles who are physically in His presence, you may be certain He isn't revealing them to guys today.**

**(Verbal Response #2)** - When you receive the Holy Spirit your business will be to be My witnesses . **1:8**

This becomes a critical key to effective Grace Age kingdom work - **to do God's work we must have God's power** . The most important thing that I need, you need, and that this whole church needs is to be in a proper relationship with the Holy Spirit so that He may release His full dynamic kingdom power through us in various geographical locations.

Now the Greek says you will be "My witnesses." **The point of the grammar is God's people are Christ's witnesses. There are no other witnesses.** I think a very legitimate question for us to ask is when is the last time I remember that the Holy Spirit moved in such a way that I was led to witness for Jesus Christ? When is the last time I so depended on the power of the Holy Spirit that I was led right into a witnessing situation and I shared Jesus Christ? Look friends, we are the witnesses. We are it. One thing worth praying is for God's Spirit to direct us to people to whom we may share Jesus Christ.

For many centuries the Church and most mission agencies have recognized **Acts 1:8** as their Great Commission passage in which Jesus Christ gives His assignment orders to the Church to take the Gospel to four main geographical locations. However, initially this charge was given to the apostles and it would be very wise for us to understand just exactly what this geographical charge was:

**Geographical Area #1** - These apostles were to be God's witness in Jerusalem . **1:8a**

Now Jerusalem as a city had been no friend to these apostles and it certainly had been no friend to their Savior. Jerusalem was not the hometown of any of these apostles and it was the very place that opposed them; it opposed their teaching and it crucified their Lord. It is amazing that Jesus tells these apostles that the place where they will have the power of the Holy Spirit to be a witness for Him will be in Jerusalem. They were to wait there because, as Everett Harrison said, "the Lord purposed to have His first fruits on the very soil that drank His life blood" (*Bib.Sac*, 95:377 (Jan. 1938) p. 54).

**Geographical Area #2** - These apostles were to be God's witnesses in "all" Judea . **1:8b**

Now we need to remember that all of these apostles are from the state of Galilee (**Acts 1:11**) not Judea. The only apostle who was from a city named Iscariot in Judea was Judas (*Matthew* 10:4). Judea had not been a friendly place to Jesus Christ and had not been nice to these apostles. So the charge here is that when you have the Holy Spirit's power, you are to be My witnesses in the very states that to this point have been totally against Me and you.

**Geographical Area #3** - These apostles were to be God's witnesses in "all" Samaria . **1:8c**

The Jews typically didn't have anything to do with Samaritans (John 4:9) because they were a bunch of half-breeds, not purebloods. In fact, when these very apostles saw Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman, they wondered why He was even speaking to her (John 4:27). Just imagine what would have gone through these apostles' minds when Jesus said you will have the responsibility to be my witnesses in every inch of Samaria to all the half-breed Samaritan people.

**Geographical Area #4** - These apostles were to be God's witnesses to the whole world . **1:8d**

This new Grace Age was certainly going to be different. They were to move out from Jerusalem to the world.

Do you understand what is being said in this context? When God's Spirit is in you and on you, you will have the power to witness in some of the most despicable places to some of the most despicable people. When you are in tune with the Holy Spirit, you will desire to reach out to places and to people who haven't been nice to you.

Those missionaries who want to use **Acts 1:8** to do deputation work so they can go to some remote place in the world, ought to be challenged to first be a witness to those who made their lives miserable. If you have the power of the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel to the world, then you certainly will be able to take it first to those you don't like or those who don't like you. If a person can't witness where they presently geographically are, I doubt much will change when the geography changes. You need to first witness on your job, in your school and neighborhood before you attempt to go to the world.

I love something Dr. Ivor Powell said, "First, we must tell the story to those immediately around us and that place is often the most arduous mission field. ... However, if the ambitious, would-be missionary for any reason should fail at home, where the reception might be cold or even hostile, he would have little chance of success overseas" (*The Amazing Acts*, p. 23).

One thing that has always rubbed me the wrong way is taking a bunch of kids on spring break mission trips or to foreign mission fields when they have not even witnessed to people they know. They don't have a solid grasp of the Gospel and they don't even try to evangelize their friends and peers, yet churches think it is great to send them overseas. I don't find that in Scripture.

A good question for any missionary committee to ask is, "Tell us how you came to faith in Jesus Christ and tell us how it is that you believe God has called you to the mission field?" If God's Spirit has truly been working, there will have been a true passion to know God's Word and there will have been a true attempt to witness right where they presently are.

**Many who have carefully examined the book of Acts observe that the apostles took the Gospel to the city of Jerusalem in Acts 2:42-8:3. They stayed here about eight years and then after Stephen was martyred, they moved out to various places in the states of Judea and Samaria in Acts 8:4-12:24. Afterwards they moved out to the world including to**

**some remote parts of the earth in the Roman world in Acts 12:25-28:31. What we see here is the witnessing plan that made Biblical Christianity the key power of the world. It was a plan based on the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**Acts 1:8** begins by informing them and us that in and of ourselves our witnessing power and ministry is zero. What we need is the power of the Holy Spirit. If the apostles tried ministry or witnessing on their own, they would fall flat on their faces and the same is true for us too. If we try witnessing in our own power we will fall flat on our face.

The idea that we are witnesses for Jesus Christ occurs some 39 times in the book of Acts. The job of these apostles and our job too is to realize we are His witnesses, but without the Spirit's power we will fall flat on our face.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said that any person who has ever tried to be a soul-winner becomes very much aware that the majority of unsaved people “do not realize the seriousness of their lost estate; nor do they become alarmed even when the most direct warning and appeal is given to them.” They lie down to go to sleep at night without any fear that they could be in the presence of God before morning. What is needed for soul winning is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (*True Evangelism*, p. 43).

We are to be witnesses for God, but in order to do that we need the power of the Holy Spirit just like the apostles did. It is our job to be so in harmony with the Holy Spirit by the way we live and what we say that we are able to take this message of the grace of God found in Jesus Christ to the world. We need to know this doctrine so we can be effective witnesses of this doctrine and we need the power of the Holy Spirit to be able to do anything.

The dimension of the witness will be Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remote parts of the world. Dr. Ivor Powell said many people fantasize about being a missionary somewhere overseas, when the mandate is start witnessing in your own backyard (*The Amazing Acts*, p. 23).

Christ is telling them that their assignment is not about establishing Israel's kingdom, but to have the power of the Holy Spirit because they are His witnesses. They were to start demonstrating this power and being His witnesses first in Jerusalem.

Kent Hughes observes that **verse 8** is “Christ's final statement on earth and the key to the book of Acts” (*Acts*, p. 20). We are witnesses and we need the Spirit's power to do anything.

James Montgomery Boice said that one time he studied the contexts of all 14 of the passages where the statement “filled with the Spirit” is used in the book of Acts. He concluded, in every instance where people were actually filled with the Holy Spirit, they were involved in powerfully witnessing for Jesus Christ (*Acts*, p. 28). The chronology is power first, witnessing second.

Now I want you to observe that initially this commission was not given to a corporate body but to individuals. What this means is this evangelistic mandate has ramifications for us all. Dr. McGee said, “Have you gone to the ends of the earth as a witness or do you support a missionary or radio ministry that does?” (*Acts*, Vol. 4, p. 512).

**INAUGURATION ACTION #3** – Luke records Christ’s ascension before His apostles. **1:9**

If it wasn’t shocking enough to have the resurrected Christ show up for 40 straight days to have discussions with them, they saw some glorious cloud from heaven in the sky, and they saw Jesus Christ ascend up out of their sight. After the disciples listened to Christ give them their assignments they saw three amazing things:

**Sight #1** - They saw Jesus lifted up while they were looking at Him. **1:9a**

Just imagine looking at someone and all of a sudden they start ascending up into heaven right before your very eyes.

**Sight #2** - They saw a cloud receive Him out of their sight. **1:9b**

This was probably the “shekinah cloud” of God which was seen by many like Daniel (Daniel 7:13). Those apostles stood there in awe as they saw Jesus ascending up into the sky.

There is a special place at NASA in Florida where the family of astronauts are brought to see the space launch of their loved one. They have their own bleacher area where they see the rocket boosters start pouring out smoke, and then they watch as the spaceship is launched into outer space. Just imagine looking at a normal human not wearing any spacesuit and not inside any space capsule, and all of a sudden, wearing normal clothes, he launches upward into outer space. That is exactly what these apostles saw.

**INAUGURATION ACTION #4** – Luke records two men appear to the apostles. **1:10-11**

These disciples saw men appear beside them. The word “men” (ανδρες) is a specific gender oriented word. What this means is that these two persons had the character and quality of a masculine look as opposed to a feminine look (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 37).

Every serious Bible student admits these two men are two angels in human, masculine form. Angels taking the form of men is not uncommon especially in matters pertaining to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:2-3; John 20:12; Luke 24:4).

There are three specific facts brought out about this:

**Fact #1** - These two men were wearing white clothing. **1:10**

This clothing reflects heavenly clothing that is pure and righteous.

**Fact #2** - These two men questioned their gazing into the sky. **1:11a**

I find this fascinating because what would you expect any person to be doing if they saw this happen. If one of you right now went floating up into the sky in a cloud out of sight and then two angels in human form show up, I think we would all be gazing up into the sky too.

Apparently during the previous 40 days, Jesus had told them about this moment, and when it happened they were so surprised they stood looking into “the sky” literally “the heaven.” As I understand the question, the angels are saying you have kingdom work to do on earth so you don’t need to be spending more time looking up at the heaven. Get back to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit’s power so you can do your work on earth.

Truth is we have all made the mistake these apostles made. We have all tended to think of God’s kingdom world being high in the sky in heaven. But what these two men revealed is God’s work and world is right here on earth.

**Fact #3** - These two men informed them Jesus will eventually come again as they just saw Him go. **1:11b**

It will be this same Jesus coming back in the same way He left. It will not be a different Jesus coming a different way like the first time when He was born of a virgin. He will come back visibly from the sky in the glory of God and He will actually come back to the same spot. We may observe from **verse 12** that they were on the Mount of Olives and Zechariah predicts Jesus Christ will return to this very spot and put His feet again on this very place (Zechariah 14:4).

I find it fascinating that these angels make it clear that these apostles are just “men.” Specifically they are “men of Galilee.” These were men who lived in the northern part of Israel. They were not the scholars of Jerusalem. They were just average men who had been chosen by God. God chooses to use ordinary, sinful, finite men to reach the world for Jesus Christ.

You and I have a job to do and it is to be a witness for Jesus Christ right here in this city. Don’t stand gazing up into the sky; get focused on your responsibility down here on earth. While we wait for the return of Jesus Christ we have work to do, so let’s be about doing it.

We may thank God that we have a church that is focused on taking the Word of God to the city of Kalamazoo and the state of Michigan and the United States and for that matter the entire world. This is the mandate Christ gave to His disciples and certainly this is a principle we try to emulate.