



# **SERMON NOTES**

## **Acts 1:1-9**

Alan Black, London City Mission's Director of Studies, offers notes on Acts 1:1-9, designed to form the basis of a sermon. We pray you find these notes helpful in your preparations and that they will be of rich blessing to your congregation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Why did the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus lead to worldwide mission?**

- If Jesus restricted himself to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...
- If the Jews had never made any active effort to evangelise the nations...
- If no other religious group had ever imagined that their religion was for all people in all nations...
- Why were Jesus' followers convinced that they were in possession of a message that was for all peoples on earth?

The mission to which the disciples are commissioned here is not something new, but simply to continue the mission of Jesus; to take the baton from Jesus and run the next leg of the race and then pass it on to the next generation.

And the mission of Jesus was not new but the mission of God, that had had been driving the story of Israel from the very beginning.

- Abraham was chosen and called that through his offspring 'all families on earth might be blessed'; that they might share the blessings promised to Abraham (Genesis 12:3).
- Israel was chosen and rescued that they might be God's treasured possession from among the nations and that they might be to the nations 'a kingdom of priests' (Exodus 19:6).
- David was chosen as Israel's king to build a house of prayer for all nations and so that the blessings of God's rule might extend from Zion to the ends of the earth.
- Jesus comes as the promised seed of Abraham; the true Israel(ite); the promised son of David to bring

God's mission of love and restoration to Israel that the restored Israel of God might be what they were called to be – for the sake of the nations.

So here he passes the baton on to his disciples who are the nucleus of God's restored people – restored both to God and to God's mission.

- *And 2,000 years later the baton has come to us.*

Let's focus on two questions.

**How are we to be witnesses to Jesus in the world today? And what would be the evidence that we were doing that in the power of the Holy Spirit?**

I suggest that the rest of Acts gives us three answers.

#### **1. We are to proclaim Jesus as Lord of all**

This is how the New Testament summarises the gospel message and it is the concluding statement of Peter's sermon in Acts 2:

*'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.'* 2:36

But this message is not a mere 'sound bite' but the summary of the story that brings the story of all God's dealings with his people through history to fulfilment and offers hope for all people, whatever story they have been living in so far.

It is the story of

- Jesus' God-accredited ministry of healing and driving out evil 2:22
- Jesus' God-ordained sufferings 2:23
- Jesus' God-orchestrated vindication and exaltation 2:24-35

that all Israel might know that *'God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.'* 2:36

Which, of course, is the story all the Gospel writers tell.

**And 2,000 years later, the baton has come to us.**

## 2. We are to proclaim Jesus as those who are so identified with Jesus that we live out his story in our own lives.

So not only does Acts proclaim Jesus through

- God-accredited ministries that brought healing and deliverance to people
- God-ordained suffering, and the
- God-orchestrated vindication of his Servant

But Acts tells the story of the Church proclaiming Jesus through their own

- God-accredited ministries that brought healing and deliverance to people; both the signs and wonders done by the apostles and the ministries of kindness done through disciples such as Dorcas
- God-ordained suffering that included imprisonment, beatings, and execution, while they patiently and joyfully waited for the
- God-orchestrated vindication of his Word and of his servants; whether by being released from prison (eg Acts 4-5), or seeing violent opponents brought to proclaim the Jesus they once persecuted (eg Acts 9), or seeing persecuting tyrants brought down (eg Acts 12)

Which is, of course, the story of Acts.

## 3. We are to proclaim Jesus through Christ-centred communities of love and truth.

So at the end of Acts 2 we read of the community gathered around the apostles who *were devoted to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship.*

Where devotion to the fellowship meant treating all in the church as you would treat members of your own family.

So at the end of Acts 4 we are told *'God's grace was so powerfully at work in them that there was no needy person because from time to time those who had property sold it and gave it to those in need.'* 4:33-34

'No needy person among them' is a quote from Deuteronomy 15, where Moses tells Israel that if they lived according to God's laws of generosity and kindness to the widow, the orphan and the alien, there would be no poor among them.

And this was supposed to be part of Israel's witness to the nations as they lived out God's laws in the Land promised to them that was sited between the two great civilisations of the known world.

- They were to be a community identified both by their love for the God who dwelt in their midst and their justice and kindness to all in their community.

Here all Jerusalem was given a glimpse into what 'the kingdom restored to Israel' would look like.

And this is what the apostles continued to strive to produce in local churches throughout the Roman Empire through their letters to the churches

- until Christ is formed in them

As Paul puts it:

*'He (Jesus) is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.'* (Colossians 1:28-29).

He pleads with the Galatians as a mother going through the pains of childbirth until *Christ is formed in them* (Galatians 4:12-20).

## So let us pray 'Come Holy Spirit'.

So let us pray **'Come Holy Spirit', that we may**

- Proclaim Jesus as Lord
  - and that the Holy Spirit might empower us to so do it in our day and our culture that people are cut to the heart by the sword of the Spirit – even if not 3,000 in one day (Acts 2:37-41)
- Live out the gospel of Jesus through:
  - Ministries of deed as well as word; ministries that bring freedom, deliverance and human flourishing
  - Ministries that patiently endure God-ordained suffering from those who oppose Jesus
  - Ministries that leave God to orchestrate the vindication of his Word and of his servants and do not seek to repay evil with evil but rather with blessing
- Exhibit the grace of God in our church communities; and be taught by the Holy Spirit how to do that when so many churches in UK cities are in locations where there is little sense of community.

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