

# Acts 1:1-11

## April 27, 2025



### CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

### MAIN POINT

After Jesus's death and resurrection, He appeared to many believers over a period of forty days. Before His ascension into heaven, He reiterated the promise that the Holy Spirit would come and gave His disciples (including us!) an important mission: to be His witnesses.

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**What do you know about the events that happened following Jesus's resurrection?**

**Why might it be important to study what happened in the early church?**

**What does it mean to be a witness?**



Acts is the story of the early church, and many of the Epistles—or Letters, like the book of Romans—we know from the New Testament, were written during the period the book of Acts records.

We will read about how first-century Christ followers lived out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), sharing the gospel “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). We’ll see how the church formed, beginning with small but growing bodies of believers boldly living as faithful witnesses. We’ll also see how God called and worked through these believers, and how the church dealt with disagreements. There is much to learn in the book of Acts, and today we’ll get started with an introduction.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 1:1-3.

**What does this passage say Jesus did before His ascension?**

**Why might Luke want to include what he said in verse 3 early in this account?**

The book of Acts was written by Luke, and the “first narrative” referenced in verse 1 is the Gospel of Luke. Luke, a doctor by trade (Colossians 4:14), was not one of the twelve inner circle disciples chosen by Jesus. He opened the book of Luke by sharing that he composed his Gospel from eye witness accounts of Jesus’s ministry (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke’s “first narrative” focused on Jesus’s earthly ministry, and the book of Acts focused on what happened next. Luke was a traveling companion of Paul, and Acts contains his own firsthand accounts of the journeys and ministry of Paul.

In this passage Luke noted that—following Jesus’s suffering, death on the cross, and resurrection—Jesus convincingly “presented himself alive” (Acts 1:3) to believers. He appeared to the mover a forty-day period, using the time to teach about the kingdom of God (v.3) now that He had given them understanding of the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-48). Note that understanding of Scripture comes not from our own intelligence but from the Lord, and it increases as we learn from Him.

The reality of Jesus’s resurrection was crucial. These appearances, and Luke’s record of them, served as a witness to the truth of this critical event. The Jews spread a story that Jesus’s body had been stolen (Matthew 28:11-15), but the many witnesses who had seen a post-crucifixion Jesus with their own eyes could confidently refute this falsehood with the truth: Jesus is alive.



 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 1:4-8.

**What command did Jesus give in verse 4?**

**Why was it important for His followers to receive the Holy Spirit?**

**What do they ask Jesus about in verse 6? How might this still show signs of misunderstanding Jesus's purposes in the world?**

In John 14:16-20, Jesus told His disciples that they would receive a Helper (ESV) or Advocate (NIV) to be with them continually. This Advocate is the Holy Spirit. We will talk more about this when we study Pentecost in Acts 2, but for now, note that Jesus affirmed that this promised Helper would arrive and instructed them to wait for His arrival in Jerusalem. The coming baptism of the Holy Spirit (v.5), an event we know as Pentecost, would empower and strengthen the disciples and kick start the ministry of the early church.

In Acts 1:6 the disciples asked if Jesus would restore Israel now. The people were still under Roman occupation at this time, and many Jews hoped the Messiah would come to bring victory over and relief from this earthly oppression. Now that their minds had been opened to the prophetic truth of the Old Testament, they believed restoration was coming, and they hoped to find out when.

But the disciples didn't get the answer they longed for. Jesus responded by saying it wasn't for them to know. This is a reality that believers must grapple with on many topics today: The answers aren't always ours to know.

We will do more unpacking on what this means when we study Pentecost, but Jesus said that they would "receive power" when the Holy Spirit came, and, following this, they would be Jesus's "witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth". (v.8). The disciples were destined to bear witness to the truth of the gospel of Jesus. The locations Jesus mentioned included an expanded geographical region to the very end of the earth.

The command to be a witness wasn't just meant for those present at Jesus's ascension. We are as much a part of the Great Commission as they were, called to be Jesus's witnesses in our city, in the United States, and to the ends of the earth.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 1:9-11.

**What happened with Jesus in this passage?**

**What did the disciples do? Why do you think they reacted this way?**

**What were they told in verse 11? How does this apply to us today?**



Our final passage today records Jesus's ascension. At the end of the forty days Luke mentioned in verse 3, Jesus gave them instruction regarding how they would receive the Holy Spirit and then He ascended into heaven.

Jesus's ascension was necessary for us to receive the Holy Spirit (John 16:5-15), and Scripture tells us that, at the Father's right hand, Jesus acts as our empathetic High Priest, extending mercy and grace "to help us in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16). First John also teaches that Jesus serves as an Advocate for us before the Father, offering forgiveness when we sin (1 John 1:9-2:2).

The disciples stared expectantly after Jesus was carried up into heaven in a cloud, and two angels appeared with a message: Jesus is coming back the same way He left (v.11, see also Revelation 1:7). Praise God!

### **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**How does Acts 1:8 apply to us? What does it mean to be Jesus's witness in 2025?**

**Why is the whole body of Christ important for carrying out Jesus's call to live as witnesses to the world?**

**Who can you share with about the ascension today?**

### **PRAYER**

*Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.*

Thank God for preserving the events of the early church for us in the book of Acts. Praise Him for His victory over death and for the promise of Jesus's return. Ask Him for help as you seek to be Jesus's witnesses today.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.*

**May 4, 2025 --- Acts 1:12-26**



## COMMENTARY

### Acts 1:1-11

#### **Literary Prologue (1:1–2).**

The first two verses of Acts link the book with the Gospel, Luke's "first book," and give a brief summary of the Gospel's contents—Jesus' deeds and His teaching, up to the time of His ascension. Like the Gospel (Luke 1:3), the book is dedicated to "Theophilus," who may have been a real person (perhaps a new Christian) or may have been a symbolic name. (The Greek means "lover of God.")

#### **Preparations for Pentecost (1:3–5).**

After Jesus' death and resurrection, He appeared to His disciples over a forty-day period. During this time, He gave them "convincing proofs" that He was alive. These became important as they bore witness to His resurrection. He also instructed them about the kingdom of God. Most likely He opened up to them the Old Testament Scriptures about the Messiah. His scriptural interpretation would become important for the Christian preaching to the Jews. Finally, Jesus instructed the disciples to wait for the Spirit in Jerusalem.

#### **Call to Witness (1:6–8).**

The disciples wondered if Jesus' resurrection heralded the immediate coming of God's kingdom. They asked Him in rather narrow nationalistic terms if God was getting ready to "restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus rejected both their concern for determining the date and their Jewish exclusivism. He replaced both concerns with a worldwide mission. When the kingdom comes is not our concern. What we do until it comes is: we are to be His witnesses. The witness is to be worldwide. Acts ends with Paul's ministry in the city of Rome, the capital of the Empire. Some would see "ends of the earth" as referring to Rome. Its meaning in the Old Testament prophets is "far distant lands," and that is probably what Jesus intended. The disciples were not to begin the witness yet — only after they had been empowered by the Holy Spirit.

#### **Ascension of Christ (1:9–11).**

Only Luke relates Jesus' ascension, here and in his Gospel (Luke 24:51). Jesus was caught up in a cloud and taken from the disciples' view. In the Bible, clouds are often associated with appearances of God, as at Mount Sinai and at Jesus' transfiguration (Luke 9:28–36). The two men in white were angels, divine messengers. They assured the disciples that Jesus would one day return on the clouds just as they had seen Him depart. For the disciples, the ascension meant their forty-day communion with the risen Christ was now at an end. He would not join them in the upper room again. For us, the ascension is a reminder that Christ has risen to the right hand of God and rules as Lord of our lives. It also assures us of the certainty of His return—on the clouds of heaven, just as He departed this earth.

