

**Acts 1.1-11 | The Transforming Kingdom**  
**Redemption Hill Church | Simon Murphy**  
**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

**Acts 1.1-11:**

The story of Acts is that a small group of 120 weak, ordinary people that Jesus left behind with no economic, political or educational power saw the world turned upside down through their lives, as they were turned upside down by the gospel.

## **1. The Gospel transformed people's lives:**

### ***Where do we see this?***

Peter who denied Christ before a slave girl, then stands up to preach and takes on the Pharisees!

Paul who killed Christians now lives with them and weeps with them, living for Christ.

The Jews shared their possessions with all the other believers, claiming nothing as their own.

They weep in love when they think they won't see each other again!

It takes men from diverse backgrounds and makes them brothers and sons!

Letters written to women and slaves! The story of Philemon!

They became radical witnesses (Acts is living out Jesus words of 1.8)

Peter says '***we cannot but speak***', and Paul agrees '***Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel***'. Jeremiah said something similar '***His word is in me like a burning fire***'.

Witnessing in a general sense is sharing your joy with others, and so we are all witnesses of something. Part of the joy in experiencing something is when you share it with others. We naturally share that which we love and enjoy and appreciate. And so when we have great joy regarding our salvation we share it. **What would make you witness like Acts? Have you experienced this joy?**

**This witness wasn't just easy and without hardship! On the contrary there was extreme persecution they underwent!**

Acts 2: They are mocked and laughed at.

Acts 4: They are arrested and threatened by the authorities.

Acts 5: They are arrested again, questioned, beaten.

Acts 6: Stephen is falsely accused, arrested and stoned!

Acts 8: There arose on that day a great persecution against the church.

Acts 9: The opposition (Saul) gets legal permission to persecute Christians.

Acts 12: James is killed by Herod, Peter is imprisoned

Acts 14: The Jews chase Paul, stone him, leave him for dead. He survives and returns!

Acts 16: They are imprisoned, before an earthquake saves them!

Acts 18: Paul arrested again and again, ends up under house arrest in Rome!

Paul sums his hardships it up in **2 Cor 11: 24-28**.

### **Yet their response to all this?**

**Peter in Acts 4 before the Saducees** 'we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard'.

**Disciples in Acts 5.41:** Then they left the presence of the counsel, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name!

**Paul in Acts 14 he goes back into the city where he was stoned!** He gets warned in Acts about going to Jerusalem, and his answer in Acts 20 says: The Holy Spirit testifies to me in

every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if I only I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God'.

**And the ones that followed them were the same!** FOXES BOOK OF MARTYRS: Pg 18, 22-24

***Tertullian said "Their blood is like seed!" The more the Christians were persecuted the more it grew.***

## **2. The Gospel transformed culture and nations.**

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century the fading Roman Empire was forced to recognize that it was a Christian society as it was the Christians who were holding the whole society together.

Acts 17: These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.

**The gospel brought so much transformation that people have said that 'church history is the spiritual side of the history of civilized people since Jesus came was born'.**

**Except from "What if Jesus Had Never Been Born" by James Kennedy, page 7.**

"He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

He was only thirty three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While he was dying, His executioners gambled for His garments, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the Kings that every reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life".

**How could this happen? What on earth would make such a thing happen?!**

### **1. 'What Jesus began to do and to teach' (Acts 1.1)**

**John Calvin said** "There is apparent in it (Acts) both the astonishing power of Christ and the efficacy and force of the gospel itself. For in it Christ has furnished clear proof of his divine power because, through men of no importance and endowed with no skill he brought the whole world into submission to himself so easily by the sound of the gospel, despite the fact that Satan rose up in opposition with so many hindrances".

Matthew 16: Christ builds his church. The gates of hell do not prevail.

God was clearly at work building His church. In Acts 5 God spoke through Gamaliel! The Sovereignty of God over his church in Acts: "And the Lord added", He saves Paul, he sends Philip, He sends Paul..

Jesus is head of the church, His Body. **We must be connected to the Head.**

In Chapter 1.11 we read of **the ascension**. The Holy Spirit works through us today, so we should repent of our small ambitions, low expectations when we open our mouths, because Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, in Heaven walking over us and building His church.

## **2. The Kingdom of God which is the outworking of the gospel (Acts 1.3, 6-8)**

**What is the Kingdom?** It's where the King reigns. Jesus is King, ruler and reigning.

It's love, righteousness, peace, joy, etc. We have to get off our thrones, and let Him reign over us.

The King who died! This brings both great comfort and great conviction. He loves you! The peace and comfort this brings!

This affects EVERY single area of our lives! Reordered!

### **How does it come?**

The disciples had a weird view of how it would come! They thought it would be some military rule of Christ, but Jesus tells them that they are off the mark, and that they are going to be the agents through which His Kingdom comes as they are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

### **By the gospel working in our hearts:**

Firstly it reconciles us to God.

Secondly it changes all our values, treasures, aims desires etc.

Through us but only as we receive. 'You will receive power when..'

You'll only serve and lay down your life when you understand the gospel! Then you are free to serve, to let go of your life, and to lay it down wholeheartedly.

**Conclusion: Has your world been turned upside down by the gospel? Have you experience this joy that would make you witness?**

**Let us press on knowing Christ, that we may know Him and love Him.**

