

First Baptist Sweetwater “Missions 101—Reaching Out at Home: And Reaching the World” September 18, 2011
Joel Breidenbaugh (Acts 1:1-11)

Intro. No Motown group has reached the status of the legendary group Four Tops. Known for the popular “I Can’t Help Myself” (Sugar Pie, Honey Bunch—which I use to sing to my children when they were babies as I was singing them to sleep), Four Tops’ most popular song was “Reach Out, I’ll Be There.” The song gave hope to those feeling hopeless. Today we begin a series in the first several chapters in Acts that focuses on giving hope to the hopeless—on reaching our immediate surroundings. Today’s message is all-encompassing as an introduction to Acts for as we are “Reaching Out at Home,” you can’t help but become concerned for “Reaching the World.”

Theme: Mission & vision

Background: Acts 1:1-3 summarizes Luke’s Gospel, which was written to Theophilus, focusing on Jesus as the Savior of the world (both Jews & Greeks). Jesus’ post-resurrection ministry on earth lasted 40 days as He instructed hundreds of His followers, including the apostles, whom He had chosen.

➤ I want you to realize 3 important truths from this passage as we think of “Reaching Out at Home: And Reaching the World”

I. Realize the Centrality of the Kingdom of God (1:3, 6-7)—the Plan of the Father

Illus: Notice the centrality of the kingdom of God throughout the Bible—the Law was given by God as He made for Himself a kingdom people (cf. Exo 19:6) & the rest of the books of History tell how God built for Himself a kingdom (even though they rebelled). The Writings are given as expressions of God’s people in relation to Him as their King & the Prophets are messages warning the Israelites of repentance as they had forsaken God’s kingdom. The Gospels tell the story of God’s kingdom in Christ (Matthew listed to continue the story to the Jews) & Acts relates God building a new kingdom, while the Letters instruct believers how to live. Finally, Revelation shows us the kingdom to come—the kingdom of God is central to the message of the Bible

- “kingdom”—52x in Luke-Acts; Luke 1:33 introduces Jesus’ coming as a “kingdom that shall know no end” & Luke 23:51 tells of Joseph of Arimathea looking for the “kingdom of God” helping to bury Jesus & Acts 28:23, 31 show Paul preaching the kingdom of God—Jesus often spoke of the God’s kingdom, including Gentiles in that kingdom as shown by Luke
- Notice how the apostles asked Jesus about restoring the kingdom “to Israel” (v. 6)—Jesus answered by telling them they were missing the point. The kingdom would return to Israel in due time, but that time has been set by the Father. The kingdom of God, however, is bigger than Israel, for God has a plan to expand His kingdom to the whole world, as noted in v. 8
- The kingdom “of God” concerns the witness of Jesus Christ, for the kingdom would only be built by those who were His witnesses, which leads me to the next truth of this text

II. Realize the New Covenant with the 1st Coming of Christ (1:4-5, 8)—the Promise concerning the Spirit

- Don’t miss the connection between these 2 truths: Jesus spoke of the “kingdom of God” (1:3) and the Spirit of God (1:5)—Luke conveys for us that these subjects are inter-related, for the kingdom of God will expand wherever the Spirit of God leads & the Spirit’s movement will result in aspects of the kingdom of God here on earth
- “baptism”—10x in Luke-Acts (as many as 9x refers to John’s baptism & 1x to Jesus’ death) & “baptized” 28x (9x to John’s, 1x to Jesus’ death, 2x by the Spirit [1:5; 11:16], & 16x to believer’s baptism via immersion in water after hearing the gospel about Jesus [thus, the witness preceded the baptism])
- John’s baptism preceded the Spirit’s baptism in history & was a baptism of repentance, where sinners came to John at the Jordan River (Matt 3) & also at Aenon near Salim (because water was plentiful there, John 3:23) to receive immersion as a change in the way they had been living. We know the water level was high during ancient days, because God performed a miracle in Joshua 3 by stopping the Jordan & allowing Israel to cross into the Promised Land on dry ground
- Jesus thus relates how John’s water-baptism compares to Spirit-baptism for both are immersion, but the latter supersedes the former. The picture throughout Acts is that the disciples were baptized by the Spirit (through a full immersion, not just a sprinkling) & then, under the power of the Spirit, went to proclaim the message of the

death & resurrection of Jesus & as the Spirit came upon the hearers (through a baptism—immersion), those new believers were then baptized via immersion as both a symbol of their belief in the death, burial & resurrection of Jesus (explained in Romans 6; Colossians 2; 1 Corinthians 15) & as a symbol of an inward reality of how they had been fully baptized by the Spirit & placed in Christ

- Thus, instead of political power (restoring the kingdom to Israel), Jesus assured them of something even better—heavenly power
- How did this witness play out? Verse 8 actually serves as a good outline & table of contents for the Book of Acts.
 - A. Jerusalem (chapters 1-7)—our focus for the next several weeks
 - The story of Jesus led *to* Jerusalem but the story of the church led *from* Jerusalem—we start here & then go out
 - B. Judea & Samaria (chapters 8-12)—the larger state & nation
 - C. End of the Earth (chapters 13-28)—the rest of the world

Illus: You may be thinking, “Pastor, how can one really reach out at home and reach the world? You cannot do both.” I beg to differ. Southern Baptists devised a plan in 1925 called the Cooperative Program. Its main focus is missions & training future missionaries & pastors. Each SBC church is asked to give 8+% to the CP & 2+% to the local association of churches. We give 8.25% & 2%, respectively & though we are 257th in size in our state, we rank between #40-50 each year in missions giving & though we are 12th in size out of 177 GOBA churches, we rank #1 or 2 each year in giving (sometimes outgiving churches 10x our size). We pass on 8.25% to FL, which keeps 60% for missions here (& in Haiti, Cuba, & Brazil) & sends 40% to the national level (though it is moving to a 50-50% split in the next few years). Then, more than 96% of all money given to the national CP reaches the mission & seminary enterprises, allowing 49K SBC churches to employ 5300 International missionaries & 5K North American missionaries, making us the largest evangelical mission force in the world—all other denominations envy So Baptists for this mission strategy & I believe God has blessed So Baptists because their mission strategy reflects Christ’s strategy to reach out both at home and in the world.

III. Realize the Certainty of the 2nd Coming of Christ (1:9-11)—the Prediction from the Angels

- Jesus ascended into the clouds to be seated at the right hand of the Father. Can you imagine what His home-going was like? The saints of old bowed before Him & the angels sang “You are worthy, Lord, to receive power & glory & dominion & might, for Your kingdom is everlasting”
- While the apostles were staring into the sky, 2 angels stood by them (cf. Luke 24:4) & asked them why they were staring into the sky (as though they had seen Jesus for the last time)? This Jesus (literally, this same Jesus) who was taken up into heaven will come in the same way (visibly, gloriously, physically)—contrary to JW’s who say Jesus came spiritually in 1914, the Scripture teaches Jesus will come physically, gloriously, & visibly—it won’t be a secret but it will be a sight to behold

Illus: Many preachers have summarized the key events in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ as the cradle (to highlight His incarnation—show pic), the cross (to emphasize His crucifixion, show pic), & the cave (to underscore His resurrection, show pic). But they forget about the clouds (both His ascension & His return, cf. Luke 21:27—show pic).

Conc. A boy went out to fly a kite & it got so far up in the sky into a cloud that he couldn’t see it anymore. A man walked up & asked him, “What are you doing?” “Flying a kite.” “I don’t see a kite up there. How do you know you have a kite up there?” The boy replied as he began to roll the string, “Because I saw it go up & I feel the pull & if you look up now, you’ll see it returning.”—There are plenty of people today that will say, “What do you believe & why do you have faith in Jesus?” Because many saw Him alive & saw Him rise in the clouds & I feel His pull on my life & if you watch long enough, you will see Him return. But you must be ready for His return by being one of His followers. You become a follower of Jesus by turning from your sin & trusting in Him as the only sufficient sacrifice for your sins. I want FBS to be a church known for “Reaching the World,” but it begins by “Reaching Out at Home.” So right here, at home, I’m asking you, will you trust Christ today?