

Session 2 The Kingdom Question, the Witness Commission, and the Ascension Promise

Acts: The Book That Explains Everything
Session 2 | Acts 1:6-11



Before You Read

Big idea: Acts 1:6-11 moves from Israel’s kingdom question to the apostolic witness commission, then to the Lord’s visible ascension and promised visible return.

How to use this guide: Read each KJV verse first. Then mark what the verse says before deciding what it means doctrinally.

Four words to keep watching

- **Taken up** - The ascension is bodily, visible, and witnessed by the apostles.
- **Kingdom** - The apostles ask about Israel’s restored kingdom, and Jesus corrects timing rather than the promise.
- **Come** - The same Jesus who went up will return in like manner.
- **Witnesses** - The apostles receive a witness commission that begins in Jerusalem.

A simple right-division reminder: Acts 1 still belongs to the kingdom-apostle setting. Paul has not yet been saved, the mystery of the body of Christ has not yet been revealed, and the apostles are waiting in Jerusalem for the Father’s promise.

Acts 1:6

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

What does the passage say?

- The apostles ask about timing: “at this time.”
- They expect restoration.
- They expect a kingdom.
- They expect that kingdom to be connected to Israel.
- Jesus does not rebuke the question.

Words to notice

- **Restore again** - Return something promised or formerly held.
- **Kingdom to Israel** - Plain language that should not be spiritualized before it is read.
- **At this time** - Their question is especially about timing.

Cross-references worth marking

- 2 Samuel 7:12-16 - The Davidic kingdom promise.
- Luke 1:32-33 - Christ is promised David’s throne.
- Romans 11:25-29 - Israel’s future is not canceled.

Do not miss

- This is one of the controlling verses for the whole book. If Acts is read as though Israel’s kingdom expectation is already gone, the reader will miss the force of the opening question.

Acts 1:7

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

What does the passage say?

- Jesus answers the timing issue.
- He does not deny the kingdom.
- He does not deny Israel's restoration.
- The Father controls the times and seasons.

Words to notice

- **Times or seasons** - Appointed periods and timing.
- **Power** - Authority. This is the Greek word **exousia**, meaning authority, right, or jurisdiction.

Cross-references worth marking

- Daniel 2:21 - God changes times and seasons.
- Matthew 24:36 - The day and hour are not revealed.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1 - Paul also uses the phrase "times and seasons."

Do not miss

- Verse 7 does not erase verse 6. Jesus withholds the calendar, not the promise.

Acts 1:8

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

What does the passage say?

- The apostles would receive power after the Holy Ghost came upon them.
- They would be witnesses unto Christ.
- The order begins in Jerusalem, then moves to Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.
- The verse follows the kingdom question and the promise of Holy Ghost baptism.

Words to notice

- **Power** - Divine enablement for the witness Christ assigned. This is the Greek word **dynamis**, not the same word translated "power" in verse 7.
- **Witnesses unto me** - The KJV keeps the direction of witness clear: they are witnesses unto Christ.
- **Jerusalem...uttermost part of the earth** - Geographic movement outward from Israel's capital.

Cross-references worth marking

- Isaiah 43:10 - Israel is called the Lord's witnesses.
- Matthew 24:14 - The gospel of the kingdom is preached in all the world before the end.
- Acts 13:46 - Paul later turns to Gentiles after Jewish rejection.
- Acts 28:28 - The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.

Do not miss

- Acts 1:8 can be applied to the importance of witness, but in context it is first a kingdom witness commission to the apostles. Do not read Paul's later gospel of the grace of God backward into this verse.

Acts 1:9

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

What does the passage say?

- Jesus ascended after speaking the words of Acts 1:4-8.
- The apostles watched the ascension.
- He was “taken up.”
- A cloud received Him out of their sight.

Words to notice

- **When he had spoken these things** - The ascension follows the command to wait, the kingdom timing answer, and the promise of Spirit-empowered witness.
- **While they beheld** - The ascension was witnessed, not imagined.
- **Taken up** - The same wording idea introduced in Acts 1:2.
- **A cloud** - Scripture often connects cloud language with divine presence and glory.

Cross-references worth marking

- Luke 24:50-51 - Luke’s Gospel also records the ascension.
- Mark 16:19 - The Lord was received up into heaven.
- Daniel 7:13-14 - One like the Son of man comes with the clouds of heaven and receives dominion.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 - Christ was “received up into glory.”

Do not miss

- Acts does not begin with an absent Christ and a self-directed religious movement. It begins with the risen Lord ascending after giving clear instructions to His chosen apostles.

Acts 1:10

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

What does the passage say?

- The apostles continued looking toward heaven as Jesus went up.
- Two men stood by them.
- The two men were in white apparel.

Words to notice

- **Looked stedfastly** - They were fixed on what they had just witnessed.
- **Toward heaven** - The direction of the ascension is plain.
- **Two men** - Luke describes them as men; their white apparel and message show heavenly messengers.
- **White apparel** - A frequent biblical marker of heavenly or holy appearance.

Cross-references worth marking

- Luke 24:4 - Two men in shining garments appear at the empty tomb.
- John 20:12 - Two angels in white appear where Jesus’ body had lain.
- Acts 10:30 - A man in bright clothing appears to Cornelius.

Do not miss

- The messengers do not invite the apostles to speculate about heaven. They redirect them to the promise of Christ's return and, by implication, to the obedience already commanded.

Acts 1:11

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

What does the passage say?

- The messengers address the apostles as “men of Galilee.”
- They ask why the apostles are standing and gazing into heaven.
- They promise that “this same Jesus” will come again.
- His coming will be “in like manner” as they saw Him go into heaven.

Words to notice

- **Ye men of Galilee** - Most of the apostles were Galileans, and the phrase marks the historical group standing there.
- **This same Jesus** - The return is personal. The One who ascended is the One who will return.
- **Shall so come** - The return is certain.
- **In like manner** - His return is compared to His visible ascension.

Cross-references worth marking

- Zechariah 14:4 - The Lord's feet stand upon the mount of Olives.
- Matthew 24:30 - The Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
- Revelation 1:7 - He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.
- Luke 21:27 - The Son of man comes in a cloud with power and great glory.

Do not miss

- This verse does not describe a private spiritual influence or the spread of Christian values. It promises the return of the same Jesus who visibly ascended.

Text And Translation Helps

- In Acts 1:6-11, no Textus Receptus vs critical text difference changes the doctrine of the passage.
- The word “power” is not the same Greek word in Acts 1:7 and Acts 1:8. In verse 7 it is **exousia**, meaning authority or jurisdiction. In verse 8 it is **dynamis**, meaning ability, might, or enablement.
- In Acts 1:8, the KJV “witnesses unto me” and the common modern rendering “my witnesses” are close in meaning. The KJV keeps the direction of the witness visible.
- In Acts 1:11, the KJV says “this same Jesus.” Many modern translations say “this Jesus.” The point remains personal identity: the Jesus who ascended is the Jesus who will return.
- “Holy Ghost” does not appear in this passage, but the context still looks back to the promised Holy Ghost baptism in Acts 1:5 and forward to Pentecost in Acts 2.
- KJV phrases worth remembering:
 - “while they beheld” - the ascension was witnessed.
 - “this same Jesus” - the return is personal.
 - “in like manner” - the return is connected to the visible ascension.

Common Ideas To Test

- “The ascension means Jesus is gone and the church now carries on His work independently.”
 - Test it by Acts 1:9-11: the ascended Lord is promised to return, and the apostles act under His command.
- “Acts 1:8 is simply the church’s missions slogan.”
 - Test it by Acts 1:6-8: the verse follows the question about Israel’s restored kingdom.
- “Christ’s return is only spiritual or symbolic.”
 - Test it by Acts 1:11: the same Jesus will come in like manner as they saw Him go.

Session Summary

- Their question about the restored kingdom to Israel was a timing question, not a foolish question.
- Jesus withheld the times and seasons under the Father’s authority but promised divine enablement for witness.
- Jesus visibly ascended after giving His final instructions to the apostles.
- The apostles watched Him go, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
- Heavenly messengers promised that the same Jesus would return in like manner.

For Long-Term Study

Mark these themes as Acts unfolds

- Jerusalem remains the starting point.
- The apostles are still functioning as the kingdom-apostle company.
- The return of Christ is presented as real, visible, and future.
- Waiting for promised power comes before public witness.
- Israel’s prophetic hope has not been canceled in the opening chapter.

Questions to keep asking

1. Who is speaking?
2. To whom are they speaking?
3. Is the passage explaining prophecy, revealing mystery, or recording transition?
4. Has Paul received and begun proclaiming later revelation yet?