

THE GREAT COMMISSION

A *Vision 195* Series

STUDY TWO

Kick-Starting a Plan to Reach the World

Acts 1:6–11

Why would anyone doubt that Jesus is coming back? We live in the light of it, in the hope of it, and the point is we have more to do than stand and stare into heaven. We have the baton. We have the calling. Remember, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the end of the earth.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SAYING goodbye to a loved one never is easy. Those final moments spent with someone we hold so dearly give us a new kind of appreciation for the relationship. You lean into the hug for a few extra moments to savor the warmth of the embrace. Your eyes linger on his or her face—as if to capture a snapshot. You hold on to every single word, listening more intently than ever before.

How much more closely must the disciples have listened to Jesus during their final moments with Him! They already had taken for granted Jesus' departure once before, and they wouldn't let this precious time with Jesus slip away like they did before His crucifixion. So what did Jesus say?

Thankfully, Luke preserved this goodbye between Jesus and His disciples so future generations might listen in on the conversation. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll see what parting words Jesus shared with His closest followers and why these words are just as vital for us today.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Our God is not a distant God. He's ever-present and relational. Although we didn't walk physically with Jesus as the disciples did, we can still commune with Him through prayer. Offer your own prayer to God before diving into His Word today, thanking Him for who He is and asking Him to speak to you in a fresh way.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The book of Acts is the second part of a two-volume work written by Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, and continues the story Luke began in his gospel account. If the book of Luke explains the good news of Jesus—the arrival of God's kingdom through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus—then Acts tells how the world would receive, or even reject, this good news (*Acts 1:1–2*).

Right after Jesus' resurrection, He gathered His disciples together in Galilee to give them one last teaching session. Today, we call this last lesson "The Great Commission." Read *Matthew 28:18–20*, and briefly summarize its key components.

This may have been the final *lesson* the disciples heard from Jesus, but it would not be the last time they spoke with their teacher. The beginning of Acts records their last moments together, and this final interaction would kick-start the process of reaching the world with the good news.



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Observation: Final Moments with Jesus

Many are eager to experience God through His Word and to see their own lives changed. Before this experience can happen, though, we must grasp what Scripture says. This often feels like a daunting task, so Pastor Chuck likes to look for a few key things in each passage: people, events, and timeless truths.¹ Read *Acts 1:6–11*, and list all the people present at this event.

According to *1:6*, what did the disciples ask Jesus that sparked this conversation. Based on this question, what did the disciples think Jesus planned to do after His resurrection?

According to *1:8*, what kind of power did Jesus say He would offer? What would this power source enable them to do?



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According to [Acts 1:8](#), in what areas did Jesus say the disciples would be witnesses? Look for these locales in a [Bible atlas](#) to get an idea of the scope of Jesus' new mission.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Looking up, the disciples watched the Son ascend to dwell with the heavenly Father once again. Then, looking down, their eyes suddenly fell upon two strangers they'd never seen before—striking men dressed in pristine white robes. What promise about Jesus did the two men make to the disciples in [1:11](#)?

What a way to make an exit! Jesus did not intend His dramatic departure merely to leave His friends starstruck. He had something greater in mind . . . an objective. Let's now ask some deeper questions to understand what Jesus meant in His final words to His disciples.



Interpretation: Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth

With our observations compiled, let's mine the information to interpret the timeless truths embedded in these ancient yet eternal words.



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What “kingdom” did the disciples have in mind in [Acts 1:6](#)? How is the power of this kingdom different from the kind of power Jesus offered through the Holy Spirit in [1:8](#)?

The Greek word translated “witness” is a legal term, and it often refers to someone testifying in a courtroom. How does this background help make sense of the disciples’ new role? What specifically would be the focus of their testimony? (Hint: Cross-reference [Acts 1:21–22](#))

The disciples *did not* like Jesus giving them Samaria as a part of their mission. Read about the Samaritans using your [Bible study tools](#), and summarize why Jesus’ statement would have sounded radical. What theological and practical implications does Jesus’ statement reveal to Christians today?

That’s what He means by the ends of the earth. You name it, and wherever God may lead, however He may open doors, you go there. You speak of Him there. You’re involved with Him there. You represent Him there. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Put yourself in the sandals of the disciples. A few weeks ago, they had witnessed the unthinkable. The long-awaited Messiah was murdered by His own people. Just as the disciples had started to accept that Jesus was gone—along with any hope He offered—they heard a rumor about an empty tomb. Soon enough, they stood in the presence of their dear friend once again.

But Jesus always had another surprise, and just as quickly as He returned, He was gone again. How would you have reacted to the events depicted in this passage? What would you have done next? (See [Luke 24:49](#).)

Jesus didn't think small. He wanted *the whole world* to hear the good news of the arrival of the kingdom of God: from family to foreigners, from friends to foes. And He didn't reserve this objective just for His disciples back then . . . we have the very same commission today!



Correlation: Jesus' Promise of the Holy Spirit

Jesus comforted His disciples by saying they wouldn't have to carry out His mission alone. He would send them the Holy Spirit as the mission's divine power source. This shouldn't have surprised them, though. Jesus talked about these things with them during the Last Supper in John 14.

Read [John 14:15–21](#). What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would help them do? (Hint: Focus on verses 15 and 21.) What do Jesus' statements reveal about *how* the Holy Spirit would help the disciples reach the world with the good news of Jesus Christ?



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Read *John 16:7–11*. It might be hard to believe, but Jesus said it was *better* for Him to go than to stay. According to these verses, why?

Jesus needed His friends to know that He wasn't abandoning them. He knew they couldn't accomplish His mission without divine assistance, so He gave them—and us—the gift of the Holy Spirit.



Application: Being Witnesses for Jesus Today

Although Jesus originally offered to the apostles this plan for reaching the world, we are called to continue this mission today. Pastor Chuck offers three practical ways we can apply this passage to our lives:

1. *To embrace an uncertain future, God's promise must be remembered.*
2. *To implement an effective plan, the right people must be engaged.*
3. *To reach an ever-challenging world, Spirit-led power must be involved.*

As you look at the broken world we occupy and consider what unknowns the future might hold, you might feel overwhelmed by the task of being a witness for Jesus. But this passage shows how the apostles needed to rely on God's promises to fulfill His mission. How do the promises in this passage encourage you to participate in the mission God has prepared for you?



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*We build this church in the power of the Spirit. We face tomorrow in the power of the Spirit.
We represent the Savior in the power of the Spirit. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Jesus laid out a plan for ministry that the apostles carried out through the book of Acts. They started in their local city (Jerusalem) then spread out to the surrounding regions (Judea and Samaria), and they continued to move the gospel farther and farther.

What is your Jerusalem? Your Judea and Samaria? How do you sense the Holy Spirit leading you to be a witness for Jesus in these areas? Is it possible that He is calling you to go farther than you've ever gone before?

Jesus' kingdom doesn't require political or physical or financial power for success. Instead, Jesus has given us power from above through the Holy Spirit. We aren't called to use this divine power to make our own names great, but to proclaim Jesus' name throughout the whole earth. This mission began 2,000 years ago with the apostles and continues through us today.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Write your own concluding prayer below asking God to guide you as you seek to continue the Great Commission in your context today.

ENDNOTE

1. For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck, consult our online instructional web page, “*How to Study the Bible for Yourself*.” This page provides an introduction to four important skills in Bible study—observation, interpretation, correlation, and application—along with other helpful study tips. You can also follow the link to purchase a copy of Pastor Chuck’s book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, on which our studies are based.

