



WEEKLY STUDY

The Book of Acts - Week Two

As we step into the Book of Acts we will quickly see Jesus' ministry rapidly expand through his small group of disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit. This week's passage prepares us for that moment. The disciples were told to wait for the Spirit after watching Jesus ascend to heaven. It's a lot for us to take in, yet exciting to consider that the same Spirit the disciples waited for is available to us today. I pray you will experience peace as you wait upon the Spirit of God to move in your times of prayer and study this week.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray with gratitude for those who lost their lives in the pursuit of freedom and a more peaceful world. Pray also that the peace of Christ would prevail in the whole world in our time.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 1.4-11 (NIV)

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 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.”

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

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 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.”

- This is the key event that Luke used to connect the two volumes of his writings (Luke/Acts). He ended The Gospel of Luke with the ascension of Jesus and began the Book of Acts with the same event. Here we have a few more details about Jesus’ instructions to the disciples. They were to wait in Jerusalem and wait for power to come in order to live out their mission. Have you ever felt limited by your location? Do you sometimes think that if you were just in a different place you’d be able to accomplish so much more? How was Jesus’ command to stay in Jerusalem a gift to his disciples?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts. ²⁰ Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. (1 Corinthians 7.19-20)**
- *God, I hear you calling me to live my life for you. Fill me with eagerness to pursue that call, and contentment to witness where you have planted me. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 3.16 (NIV)

John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- This is the moment that Jesus was referencing when he spoke about the baptism of John in Acts 1. A coming baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire was always the plan, and yet it seems surprising when it comes. Are there promises of God that you have been slow to realize? When has God surprised you with His faithfulness?
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- **Prayer Prompt: 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. (Joel 2.28)**
 - *Lord God, wake me up to the dreams you have for me. I repent of the times when my own desires hold priority over yours. Fill me with visions of your coming Kingdom and fill me with your Spirit. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 1.6 (NIV)

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

- Even after sitting at Jesus’ feet for three years, after witnessing his paradigm-shifting way of leading and teaching, the disciples remained confused about the nature of Christ’s rule. The expansion of the Kingdom of God is gradual. The disciples were both curious and a bit impatient. I wonder if they weren’t a little nervous with doubt. The victory they were longing for was beginning to appear further and further away. When have you shown impatience with God? What evidence of his rule are you looking for today?
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- **Prayer Prompt: the Spirit is poured on us from on high,
and the desert becomes a fertile field,
and the fertile field seems like a forest. (Isaiah 32.15)**
- *Lord Jesus, I am eager for your Kingdom to come on earth. Thank you for the promises of your different kind of Kingdom. You are truly a different kind of King. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 1.7-8 (NIV)

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 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.”

- *We want answers, but Jesus wants to give us what we truly need. While it was not for the disciples to know the time or dates of Christ’s rule, it was for them to know that power was on its way. How deeply this resonates with our condition today. We can’t have all of the answers (our minds and hearts can’t comprehend all of the things of God), but we are gifted the power to persevere in witnessing to the work of Christ. Have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your life? When did you seem to have capabilities that were beyond yourself?*

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- **Prayer Prompt: And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸ Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36.27)**
 - *God, move in me with power so great that others will know it is you working through me. I will point to you with my life. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 1.9 (NIV)

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

JOHN 20.17 (NIV)

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

- Many have pondered the historical nature of the ascension. It is alluded to in multiple places like John 20.17. There also were eyewitnesses to this moment. The ascension explains why the appearances of the risen Jesus stopped and the Holy Spirit came on the scene. It was hard to say goodbye, and it was difficult to face the absence of Jesus after 40 days of him showing up, but the promised power of the Holy Spirit allowed the disciples to stay on task. The words spoken to Mary in the garden outside the empty tomb could just as easily been spoken in Acts 1. "Do not hold on to me. It will be even better when I have ascended to the Father." When have you had to let go of a good thing in the present in order to allow for an even better future?
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- **Prayer Prompt: No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. (John 3.13)**
- *Lord God, help me to let go of the things I must let go of in order for your Kingdom to reign in my life. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 1.10-11 (NIV)

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 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.”

- The pattern of Jesus coming to earth, dying on the earth, raising back to life on the earth, and then ascending to heaven ought to give us hope for his return. This is what he does! He comes and goes so that we can know the way to go and have the power to get there. When Jesus returns, he'll pull heaven down with him. How do you picture the scene of Jesus' returning to earth?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. (Revelation 21.1-2)
- *God, I long for the return of your Son. Empower me and prepare me to recognize your Kingdom as it begins to reign on earth. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Commentator John Stott pointed out the order of these four key events:

1. Jesus returned to heaven (ascension)
2. The Holy Spirit appeared (Pentecost)
3. The church goes out to witness (mission)
4. Jesus will come back (return)

The timing between these movements is obviously uneven and unknown to us. In between the 1st and the 4th (the going and coming of Christ), the Spirit must come and we must go (out to witness). We are living in the 3rd event listed here, and waiting for the 4th.

- The disciples were quickly encouraged by two angels to stop staring up at the sky and prepare to go and witness. Do you ever find yourself frozen in awe of some amazing thing God has done? How do you respond to miracles and signs? How do they impact your life of discipleship to Jesus?