

CHURCH WITHOUT WALLS: After the Benediction—Then What?

Scripture used: [Acts 1:6-9 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

The opening chapter of Acts captures one of the most dramatic moments in human history. Jesus had been crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. His resurrection was so unexpected that His frightened disciples were hiding behind locked doors. Then Jesus showed up in the room! After spending time with them, Jesus prepared to return to heaven. The disciples wanted to know what He would do next, but Jesus redirected the question: through the power of the Holy Spirit, they would continue His work and become His witnesses throughout the world. The same calling applies to us. The end of the gathering is actually the beginning of the church's work. We do not leave God inside the building; we carry His presence into our homes, cars, offices, neighborhoods, and communities. Our calling is to practice the Jesus Way together until it becomes a Jesus-shaped life—one that allows others to experience what it is like when Jesus shows up in the room.

KEY POINTS

1. **The church begins after the benediction.** The church is not primarily a building or an event. The Greek word *ecclesia* describes a gathering of people, reminding us that the church is a “we,” not merely a “me.” The building is where we gather for worship, encouragement, and preparation, but our mission begins when we leave. God’s presence accompanies us wherever we go, which is why the conclusion of a worship gathering is not the end of church—it is the beginning of our opportunity to be the church in the world.
2. **The Holy Spirit fills lives surrendered to Jesus.** Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would live with us and within us ([John 14:17 \(NIV\)](#)). He also promised that those who love Him and follow His teaching would experience God making His home with them ([John 14:23 \(NIV\)](#)). We are all unfinished, but when we authentically seek God and surrender ourselves to Him, the Holy Spirit fills us, transforms us, and works through us.
3. **We make room for God by practicing the Jesus Way.** We can pray with an open and seeking heart, “Jesus, fill me with Your Holy Spirit.” We then deepen that relationship through prayer, fasting, silence and solitude, memorizing Scripture, and practicing the Sabbath. Jesus Himself depended upon spiritual preparation when facing temptation ([Matthew 4:1–3 \(NIV\)](#)). The Jesus Way also includes interpersonal practices such as radical empathy, active listening, breaking the power of labels, courageous integrity, and sacrificial service. Because Jesus laid down His life for us, we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another ([1 John 3:16 \(NLT\)](#)).
4. **Our lives become witnesses for Jesus.** Jesus told His followers that the Holy Spirit would empower them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8 \(NIV\)](#)). Jerusalem represents where we are now; Judea is our larger community; Samaria calls us across familiar social, cultural, and relational boundaries; and the ends of the earth include wherever God sends us. We will never become perfect, but we can faithfully improve. As God changes us, our presence, relationships, and service can help change the community around us.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - The end of the worship gathering marks the beginning of the church’s mission. The Holy Spirit lives within us and empowers us to carry the presence of Jesus into every place, relationship, and community God gives us.

- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - When people spend time with you, do they experience something of the presence and character of Jesus? Where is God calling you to be His witness right now—in your Jerusalem, your Judea, across the boundaries of Samaria, or somewhere entirely new?
- 3) **DO** - Begin each day this week by praying sincerely, “Jesus, fill me with Your Holy Spirit; work in me and through me today.” Then choose one Jesus Way practice and one person or community you can serve alongside others after the benediction.