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Text: Acts 1

Title:

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File: Acts 1

Preacher: Stephen Taylor

Slide 1

The Taylor household is almost at the end of their time receiving school report cards. But for almost two decades it has been a constant. A look at how the kids are really going. An independent review by their teachers at what they have achieved in the last six months and what they need to do in the future to reach their potential.

Slide 2

But what do you think about this report card? *"Christina started off the year with great enthusiasm. She wanted to learn and was keen to pass on what she learnt to others. She made quite an impression on the rest of the class. But after a while, she began to think she knew it all. She stopped listening to her teacher. She isolated herself from her fellow classmates. And she got into some bad habits which she has failed to rectify. Christina's results have since suffered and she's in danger of being left behind"*

Now if we were Christina's parents, we would be rightly concerned, wouldn't we? And we would probably want her to get back to basics and try and do again what she had been doing earlier. Well, I think if we were going to give the Christian Church a report card, it would be very similar to the one that Christina received. The Church started off with great enthusiasm. It listened to its teachers, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It achieved great results, but it began to look inward. It began to forget why it was placed here by God. It began to concentrate on itself. And now it is in danger of being left behind.

I wonder what report card we would get for our Church? Doing well? Trying hard? Distracted? Off the boil after such a crazy mixed up year? Top of the class? I guess we would all make different assessments. But before we do that, I thought, why don't we look at the setting up of the Church, the mandate for the Church, the early practise of the Church? So this term we are going to look at the book of Acts to remind ourselves of why we are here and why the Church is of vital importance in God's plans for His world.

Slide 3

So our author Luke begins his history lesson by saying, v 1, *"In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus **began to do and to teach**<sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen."* Luke begins by saying something quite startling. This is not a book about the Church but about Jesus! In his first book, the gospel of Luke it was obviously about Jesus. What he began to do. But this sequel is also about Jesus what he continues to do through the Holy Spirit. So in the beginning how does Jesus lead his Church? Well, it begins with

Slide 4

1. **Jesus spending** time with his followers (v1-3)

Jesus spends. “<sup>3</sup> After his suffering, he **presented** himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”

Jesus made sure that his followers knew that the resurrection was for real. He gave them convincing proofs that he was really alive. He comes and goes over the next 40 days and 40 nights. For Jesus followers had to be convinced, utterly convinced that Jesus had indeed physically risen from the dead.

Slide 5

This is the difference between Christianity and every other religion. All the leaders of the other religions died. And their bodies remain in the grave. But Jesus came back from the dead. Death could not hold him. Jesus is alive. His work is going to continue. That is why the gospel of Luke is about what **Jesus began to do & teach** before he was taken up to heaven. And that is why the book of Acts is about what Jesus continues to do through his followers.

Slide 6

For Jesus had come to preach about the Kingdom of God. He had come to grow the Kingdom of God. So, he appears to his disciples to teach them about the resurrection and to instruct them about the Kingdom of God. Now today we have the Kingdom of Denmark or the Buddhist Kingdom of Thailand and even the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales and Nth Ireland. And each kingdom is marked by borders, it is all about land.

But the Kingdom of God is marked out by a people. The people of God. Who have been saved by the power of God, based on the work of the Son of God and made holy by the Spirit of God! This Kingdom is like a seed that has been placed in a ground. Its growth has only just begun. And Jesus will grow this kingdom, Jesus will build this church. And the gates of Hades will not stop it. Nothing in fact will stop it.

You see if Jesus lives then his ministry will continue in new, fresh & vibrant ways every day. Until he appears again, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the King. He is the King of God's kingdom. And so Jesus spends time with his disciples and teaches them and prepares them for their future role. In growing God's kingdom. Making sure that everyone has a chance to be a part of something big, really big.

Slide 7

So how would someone independent mark that part of our Church's report card. Because we know that when two or three gather in Jesus name, he is in our midst. Jesus still is spending time with his people. He is still the head of the church. He is still teaching us through his word. Challenging us to be his witnesses. Strengthening us for the task at hand. So what difference does spending time with Jesus make in our lives. At Church on a Sunday. With our Bibles open on a Monday? Has his presence really and truly rubbed off on us? Is his word really shaping us? Does his company give us strength, courage and perseverance to face every situation?

## Slide 8

**2. Jesus spends, then Jesus suspends (verse 4-5)**

<sup>4</sup> *“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. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

The world needs to hear the good news, but the disciples are to wait. People need to be saved from hell but the disciples are not to go, not just yet. Jesus has already given them the great commission, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel” but it is like he suspends that mandate until the coming of the Holy Spirit. For it is the Holy Spirit that opens men’s

hearts and minds, it is the Holy Spirit that convicts men of sin, it is the Holy Spirit who guides

us into the whole truth.

Jesus has no intention of sending out his followers to be lambs to the slaughter. He will not give them a task to do before fully equipping them for the task at hand. He will not send them out powerless. So, they need to wait. For the gift that His Father had promised. For the Holy Spirit is not a reward for work done, it is a gift attached to souls won.

## Slide 9

Wait. Don’t run on ahead. Don’t think it is all up to you. It isn’t. In the OT God sent the Holy Spirit to just a few people for just a short period of time. So, prophets or priests or kings were filled with the Holy Spirit and when they were filled, they were able to do great things.

## Slide 10

Now God is about to fulfill his promise to the prophet Joel that *“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. <sup>9</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. <sup>30</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens & on the earth, blood & fire & billows of smoke... <sup>32</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved”*

## Slide 11

So wait! In my good time I will give you all that you need. And so, I wonder are we good at waiting for God? Are we good at resting in his promises? Would our report card say that when God tells us to move, we move and when God tells us to wait, we wait? Jesus is in control of the work of the Church. We have no mandate to do things alone, in our own strength. We need to look to him. Listen to him. Obey him. How good are we at doing that?

## Slide 12

**3. Jesus spends, suspends and thirdly sends (verse 6-8)**

<sup>6</sup> *“Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup> He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> 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.”*

You see even after spending time with the disciples they still don't get it. 'Restore' means they thought God's kingdom was a kingdom with borders, 'Israel' shows they thought it was going to be all about the Jews. And 'at this time' means they thought that Jesus resurrection was going to bring God's kingdom into place right now. As Calvin once said, *"There are as many errors in this question as words!"* And this is after Jesus has spent time teaching them!

But Jesus as he answers them lifts their sights. He moves their gaze from their own backyard to the furthest corners of the earth. Yes, God's Kingdom will take a hold in Jerusalem but that is just its starting point. It's going global, viral even. It's going to make it to Charlestown, Chad & Chile. To Swansea, Swaziland & Switzerland. But to do that it is going to need power.

Slide 13

Not power to wage war but to witness to the truth. Not by force of arms but by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. The power of the Holy Spirit. The book of Ephesians says the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to every believer. Not to bludgeon others into submission but to grow in godliness, to witness to the world & to persevere in prayer. That's why they had to stay to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Remember Jesus said to his disciples, it is better that I go for them the Holy Spirit will come. While Jesus was here on earth this power was concentrated in our person, now that he is going to the Father, he can send this power to all those who have put their trust in Jesus.

Slide 14

Power to be his witnesses. The disciples are not bearing witness primarily to something that's happened to them. Rather, they are bearing witness to something Jesus has done. He has died and risen again. His Word is alive sharper than any two-edged sword. And he has transformed a people. Jesus has turned sinners into saints. Ordinary, everyday, followers into people who will help change the world.

In the past the nations came to the Jews. Naaman came to Elisha for healing. The Queen of Sheba came to hear Solomons Wisdom. The wise men had followed the star in the sky and come to Jesus. But now God's kingdom was going to go to them. As Bishop Leslie Newbigin says in his book *the Household of God* *"the Church is the pilgrim people of God. It is on the move – hastening to the ends of the earth to beseech all men to be reconciled to God & hastening to the end of time to meet its Lord who will gather all into one."*

Slide 15

We have no liberty to stare at the sky waiting for someone else to do all the work. We are given the work to do. In the words of David Strain, He *"will empower and equip God's people to be witnesses all over the world in fulfillment of Christ's vision. The gift of the Spirit will enable and propel mission. When we think about the work of the Holy Spirit,*

*too often, I think, we focus on experiences and emotions when we think about the Holy Spirit's work in the Church's life. But in Acts 1:8, Jesus says the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to propel ordinary, average, broken-down, often confused, usually stumbling, falling, sinful believers outward to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. That's His work."*

Slide 16

And the rest of the Book of Acts shows how the early Church did just that. In chapters 1 to 7 we see them being witnesses in Jerusalem, in chapters 8 to 11 it was Judea and Samaria turn: and chapters 12 to 28 takes us to Rome, which in one sense for the people of that time was the end of the earth. But this is more than just a pattern for the early Church I believe it is a pattern for us now. We start with Swansea/Charlestown & then we work out so that we too can be witnesses in Newcastle, in NSW, and then to the very ends of the earth.

Slide 17

So how would our report card say we are going with that mission? With our witnessing? Would the people of our suburb even notice if we shut up shop and went away? I doubt they would. I often think about the work of all the other churches in our area and think what they do doesn't affect me at all and then I realise what we do doesn't affect them either!

We are a Church with tremendous resources. Two full time ministers, two part time workers, good Christian families with decades worth of a good teaching. And how many people are converted each year because of our ministry. One a year, if we are lucky! When did we last plant a Church? When did we last send out a missionary? When did we last step out in faith and do something really radical for the Lord?

We have a great need, for a fresh out pouring of the Holy Spirit. We have a great need to get

out of our building and into our world. We have a great need to go from this place and be witnesses to the risen Jesus Christ.

Slide 18

#### **4. Jesus spends, suspends, sends and fourthly ascends.**

<sup>9</sup> *"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. <sup>10</sup> They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> "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."*

It's been well said that: *"At the Ascension Jesus left the Here for the Everywhere; He left the Time for the Eternal; He left the First Century to fill All the Centuries."* At the ascension, Jesus miraculously leaves this earth and goes to heaven. At the ascension, Jesus begins a new part of his ministry, he starts interceding for his followers on behalf of the Father. He begins to rule the world. He takes up his position as head of the Church.

Slide 19

In Daniel 7 we have the Son of Man ruling on high, now the Son of Man has gone to rule from on high. Jesus is crowned as King of Every Nation. As God's appointed ruler not just of little Israel. But everywhere & this little bunch of guys, these 120 or so disciples, this bunch of men & women, fishermen & family have got the job of announcing it & telling the world.

How do you reckon they're going to go? I reckon it's a scary job. I mean, I reckon it's scary enough just having Lake Macquarie to worry about. They had the world. And they're just ordinary guys. But ordinary guys with the power of the Spirit, with the witness of Jesus, with access to the promises of the Father.

Slide 20

In the words of John Calvin *"Since Jesus has gone up there, and is in heaven for us, let us note that we need not fear to be in this world... thus we look to our Head who is already in heaven and say 'Although I am weak, there is Jesus Christ who is powerful enough to make me stand upright. Although I am feeble, there is Jesus Christ who is my strength. Although I am full of miseries, Jesus Christ is in immortal glory and what he has will sometime be given to me and I shall partake of all his benefits. Yes, the devil is called the prince of this world. But what of it? Jesus Christ holds him check for he is king of heaven and earth... the Son of God is my head... I must then take confidence in Him.'"*

Slide 21

Is that what is written on our report card? Even when we felt weak during the coronavirus we looked to Jesus and found strength. Even when we were opposed by a changing culture we looked to Jesus and found courage. Even when we felt like there was so much to do within the walls of our Church we kept reaching out, witnessing to all about Jesus Christ.

Slide 22

#### 5. **Jesus** spends, suspends, sends, ascends and lastly **mends** (verses 12-26)

Which leads us to the practical component of the Church's report card. For after Jesus leaves, and before the Spirit comes, the Church has to make a decision, an important decision. And that is who what happens to Judas' place? How do we mend, how do we fix up and repair our past failure with regard to Judas? Who betrayed Jesus? Who caused God's Son to die? Who helped kill the Son of God?

In this case study we see how any group of Christians should make a decision. Notice firstly they met regularly to pray. They all joined together in prayer. Everyone. Together. Seeking God's help and asking for God's guidance. As Matthew Henry once said, *"When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he does is to set them praying."*

Slide 23

Or listen to the words of the preacher Harry Ironside, *"When God is going to do some great thing, He moves the hearts of people to pray. He stirs them up to pray in view of that which he is about to do so that they might be prepared to for it. The disciples needed the self-examination that comes through prayer and supplication that they might be ready for the tremendous event which was about to take place, the coming to earthy of God the Holy Spirit to dwell in believers and empower them to witness for him."*

Slide 24

And it seems out of this time of prayer, they realise that they need to replace Judas. And once they make that decision, they find that Scripture confirms their need to do just that. They find two passages from the Psalms that back up their heart's promptings. When it comes to guidance, here is where we always need to start. What does God want me to do? How should I live? How can I really help my friends, my family? If we are often in prayer, God will convict us, and we can confirm these convictions through the Scriptures.

Next, they used their common sense. To be an apostle, they had to know Jesus, which meant being there from the beginning. And because the death and resurrection and ascension was the key to who Jesus was that person had to be there at the end as well. So they sifted through all the possible candidates and choose two who were suitable, Justus and Matthias. So, friends relying on God doesn't mean throwing away our brain.

Slide 25

And lastly, they left the final decision up to God by drawing lots, and Matthias was chosen. This is the only use of lots in the NT, and personally I think that once the Holy Spirit comes, there are probably better ways. But you can see that the early Church is keen to let God make the final decisions.

Slide 26

How have we gone with our practical component of our report card – say the coming of COVID last year? Did we pray together? Did we search the Scriptures for answers? Did we use our common sense? Were we really dependent upon God to lead us through the tough times? Or did we just do our own thing, each man for themselves & hope that somehow, in some way, God would get us through such a tough time.?

Slide 27

When the missionaries were forced out of China by the Japanese during WW2, one lady Gladys Aylward decided she couldn't leave her work behind. So with only one assistant she led more than 100 orphans over the mountains out of China. It was a harrowing journey in a war-torn country. One of the orphans, a 13 year old girl reminded her of the story of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. "But I'm not Moses", Gladys cried out. "Of course, you aren't," the girl said "but Jehovah is still God."

Slide 28

God hasn't changed. God's mission for us hasn't changed. He is calling us to be his witnesses here in Newcastle, Australia, the world. But he doesn't leave us on our own, we have prayer, we have his word and we have the power of the Holy Spirit. And friends that is more than enough. So, let's get going. The work of Jesus hasn't stopped. It continues through us.

\*\*\*\*\*a (David Strain)

This week, as we consider Acts 1 verse 8 a second time, we want to think about three more points. We're going to think about the power we will need to accomplish the mission, the project that is integral to the vision Christ has given us, and the program according to which the vision will be realized.

\*\*\*\*\*b

A good friend of mine is an airline pilot. He was a fighter pilot and he once explained to me the importance of the pre-flight briefings when his squadron were about to make a

flight together. Each pilot had to be sure of the coordinates, they needed to know the destination with precision, and plot the trajectory carefully. And to be sure, a tiny error, perhaps over the first few miles, really would make very little difference. Everyone would still be flying in formation along broadly the same trajectory. But over 100 miles, or over 1,000 miles, the difference of just one degree at the beginning, which may have seemed like a minor difference, over 1,000 miles, you were 100 miles away from target when you finally arrived. You were 100 miles off base. Before His ascension to glory, we might say here in the upper room in the beginning of the book of Acts, Jesus calls a pre-flight briefing with the apostles.

\*\*\*\*\*c

If First Presbyterian Church were just simply gone tomorrow, would Belhaven miss us? Would Fondren? Would Midtown? Would they care that we're not here anymore? Would they even notice? Maybe they would be glad that we're not here, you know, parking in their driveways and cluttering the streets. Whether it's justified or not, the truth is, we probably all know this, we don't have a very good reputation in our neighbourhood and among our immediate neighbours around here.

\*\*\*\*\*d

We are a church with the resources to make a national and a global impact. Are we deploying those resources in a way that is consistent with what the Bible says is at the very heart of Jesus' plan for the evangelization of the world? The whole of Christ's plan, His entire strategy to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth, is local churches. It is the church. Are we planting churches? When was the last time we planted a church? And are we going – Elias Medeiros, I don't know if you know him – professor at Reformed Seminary – a wonderful, joyous man who loves the Gospel and loves to equip men to preach the Gospel, likes to say that we have been called, by the Lord Jesus ourselves, "to go across the street and around the world." That's what Jesus is saying in Acts 1:8, isn't it? That's the mission. It's big, scary, uncomfortable, awkward, outside of our comfort zone. But that's the task.

\*\*\*\*\*e

. It will empower and equip God's people to be witnesses all over the world in fulfillment of Christ's vision. The gift of the Spirit will enable and propel mission. When we think about the work of the Holy Spirit, too often, I think, we focus on experiences and emotions when we think about the Holy Spirit's work in the Church's life. But in Acts 1:8, Jesus says the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to propel ordinary, average, broken-down, often confused, usually stumbling, falling, sinful believers outward to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. That's His work.

\*\*\*\*\*f

he Holy Spirit comes upon the church, oftentimes on the same people who were right there in Acts chapter 2, to empower them at critical moments where they need boldness and courage and strength to press on and continue to preach Christ in the midst of persecution and hardship and difficulty.

\*\*\*\*\*g

The great need of the hour, the most pressing, urgent need of the Church, isn't more money! It is a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is for the place where we are



gathered to be shaken and all of God's people to be filled with His Spirit that you and I may go and speak the Word with boldness. That is our great need.

\*\*\*\*\*h

Next, notice the project. What is at the very heart of the vision, the task to which Christ has called us? Acts 1:8, look at it again. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my" – what? "You will be my witnesses." That's the task; that's the project. That's our great business – to bear witness about Jesus.

\*\*\*\*\*i

That's not what it means to bear witness here. You're not bearing witness to something that's happened to you. Rather, you're bearing witness to something Jesus has done. At least that was the task given to the apostles. And there's a very real sense in which it is given uniquely and only to the apostles because, after all, they were eyewitnesses to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. More than that, they are His inspired, authorized spokesmen in the world whom He sends to the church to interpret, explain, and apply the significance of the coming of Jesus and of His work in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures. And so there are no more witnesses in that sense because the apostolic witness is finished with their witness to us. However, we have access to their witness today in the New Testament Scriptures. Don't we? Their witness, their testimony to Christ, has been recorded in the New Testament and we can participate in their witness-bearing to Jesus to the ends of the earth by opening the Scriptures, by pointing people to the Word, by speaking the truth of the Word of God to the world. And so if the first point really challenges us and calls us to prayer, the second point, as we think about the great project, is a reminder and a call back to the Bible. To be people of the Book. People whose witness participates in the apostolic witness as we open the Word.

\* And then finally, the program. In the book of Acts, you will notice if you read Acts 1:8 – "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" – those three stages, and then you read through the book of Acts you'll see it's a virtual table of contents. So the first seven chapters focus on the work of the Gospel in Jerusalem. Chapter 8, the Gospel goes to Samaria. Chapter 8 through about chapter 20, you see the itinerant missionary endeavors of the apostle Paul throughout the Roman Empire. Chapter 21 to the end gathers momentum towards Paul's arrival in Rome, the center of the known world – the symbolic ends of the earth. And there's Jesus' pattern in Acts 1:8. There's a program according to which the Gospel advances until the story is complete.\*\*\*\*\*j

\*\*\*\*\*k

The great Puritan, John Flavel, famously said that "providence," the providence of God, "is like a Hebrew word. You can only read it backwards." Isn't that true? We don't really know why this or that is happening to us. Sometimes we never do, but often it's only with hindsight. Looking back we get to see, maybe only glimpses, of God's design and purpose in our trials and difficulties and in our triumphs and blessings. "Providence is like a Hebrew word – best read backwards."

\*\*\*\*\*l

A familiar illustration of that I've used before has to do with the day the missionaries were expelled from China. You've heard me say this before. 1952, the last missionary left

China, Western missionary, left China. At that point, there were 750,000 Protestant Christians living in China. And the expulsion of the missionaries was a catastrophe. It really was a disaster. It looked like the work was over. Today, there is a conservative estimate, 58 million Protestant Christians in China; 58 million since 1952.

\*\*\*\*\*m

Mpc Acts sermons are on 2018 & 2012 & 2001

\*\*\*\*\*n

don't know if you've come across the Apostolic Church; they're a denomination that believes they're still ruled and led by present day apostles today. Who have the same authority and power as Peter and James and John and Andrew and the other guys in verse 13. But as Luke tells it, there's something more foundational going on. Paul later on says the church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets. Foundational because; it's gotta be someone in verse 21 who's been there with them the whole time Jesus was with them. And who most significantly has been a witness of his resurrection. Not just the forty days of teaching. But the whole time, from John's baptism to now.

\*\*\*\*\*o

e're starting out in Acts 1 with the **mission** Jesus left with his Apostles which is a **way bigger job than they were expecting**

\*\*\*\*\*p

"The **ends of the earth.**" Not from **everywhere into Jerusalem.** But from **Jerusalem out, to everywhere.**

To places like Ulaan Bataar in Mongolia and like Chiba City in Japan and like Alderley up the road and Wallabadah in New South Wales that's got a name I just like the sound of.

\*\*\*\*\*q

If you were to **ask peter or James or John** how many Christians there were back then the answer was around 120. If you were to ask **Google today** how many Christians there are in the world today, you'll get the answer **2.4 billion (2015)**. 32% of the world's population. Greg Clarke who's now Australian director of the Bible society, is just back from China where he says the **bible is now china's best selling book.**

\*\*\*\*\*r

The Acts of the Apostles is written by Luke, the same Luke who wrote Luke's gospel. It's kind of like LUKE PART 2. The sequel.

These days a movie only has to earn a few bucks at the box office, and the next thing you know they're out with Part 2. And Part 3. *Crocodile Dundee 3*, I don't know if you've seen it. But from the reviews I've read, it's hardly worth bothering. But let me tell you, LUKE PART 2 is a blockbuster.

\*\*\*\*\*s

Well, have a read of what Luke says right at the start in Acts chapter 1 verse 1. He's dedicating the book to a guy called Theophilus; exactly like he did with his gospel. And here are the words of verse 1. Nobody knows exactly who Theophilus was. I reckon my wild guess is as good as anyone else's; and my guess is Theophilus is a **LAWYER** who's defending Paul in his courtcase in Rome. Which we get to right at the end of the book.

Acts ENDS with Paul under house arrest waiting for his trial. And maybe Acts is everything Theophilus needs to know to defend him.

\*\*\*\*\*t

Now can I take a moment to say that THE KINGDOM OF GOD is an idea we've got to try to get hold of. We're used to thinking about Kingdoms as being patches of ground. Like the United Kingdom. It's marked out by the borders of England and Ireland and Scotland and Wales.

But the Kingdom of God isn't like that. The Kingdom of God's marked out by A PEOPLE. And the geography doesn't count.

Mind you, even after Jesus has been talking to them, the apostles don't quite get it. They ask him in verse 6, they say, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the KINGDOM TO ISRAEL. Are you going to throw out the Romans, are you going to take back the throne of David in Jerusalem. And mark out the borders on the map.

\*\*\*\*\*u

And he says, IT'S NOT JUST AN ISRAEL THING ANYWAY. It's BIGGER THAN THAT.

\*\*\*\*\*v

Luke's very economical with words at this point. Verse 9. After this, he was TAKEN UP BEFORE THEIR VERY EYES; and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Now I've never actually seen a person float up into the clouds before. How would you feel watching it? I reckon you'd be terrified. Luke doesn't say whether there was a whooshing noise, or whether there was thunder and lightning, or what. Just a sentence. He was taken up before their eyes.

\*\*\*\*\*w

Jesus is crowned as King of Every Nation. As God's appointed ruler not just of little Israel. But everywhere. And this little bunch of guys have got the job of announcing it. And telling the world. How do you reckon they're going to do? I reckon it's a scary job. I mean, I reckon it's scary enough just having Mitchelton to worry about. They had the world. And they're just ordinary guys.

Jesus says they're not going to do it alone. That his SPIRIT is going to be there to help them do it. And we're going to see that happening next time.

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## Acts 1

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach<sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.<sup>3</sup> After his suffering, he **presented** himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*

<sup>4</sup> *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.<sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

<sup>6</sup> Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> 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."

<sup>9</sup> After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. <sup>10</sup> They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> "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."

<sup>12</sup> Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. <sup>13</sup> When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup> They all joined together constantly in **prayer**, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

<sup>15</sup> In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) <sup>16</sup> and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup> He was one of our number and shared in our ministry."

<sup>18</sup> (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. <sup>19</sup> Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) <sup>20</sup> "For," said Peter, "it is written in the Book of Psalms: "'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, "'May another take his place of leadership.' <sup>21</sup> Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." <sup>23</sup> So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup> to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." <sup>26</sup> Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.