



The Mission of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-11)

Notes: Week Two

Acts 1:4-11 (NIV)

⁴ 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. ⁵ For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with^[b] 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.”

Footnotes:

- a. [Acts 1:5](#) Or *in*
- b. [Acts 1:5](#) Or *in*

Acts 1:4-11 (HCSB)

The Holy Spirit Promised

⁴ While He was together^[a] with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "This," He said, "is what you heard from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

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

⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. 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^[b] of the earth."

The Ascension

⁹ After He had said this, He was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While He was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven."

Footnotes:

- a. [Acts 1:4](#) Or *He was eating*, or *He was lodging*
- b. [Acts 1:8](#) Lit *the end*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹

Acts 1:4-11

1:4 The **Father's promise** refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit, which would soon come (chap. 2).

1:5 John's baptism was a symbolic washing to purify and to indicate repentance of sin. Jesus' baptism of believers would be of greater impact and involved the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

1:6-7 Restoration of the **kingdom of Israel** was something for which all first-century Jews longed. It was commonly believed that Messiah, son of David and heir to his throne, would accomplish this restoration. Jesus deflected the disciples' misguided question and repeated His command that they were to be His witnesses near and far (cp. [Mt 28:19](#)).

1:8 The major focus of the book of Acts is stated in this verse. Jesus said believers would **receive power** when the **Holy Spirit** came upon them, empowering them to be His **witnesses in Jerusalem** first and then spreading to **the ends of the earth**. Note three things about how this unfolds. First, the empowering presence is to be the Holy Spirit, not Jesus Himself. Jesus prepared His disciples for the transition when the Holy Spirit would come to be a constant presence in His bodily absence. Second, the growth of the church would come about through the witness of the disciples. From the beginning, the church is depicted as a community that actively witnesses to their faith in Jesus Christ. Third, the result of this witness will be measurable, geographical growth. This growth will begin in Jerusalem and then spread through ever-widening concentric circles to other Jewish areas (e.g., **Judea**), to areas on the edges of Judaism (e.g., **Samaria**), and eventually to "the ends of the earth," which may refer to the known world of that time, likely coextensive with the reach of the Roman Empire. As new lands and peoples were discovered in coming centuries, the church understood that it must keep expanding its witness to reach the newfound "ends of the earth."

1:9-11 Luke briefly told about Jesus' ascension in his Gospel ([Lk 24:51](#)), and now he provides a somewhat fuller account. **A cloud took Him out** recalls the presence of God depicted as a cloud elsewhere (e.g., [Ex 13:21-22](#)). Thus Jesus was received by the Father in fulfillment of His words in [Jn 7:33-34](#). Jesus' final instructions and ascension to heaven provide overlap and transition between Luke's Gospel and the book of Acts. The ascension took place on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem ([Ac 1:12](#)). Jesus' return will be in the **same way** as He departed—bodily and visibly.

Opportunities and Challenges in Global Missions

M. David Sills

The twenty-first century is a time of unprecedented challenge and opportunity for global missions. The terrorism of 9/11 was the first of many cataclysmic global changes that are reshaping our world. The surge of terrorism against Western powers, the growth of Islam, and the burgeoning global prominence of the Majority World (formerly called Third World) represent significant challenges facing Christian missions. The unprecedented worldwide interconnectivity due to globalization both facilitates and challenges missions work. Urbanization has resulted in more than half of the world's people living in major cities. In many global south countries, up to one-half of the population lives in the capital cities.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Acts 1".

The principle of acceleration, which means that something is not just true but is *increasingly* true, exacerbates the challenges. In order to meet new challenges, missionaries and their agencies must constantly monitor global trends in order to reshape strategies and methodologies.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, missionaries began to strategize to reach people groups rather than just nations. This led to a focus on unreached people groups and more recently to strategies for engaging groups where no one was seeking to plant churches. Missiologists call this the "Last Frontier"—unreached and unengaged people groups. Reaching areas where there is no Christian witness and no government permission to do so is one of the daunting challenges facing missions today. On average three countries per year legally close their doors to traditional missions.

As the world's economic center shifts toward the global south, there is also rapid growth in the Southern Church. The churches of Latin America, Africa, and Asia have produced record numbers of Christians and missionaries that dwarf their older sister Church of the North. Evangelical missionaries celebrate this growth cautiously because, sadly, aberrant doctrine and practice abound in many southern churches. Since the first missionaries to these areas often emphasized simply reaching groups with the gospel, they left once they had evangelized a number of people. This means they regularly left behind undisciplined believers, ill-equipped leadership, and churches that adopted syncretistic beliefs and practices.

Missionaries of the twenty-first century must find ways to disciple people who learn in differing ways. This will require returning to some areas to train biblical leadership in the churches. One reason why many areas of the world are unreached, as well as why many reached peoples were left untaught, is that the people are oral learners who do not read. Oftentimes, their languages have not even been reduced to writing. Although missionaries are developing methods to teach this 70-80 percent of the world, less than 10 percent of all evangelism and discipleship resources are currently designed for oral learners.

The growth of the Southern Church has also brought about an emerging mission movement. The Southern Church has heard the missionary call, and its members are following the Lord's guidance to fulfill it all over the world. The biblical principal that those who know should teach those who do not suggests that missionary training programs ought to be developed for this emerging missions force. Disciplined and trained believers among the cultures of the world are the key to healthy, reproducing New Testament churches.

Modern missions history has witnessed pendulum swings ranging from the rejection of cultures to an uncritical acceptance of them. A healthy balance is one that is faithful to God's Word and sensitive to cultures so that they can embrace the pure gospel in culturally appropriate ways. Missionaries in Muslim and Hindu areas are facing challenges to this balance in the extreme forms of insider movements and uncritical contextualization models that fail to stress the exclusivity of Christ.

Answers to these challenges are not easy, and no single-solution strategy will fit every culture in all ages. We can be certain God will make a way, but we must be diligent and faithful no matter the challenges. Missionaries must stay in the Word, on their faces in prayer, and as close to Jesus as they can get in order to tread the narrow way through an ever-changing world, bringing the Good News to all nations.

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

Acts 1:4-11

1:4 The **promise of the Father** refers to the gift that was promised by the Father, namely, the new and greater empowering of the Holy Spirit that the disciples were to await in Jerusalem (see [Luke 3:15-17; 24:49](#)).

1:5 Baptized with the Holy Spirit looks forward to Pentecost (see [ch. 2](#)). John had contrasted his “repentance” baptism with Jesus’ “Holy Spirit” baptism ([Mark 1:8](#)). Throughout Acts, baptism and the gift of the Spirit are closely related. Repentance, forgiveness, water baptism, and reception of the Spirit comprise the basic pattern of conversion.

1:6-11 Jesus Ascends. At the end of the 40 days ([v. 3](#)), Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives and ascended visibly ([vv. 9-11](#)). Before doing so he commissioned them to be his witnesses ([v. 8](#)).

1:6 The place of the disciples’ assembly was the Mount of Olives ([v. 12](#)), at the foot of which lay Bethany ([Luke 24:50](#)). The disciples asked Jesus when he would **restore the kingdom to Israel** because they concluded from his resurrection and the promise of the Spirit that the messianic era had dawned and the final salvation of Israel was imminent. However, they were probably still expecting the restoration of a military and political kingdom that would drive out the Roman armies and restore national sovereignty to Israel, as had happened numerous times in the OT. Jesus corrected them, not by rejecting the question, but by telling them ([Acts 1:8](#)) that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit, not in order to triumph over Roman armies but to spread the good news of the gospel throughout the world. In other words, the return is in God’s timing; in the meantime, there are other key things believers are to do.

1:7 the Father has fixed by his own authority. Ultimate authority in determining the events of history is consistently ascribed to God the Father among the persons of the Trinity.

1:8 Jesus corrected the disciples’ questions ([v. 6](#)) with a commission: “this time” ([v. 6](#)) would be for them a time of witnessing for the gospel, and the scope of their witness was not to be just Israel but the world. [Verse 8](#) is the thematic statement for all of Acts. It begins with the Spirit’s power that stands behind and drives the witness to Jesus. Then it provides a rough outline of the book: **Jerusalem** ([chs. 1-7](#)), **Judea and Samaria** ([chs. 8-12](#)), and the **end of the earth** ([chs. 13-28](#)). **you will receive power.** Interpreters differ over whether the Holy Spirit was at work in the lives of ordinary believers prior to Pentecost in a lesser way or not at all, except for empowering for special tasks. On either view, something new that needed to be waited for was here. This powerful new work of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost brought several beneficial results: more effectiveness in witness and ministry ([1:8](#)), effective proclamation of the gospel (cf. [Matt. 28:19](#)), power for victory over sin ([Acts 2:42-46; Rom. 6:11-14; 8:13-14; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10](#)), power for victory over Satan and demonic forces ([Acts 2:42-46; 16:16-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-4; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 John 4:4](#)), and a wide distribution of gifts for ministry ([Acts 2:16-18; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Pet. 4:10](#); cf. [Num. 11:17, 24-29](#)). The disciples likely understood “power” in this context to include both the power to preach the gospel effectively and also the power (through the Holy Spirit) to work miracles confirming the message. The same word (Gk. *dynamis*) is used at least seven other times in Acts to refer to power to work miracles in connection with gospel proclamation (see [Acts 2:22; 3:12; 4:7; 6:8; 8:10; 10:38; 19:11](#)).

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Acts 1".

Acts 1:8

Text	Region Named	Narrative of Ministry There
Acts 1:8 : you will be my witnesses	in Jerusalem	Acts 1-7
	in all Judea and Samaria	Acts 8-12
	to the end of the earth	Acts 13-28

1:9 Elsewhere in Scripture a **cloud** is often associated with a manifestation of God's presence ([Luke 9:28-36](#)). This was not an ordinary rain cloud but the cloud of glory that surrounds the very presence of God. **as they were looking on, he was lifted up**. This visible ascension of Jesus into heaven indicates that Jesus retains a physical human body, as a man, though he is exalted to the right hand of God, i.e., given direct executive rule in God's spiritual kingdom ([Matt. 28:18](#)). When coupled with [Acts 1:11](#), it also indicates that he will someday return in the same physical body. The amazing miracle of the incarnation is not only that the eternal Son of God took human nature on himself and became a person who is simultaneously God and man, but also that he will remain both fully God and fully man forever.

1:10 The pair of "men" were angels in human form, as their **white robes** attest (see [Matt. 28:3](#); [Luke 24:4](#); [John 20:12](#)).

1:11 **will come in the same way as you saw him go**. Jesus' return, like his ascension, will be bodily and visible. (See note on [v. 9](#).)

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Acts 1:4-11

1:4, 5 The *Trinity* is a description of the unique relationship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If Jesus had stayed on earth, his physical presence would have limited the spread of the Good News because physically he could be in only one place at a time. After Christ was taken up into heaven, he would be spiritually present everywhere through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was sent so that God would be with and within his followers after Christ returned to heaven. The Spirit would comfort them, guide them to know his truth, remind them of Jesus' words, give them the right words to say, and fill them with power (see [John 14-16](#)).

1:5 At Pentecost ([2:1-4](#)) the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believed in Jesus. We receive the Holy Spirit (are baptized with him) when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. The baptism of the Holy Spirit must be understood in the light of his total work in Christians.

(1) The Spirit marks the beginning of the Christian experience. We cannot be Christians without his Spirit ([Romans 8:9](#)); we cannot be joined to Christ without his Spirit ([1 Corinthians 6:17](#)); we cannot be adopted as his children without his Spirit ([Romans 8:14-17](#); [Galatians 4:6, 7](#)); we cannot be in the body of Christ except by baptism in the Spirit ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#)).

(2) The Spirit is the power of our new lives. He begins a lifelong process of change making us more like Christ ([Galatians 3:3](#); [Philippians 1:6](#)). When we receive Christ by faith, we begin an immediate personal relationship with God. The Holy Spirit works in us to help us become like Christ.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1814-1815.

(3) The Spirit unites the Christian community in Christ ([Ephesians 2:19-22](#)). The Holy Spirit can be experienced by all, and he works through all ([1 Corinthians 12:11](#); [Ephesians 4:4](#)).

1:6 During the years of Jesus' ministry on earth, the disciples continually wondered about his Kingdom. When would it come? What would be their role? In the traditional view, the Messiah would be an earthly conqueror who would free Israel from Rome. But the Kingdom Jesus spoke about was, first of all, a *spiritual* Kingdom established in the hearts and lives of believers ([Luke 17:21](#)). God's presence and power dwell in believers in the person of the Holy Spirit.

1:6, 7 Like other Jews, the disciples chafed under their Roman rulers. They wanted Jesus to free Israel from Roman power and then become their king. Jesus replied that God the Father sets the timetable for all events—worldwide, national, and personal. If you want changes in your life that God hasn't yet made, don't become impatient. Instead, trust God's timetable.

1:8 The "power" believers receive from the Holy Spirit includes courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

1:8 Jesus had instructed his disciples to witness to people of all nations about him ([Matthew 28:19, 20](#)). But they were told to wait first for the Holy Spirit ([Luke 24:49](#)). God has important work for you to do for him, but you must do it by the power of the Holy Spirit. We often like to get on with the job, even if it means running ahead of God. But waiting is sometimes part of God's plan. Are you waiting and listening for God's complete instructions, or are you running ahead of his plans? We need God's timing and power to be truly effective.

1:8 This verse describes a series of ever-widening circles. The Good News was to spread, geographically, from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth. It would begin with the devout Jews in Jerusalem and Samaria, spread to the mixed race in Samaria, and, finally, be offered to Gentiles all over the world. God's Good News has not reached its final destination if someone in your family, your workplace, your school, or your community hasn't heard the Good News about Jesus Christ. Make sure that you are contributing in some way to the ever-widening circle of God's loving message.

1:9-11 After 40 days with his disciples ([1:3](#)), Jesus returned to heaven. It was important for the disciples to see Jesus taken up into heaven; they knew without a doubt that he was God and that his home was in heaven. The two white-robed men were angels who proclaimed to the disciples that one day Jesus would return in the same way he had gone—bodily and visibly. History is not haphazard or cyclical; it is moving toward a specific point—the return of Jesus to judge and rule over the earth. We should be ready for his sudden return ([1 Thessalonians 5:2](#)), not by standing around "staring into heaven," but by working hard to share the Good News so that others will be able to share in God's great blessings.