

Acts (Part 10) – Like a Wildfire

Zach Lee – April 27, 2014

[Video]

In Jerusalem, AD 30, Jesus died on the cross, resurrected on the third day, and then ascended into heaven. Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit fell on the apostles, giving them power, purpose, and a plan. Out of joy, the church was born. Empowered by the Spirit, Peter gave his first sermon, and 3,000 hearts were transformed. Hearing, receiving, and repenting, the young church walked in unity and garnered praise. Out of joy, the gospel creates community.

Peter and John then continued to spread the gospel through preaching and miracles, and the church grew by 5,000. In AD 31, Stephen gave a powerful sermon, and the enraged crowd stoned him, making him the first Christian martyr. Around AD 34, on the road to Damascus, the Lord transformed the heart of Saul, a man who persecuted countless Christians, and Saul became Paul. After this conversion, the gospel continued to spread through the ministries of Paul and Peter. God gave Peter a vision and used him to first reach the Gentiles.

In AD 44, King Herod Agrippa the First executed the apostle James and had Peter arrested, but an angel rescued Peter, leading him out of the prison. As the believers were scattered because of persecution, the center of operations for Christianity then turned from Jerusalem to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first missionary journey.

In AD 49, an argument arose over whether it was necessary for Gentiles to follow Jewish traditions and customs, particularly circumcision, but the Jerusalem Council sent a letter to the Gentiles affirming that circumcision was not a requirement for salvation. Meanwhile, in their missionary journeys, Paul and Barnabas disagreed over John Mark traveling with them, and they separated. Barnabas and John Mark then sailed to Cyprus, while Timothy joined Paul, as they spread the gospel throughout Asia Minor and Greece.

We must keep reminding ourselves of the gospel so that we are careful not to drift toward false gospels. A church consumed with itself will move away from the truth and move toward irrelevance. Salvation comes only through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, not traditions, not customs, not good works. This is the message that must move forward, because the mission doesn't stop. Out of joy, the church multiplies.

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Well, good morning. How is everybody doing? It's great to see you. My name is Zach Lee. I'm one of the ministers here on staff, and I have the pleasure of chatting with you out of the Scriptures this morning. I'm glad you're here. It's good to see you. Because we are in Acts, what book do you think we're going to be in? Wrong. Isaiah, chapter 11, starting in verse 1.

When I was originally told I'd be preaching this weekend, I was assigned six chapters in Acts. I emailed Matt Chandler, and I was like, "I don't know how to not just breeze over everything. So what I want to do is preach out of Isaiah and just reference these things you want me to hit in the book of Acts. Is that okay?" He said, "Yes."

So I sent him a second email and said, "Okay, just to make sure. I don't want to ruin your Acts series. I'm preaching out of Isaiah." He said, "Go for it." So I kept those emails as job security for what I'm doing this morning coming out of Isaiah. My hope is to be able to show you sort of a Jewish expectation of how history would play out, sort of a Jewish expectation of what it would look like when God sent his Messiah to bring in his kingdom.

I want to show you what that looks like in Isaiah, and then at the end, I want to show you how that plays out in Acts. I want you to see Acts being a fulfillment of some of these other themes going on in the Bible. That way we can look at it sort of holistically and see that stream throughout the whole Bible. So we're going to be in Isaiah. Let me pray for us, and then we will jump into the text in just a second.

Father, I thank you for your grace. I thank you for your kindness. I thank you that I can even call you "Father" only because of Christ. I pray that you would, by the power of your Spirit, just be with us. Would you be with me? Would you give me clarity of thought, clarity of speech? Would you be with these people? Would you encourage them, Jesus? I thank you that your yoke is easy and your

burden is light and that you're not far off. So would you be here? Would you encourage us? We thank you. We thank you for this time, amen.

Before we jump into Isaiah, let me start with a little illustration. The illustration is the first time I ever gave blood. If you're squeamish, this is going to go really badly for you. The first time I ever gave blood I was in high school. You have to wait until you reach a certain age before you can give blood. For example, babies don't make great blood donors. They're kind of small. Their arms are squishy. You can't get the veins. So you have to wait until you get a little bit older.

When I was in high school, my school had a blood drive, and I decided I would give blood, which is interesting, because I'm not really a tough guy. I don't know why I'm telling you this. I sneezed the other day and got a cramp, and I thought to myself, "Okay, that's where I'm at now in life. I'm the guy who sneezes and gets cramps." I wasn't a tough guy, but I decided I would sign up for this blood drive.

I had certain expectations of what giving blood would be like. I knew there would be a needle. I knew there would be blood. I knew I'd probably get a little squeamish. I knew I might be able to help a life. I had these expectations of giving blood, but when I actually went to go give blood, it played out a little bit differently than I had expected.

If you've ever given blood, here's the process. You go in, and you first fill out like a thousand-page questionnaire. It's like, "Have you ever been to Germany? Because if so, you probably caught some disease and you can't give blood," and it mentions all of these things. Then at the very end of the questionnaire, I love it because it says, "Please do not skydive within 24 hours of giving blood." I love it, because if you're the kind of person who schedules those two events on the same day, then go ahead and skydive and get some of the dumb genes out of the gene pool, you know.

So you fill out this questionnaire. It takes an eternity. Then the next station you have to go to before you can give blood is one where they actually prick your finger to test to make sure you can give blood. That's the worst part. You can stab my arm, you can take a shotgun to my arm, but when you prick my finger, that's ouchy, and I don't appreciate that. I'm like, "Do it quick. Just do it quick. Tell my wife I love her."

They prick my finger, and then I go sit down to actually give blood. I'm a little nervous, so I sit down. This lady who's supposed to be taking my blood... I instantly know she has no idea what she's

doing. She comes up, and she goes, "Hey, I'll be your...uh...uh..." I'm thinking, "Please tell me you know what you're called. Please tell me you know the name of your medical profession. I'm a student; you're a... You don't know, okay."

So she comes up and goes, "I'll be your...uh...your sticker. Ha, ha, ha." I sort of sit back and nervous laugh. "Ha, ha, 'sticker.' Good one." She comes up to put the needle in my...is it a vein, artery? I don't really know anything about the human body. She comes to stick that needle in my blood tube, and as she's coming up, she sticks in that needle, and it sprays me with my own blood. Yeah. Aren't you glad you came this morning?

That's how I felt. How you feel hearing this story is how I felt experiencing this story. I'm sitting there, looking like I just got birthed, waiting for this lady to try to figure out what to do. She didn't even put in the needle correctly. While it's in my arm, she has to now bend it up in my arm. It was terrible. It ended up bruising my arm for like three months. I almost passed out because I'm covered in my own blood.

When this horrendous procedure was over, I still had to go back to class. I'm covered in blood, and I'm walking down the hall looking like I just got back from Vietnam. Students are looking and pointing, and they're like, "Look at that guy. I'm never giving blood. Zombie!" So I'm trying to get back to class, avoiding all of these comments. I eventually did get back to class and eventually gave blood again.

Now what does that story have to do with anything other than making our visitors uncomfortable? Here's the point. I had an expectation of what it would be like to give blood, and part of that expectation was right. There *was* a needle. I *did* give blood. I definitely got a little squeamish. I had these expectations, and part of those expectations was correct, but the way it played out was a little bit different than I had expected. Part of my expectation was right, but part of it was wrong.

What I want to show you before we jump into the book of Isaiah is a very common Jewish assumption, sort of a Jewish way of thinking about how life would look when God sent his Messiah. If you are living in the time of Isaiah and you're a Jew, you have a particular framework in which you view history, so I want to show you what that framework is.

Now I'm not saying this is correct or biblical; I'm just saying this was a common assumption for many Jews during the time of the Old Testament. I created a little picture for you. We don't use a lot

of charts and stuff here. If you ever see a pastor start talking about predicting the end times with a chart and they have a big Israeli flag, you run, but this chart will actually be really helpful. This is a very common Jewish assumption of how history was divided.

If you're a Jew, you assume history is divided into two what are known as "ages." The first is what's known as the "present evil age." The present evil age is marked by the effects of the fall. It's marked by the effects of sin. When mankind rebelled against God and the fall happened, these are the things you get in the present evil age: demonic oppression, death, damnation, sickness, failure to keep God's law.

Everything you see that has gone wrong in the world is due to a result of mankind's rebellion against God in the person of Adam and Eve. That is what marks the present evil age. But if you're in the time of Isaiah and you're Jewish, you hope that one day there will be what's known as "the age to come." The age to come will be marked by the reversal of the present evil age. The age to come will be marked by the reverse of the curse.

Instead of death, you get resurrection. Instead of failure to keep God's law, you get the Holy Spirit so you can keep God's law. Instead of sickness, you get healing. Instead of demonic oppression, demons are cast out. That was the Jewish hope. But there is this stark contrast. "We live in the present evil age. When the Messiah comes there will be a sharp drop, and instantly we'll be in the age to come." That was sort of the Jewish assumption.

Now this age to come is also what is known as the *kingdom of God*. God has always ruled and reigned. He's even sovereign over evil events. What the Old Testament means when it talks about God's kingdom in Daniel and Isaiah and these kinds of things is...*What would the world look like if there was no opposition to God's loving rule and reign?* What would it look like if there were no effects of the fall, no effects of sin?

What would it look like if demons did not rebel against God, if there were no humans who rebelled against God; there was just God ruling? Well, here's the answer: it would look like Eden. That was the Jewish hope, that God would get us back to Eden, that he would reestablish his kingdom. Though he's always sovereign, that he would eventually stomp out our enemies and stomp out everything that is bad.

Just keep that in mind. I'm not saying that's right or wrong; just keep that in mind. We're going to come back to that later. With that in mind, let's jump into Isaiah and see this promise of this Messiah, this kingly figure who would deliver God's people. Then at the end I'm going to show you this has a lot of relevance for what we're doing in Acts.

Verse 1: **"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit."** "Zach, what is going on here with all this lumberjack imagery?" Let me explain it to you. In Isaiah 6, Israel is seen as this proud forest that exalts itself. So do you know what God does? He cuts it down. "You want to exalt yourself against me? I'll cut you down." In Isaiah 10, Assyria does the same thing. Assyria exalts *themselves*, so God takes his ax and cuts them down.

If you've just been cut down by God because of your pride or you know this judgment is coming, you have a tendency, if you're an Israelite, to think, "Maybe God's promises have failed. We're supposed to be great. There's supposed to be a messiah coming, but we've been cut down. Maybe God's final word to us is divorce. Maybe his covenant is not true. Maybe the story is over."

What Isaiah is saying is, "No, no, no. Though God has cut down the trees, he has not uprooted them. There remains a stump, and out of this stump is going to come forth a little sapling, is going to come forth a little shoot, is going to come forth a branch, and he's going to come from the stump of Jesse." Now who is Jesse? Yes, David's dad. I heard some other answers. "The uncle from *Full House!*" No. David's dad is Jesse.

What Isaiah is saying is that this promised, Davidic, messianic king is going to come forth out of these promises. He's going to come forth from the line of Jesse. "Though you have been cut down, God has a branch that's coming, and he's coming from David's line, and he will bear fruit." That's what it says in the second half of the verse. "Unlike you, O Israel, who have failed to keep God's commands and have not borne fruit, this Savior will bear fruit."

Let me give you an interesting comment on this verse. The first African-American to ever play professional baseball was a guy named Jackie Robinson, number 42. He played for the Brooklyn Dodgers who are now the Los Angeles Dodgers. The guy who hired Jackie Robinson, the manager of the team... Let me tell you one of the reasons he hired Jackie Robinson, because he knew he would get a lot of scorn for that.

He was actually a devout Christian. He was a Methodist. He knew he would have to stand before God to give an account for his whole life, and he didn't want to have to explain to God why he wouldn't allow a black player in professional baseball. It was his Christian faith that led him to help fight racial barriers, fight against racism, and help get Jackie Robinson into professional baseball.

Do you know what his name is? Branch Rickey, Wesley Branch Rickey. He's named after this Messiah, this Branch who is to come, and it was his Christian faith that led him to fight against the racism. That's just for free; it has nothing to do with the sermon. I just like baseball, and the word *branch* is there, so let's do it.

Verse 2: "**And the Spirit of the LORD...**" You'll notice in your Bible that is probably in all capital letters, L-O-R-D. In the Old Testament, when you see an all-capital *LORD*, that is where your translators have transliterated God's divine name. God's name is not *God*, just like your name is not *Human*. His name is *Yahweh*. In Hebrew it's four letters, *yod, hey, vav, hey, YHWH*, so your English translation has capital L-O-R-D so you know when God's actual divine name is being used.

Now in the New Testament it doesn't do that. It'll just say *Lord*, and sometimes it *does* mean *Yahweh*. Other times it means something like Master, or in the case of Jesus it's both. He is both *Yahweh* and Master. Just keep that in mind, because as it says capital *LORD* here, I'm going to read God's divine name, because that's how it was originally written. There's something covenantal and personal to that.

"And the Spirit of [Yahweh] shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of [Yahweh]." That this branch coming forth out of this stump will be inspired by the very Spirit of the eternal God, the Holy Spirit. Let me say something about Jesus to adjust our thinking about him in some good and helpful biblical ways.

First of all, is Jesus truly and fully God? Yes. Yes and amen. He is truly and fully God. He has always been God. He will always be God. He forgives people of their sin. He is said to be the one through whom everything was created. Colossians says, "In him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily." People worship him. He is called "God." Constantly, all throughout the New Testament, you see this kind of language, that Jesus is equated with the one true God of Israel.

Yes and amen he's God, and we need to never lower that. We need to never preach against that. That should always be lifted high. Yes and amen. To go against that is heresy in the traditional sense of the word. But something we've not done a good job in, I think, as evangelical Christians is also talking about Jesus' humanity. We have a tendency to act like he's just a robot in a body and that he's not also truly human.

The biblical view is that Jesus is truly God and also truly man. If he's not God, he cannot save you, and if he is not man, he can't be mankind's representative before God. You need both the deity and humanity of Christ for your salvation. We have a tendency to not also realize Jesus is also truly a man when he incarnates himself. Not before then, but when he incarnates himself.

We have a tendency when we read that Jesus is tempted in the wilderness by the Devil to think, "Well, he's not really tempted, because he's God." If Jesus is not really tempted, then he cannot be your sympathetic High Priest and you cannot be saved. If Jesus doesn't also live life truly as a human, truly get tired, truly have to study God's Scriptures, truly have to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, then he is not the last Adam and he cannot be your Savior.

So yes and amen to his deity. That needs to continue to be lifted up, but we equally need to talk about the fact that he also is truly human, that these go together. One of the things he needs to truly be human and one of the things he should do to succeed where Adam has failed is to be empowered by God's Holy Spirit. You see this at Jesus' baptism. He's anointed with the Holy Spirit to begin his ministry, and many of the miracles he's doing are through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, you see his deity. He calms the winds and the waves. But a lot of what he's doing is through the power of the Spirit, as he's studying God's Word and living righteously as Adam and Israel should have but failed to do. When Jesus wants to describe something about himself, he steps up in the synagogue and reads a passage. What passage would *you* have read if *you* were Jesus? Maybe Isaiah 53. Maybe Psalm 2. Here's the one Jesus reads. Tell me if this sounds anything like what I just read in Isaiah. Luke 4:18-21 says:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the

synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"

Here's what Jesus does. He steps up and says, "Hey, you know all that Old Testament stuff about this one who would come from God, who would be both God and inspired by God's very Spirit? That's me." Then he does like a microphone drop and backs up and sits down, and everybody gasps, because he's explaining exactly what they think he's saying: "I am this Messiah. I am this Spirit-inspired one who is both God and from God."

There's one more thing about verse 2 I want to mention. If you look at these attributes in verse 2: **"And the Spirit of [Yahweh] shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of [Yahweh]."** These are kingly attributes. It's kings who are meant to be wise. Solomon asked for wisdom. It's kings who are meant to be discerning and mighty and to fear God.

You often see the Holy Spirit given to kings in the Old Testament. He's given to Saul to help him rule. He's given to David to help him rule. That's what David means in Psalm 51 when he says, "Take not thy Spirit from me." He's not talking about salvation or something like that. He's saying, "Don't take your Spirit that inspires me to be king, like you did from Saul when *he* disobeyed, though I've disobeyed as well." So you see this kingly idea. You see this anointing idea of this Messiah.

Verse 3: **"And his delight shall be in the fear of [Yahweh]."** Jesus will not follow the Father like I follow a speed limit sign. When I see a speed limit sign (and I'm assuming this is probably the same for everybody in here), I don't want to follow it. In fact, I push it as far as I can go just so I don't get a ticket. I have a heart that doesn't want to submit to the authority, that doesn't want to follow that good rule, because I'm sinful and wicked, so I just do the bare minimum so I don't get a ticket.

Well, that's not how Jesus will follow the Father, but rather, he will delight in honoring God. He will delight in following his Word. Hebrews says that for the joy set before him he endured the cross. Though he knew it would be terrible and painful and awful, there's a sense in which Christ had a holy joy, because he loves us and wants to save us and he wants to honor the Father. "Not my will but thine."

"He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth..."

Here where it says Jesus won't decide by what his eyes see or ears here, it doesn't mean he's just like this, and someone is like, "Jesus, can we get a ruling on this?" and he's like, "Shh! I'm discerning." That's not the point.

The point is that he will not use merely worldly judgment. He will not fail in his judgments like we do. When we judge, we judge by what our eyes see and our ears hear, what seems best to us. We're biased, we have false assumptions, so we don't have a perfect sense of justice, but that's not how Christ will judge. He will judge with perfect equity and perfect righteousness.

A couple of weeks ago I went up to New York City with a few people here from The Village. We went to visit one of our partner churches, Apostles Church in New York. I loved it. I love New York. I grew up in the South, and I was told New York was the enemy. "Watch out, Zach. There are Yankees there," and they didn't mean the baseball team. I loved it, though. I thought it was a very cool city, a lot of fun things.

The only part of this little mission trip we went on I didn't like is that we had to sleep with four guys in one hotel room with two not queen-sized but full-sized beds. That was the worst. You're sleeping in the middle of the night, and someone bumps you or you feel a cold foot go against your leg, and you instantly think, "Oh, that's probably just my wife." Then it hits you. "That is a man! My wife is in Texas, and I am not in Texas anymore."

So after getting some counseling, we went out to New York and visited these churches. It was really encouraging. One of the things I kept seeing in New York was an image of this virtuous lady known as "Lady Justice." Not "Lady Liberty." She's in New York as well. She stands in the harbor. This was a different virtuous lady, Lady Justice. There are two virtuous ladies in New York and a lot of ladies who are not so virtuous in New York.

Lady Justice was the one I kept seeing. She was on top of the courthouses in New York. She's actually on the state seal of New York. You've probably seen this image somewhere, maybe in a courthouse or an attorney's office, of Lady Justice. Lady Justice in one hand holds a pair of scales. She doesn't care about opinion. She doesn't care about excuses. She doesn't care about reasoning. She cares about which way those scales tip, and that's all she cares about.

So much so that she has what over her eyes? A blindfold. Justice is blind. She is not a respecter of persons. She cannot be bribed. She cares only about which way those scales tip. In case those scales

tip in the wrong way, what does she have in her other hand? She has a sword, because if those scales tip against you, you have a sword coming.

Well, the reason this is a popular image... It's a popular image in US culture. You even see it in other cultures with like Athena in Greek mythology and these kinds of things. There's something in the human heart that longs for true justice and longs for equity, usually not for ourselves, but at least for others. We want mercy, but, God, you judge all the rest of them. There's something, though, in our hearts that longs for justice.

We see someone on the news go free whom we know is guilty, and it enrages us. Or we see someone on the news who's innocent be locked up, and that enrages us. Maybe *you've* been denied justice. Maybe somebody has wronged you, and you have not been vindicated. Your job is to forgive. It's God's job to vindicate. But there's something in the human heart that wants to see that justice, that wants to see that vindication.

What this text is saying is that long before there's Lady Justice there's Jesus, and he will judge with absolute equity. He will judge with absolute righteousness. His judgment will never be flawed. It says he will specifically stand up for the poor and the meek of the earth, meaning the downtrodden, those who have not received justice.

If you're poor and you can't hire an attorney and the rich take advantage of you, like what's going on in the time of Isaiah, then you're the one who needs an advocate. You need a mediator. You need someone to vindicate you. They're saying, "That's what Jesus will be." Let's go back to verse 4. I want to mention one more thing. " **...and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.**"

Jesus will judge by his word. Jesus' word is his weapon by which he judges, by which he slays. In the book of Revelation, there's a passage where there is a sword coming out of Jesus' mouth. That is a symbolic image that is meant to teach a literal point: that he judges by his word, his word which is sharp like a double-edged sword, which is what you see there, that pierces to the joints and marrow. That is what Jesus judges by. It is his word of judgment. He is the Judge, and he is the one who pronounces whether or not you will be judged.

Verse 5: "**Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.**" Jesus' actions will be so characterized by righteousness that it is as though he is wearing those

qualities. He won't just do righteous acts; he will be the embodiment of righteousness and faithfulness.

You put on pants, and Jesus puts on righteousness. It's a different level. What will also happen when this Messiah comes? Here's where it gets very interesting with this whole "age to come," that kind of stuff I mentioned. Let's listen to this kind of language. Verse 6 (some of the most beautiful verses in the Bible, as well):

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den." Adders are poisonous snakes. "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain..."

This is meant to be a picture of this kingdom that produces so much peace it's shocking; it's audacious. When you read that and you hear about a wolf lying down with a lamb, it shocks us, because that's not what we see. We see wolves eat lambs. It's meant to shock you with how much peace there is there. "There is a day coming where there will be absolute peace," is what the prophet is saying.

When this Messiah comes, somehow there will be this absolute peace, where OU fans and Aggie fans and Texas fans will all get together, and they will eat barbecue and they will laugh, and they will throw the football with no smack talk. They will beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks, and their hands will learn war no more. It's meant to shock you.

Especially look at verse 8. Let me show you this. This probably stressed you out if you're a parent. **"The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den."** Imagine that you are doing dishes in your home, and you look over and realize you left the back door open. So you walk over to close the back door, and you peek out, and your little kid is crawling toward a cobra.

How would you feel? Pretty terrible. Pretty frightened. Pretty awful. You might just be so scared you throw up and then go run and try to protect your kid. Now imagine you see that and you get anxious, but all of a sudden the baby goes up to the cobra and just pets the cobra on the head. The

cobra sways, like cobras do, and the baby laughs at the little cobra dance. The cobra takes its tongue and tickles the baby's cheek, and the baby laughs.

It's meant to be a little weird. It's shocking. There's that much peace, where even to talk about it sounds strange. That's how much peace there will be, that this kingdom will bring. Specifically... This is also interesting imagery here in verse 8. Where else do you see the seed of a woman, a child, at enmity with snakes? In Genesis.

In the first part of Genesis, the Devil comes as a serpent to deceive Adam and Eve, and God curses them and puts enmity between them, and then preaches the gospel beforehand to Adam. He says, "From the seed of the woman will come one who's going to crush that Serpent's head." Well, you see, once that Serpent's head has been crushed, then people and snakes can just go back to being people and snakes. Snakes don't have to have this demonic connotation anymore, because the Enemy has been dealt with.

You see these two creatures that are supposed to hate each other the most...even peace now. Demons have been dealt with. The Devil has been dealt with. They're cast in a lake of fire, all of these kinds of things eventually. There is just peace, and mankind is again ruling over the animals like he was made to do, subduing the earth. There's that much peace.

First part of verse 9: "**They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain...**" What is God's holy mountain? Constantly in the Bible, God's mountain is referred to as *Mount Zion*. You've probably heard of that before. Mount Zion is said to be lifted up over the other mountains. Mount Zion is said to take over the world. The Gentiles flock to Zion, all this kind of imagery.

I went on a mission trip to Israel and went to visit Jerusalem. I wanted to see Mount Zion. I figured it would look like Mount Everest, or something like this, because of everything I had read. It's in Jerusalem, and it's just this little lump, just this little hill. I remember seeing that, thinking... It's sort of like that scene from *Dumb & Dumber*, where he was like, "Man, I really thought the Rocky Mountains would be a lot rockier than this."

The point is not the size of that lump of dirt; it's what it stands for. Mount Zion is metaphorical for all of God's promises, his covenant, his hope to his people, and the hope here is that there will be peace on God's mountain. I say all of that to look at the second half of verse 9 and verse 10. You'll

see the relevance for Acts. Just take a stab in the dark and see if you can see this relevance for the church multiplying and the gospel going out.

"...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of [Yahweh] as the waters cover the sea." All over the earth. **"In that day the root of Jesse..."** This Davidic Messiah. **"...who shall stand as a signal for the peoples..."** Meaning those in addition to the Jews, the other people. **"...of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious."** One of the promises when this kingdom comes is that the gospel goes out to the nations, and those who are non-Jewish get into the Jewish faith without having to become Jews.

I started off with this little image, this little picture of the present evil age and the age to come. That was a common Jewish conception, but it was right on some parts and wrong on others, like my experience of giving blood. Let me show you the biblical view, both Old Testament and New, of what this actually looks like. This is actually how these things play themselves out.

It's not just present evil age marked by all of the effects of sin and then a stark contrast when Messiah comes and then the end, but rather, that these two ages overlap, that in the ministry of Jesus, it's the beginning of the end. In the ministry of Jesus the end has begun, but it has not been consummated yet. The kingdom is, to use a phrase by many theologians, already but not yet. It has begun, but it is not finished.

Let me give you an example. Do we still see death today? Yep. Do we still see sickness? Yep. Do we still see people fail to keep God's law? Yep. We see all of these things today, but we also see some of *these* things. Resurrection. Jesus is not just being revived; he's taking part in that end-times resurrection that we're *all* going to take part in. He's just the first one to do it.

The giving of the Spirit. Did *that* come? Yes. In what book? Acts. Forgiveness of sin comes in the ministry of Jesus. He casts out demons. He forgives. What many people didn't expect but what the Bible teaches is that, yes, there are two ages, but they overlap. We live in this middle part. We actually live in the most exciting time in world history to be born, in the overlap of the ages.

Jesus does in the middle of time what the Jews are expecting to happen at the end of time. In the ministry of Jesus, the future breaks into the present. "Zach, aren't we in the end times?" Yes, but we've been in the end times for 2,000 years, because the end times is a theological category in the New Testament for what happens when people start getting up from the ground.

Let me just jump on a soap box. This is my soap box, but I think it's also Jesus' soap box. What does Jesus talk about more than anything else? It's not love. Some people said love. It's not love. I've heard people say money. He only actually mentions money a handful of times. Here's the thing Jesus talks about the most. There is not a close second, by the way. It's something known as the *kingdom of God*. In Matthew it's called the kingdom of heaven. Despite what you were told growing up, those *are* the same thing.

Let me jog your memory in case you're like, "Oh, that's new to me, Zach." The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. The kingdom of God is like a man who had two sons. The kingdom of God is like a field. The kingdom of God is like seed sown along the way. The kingdom of God is like a vineyard. The kingdom of God is like wheat and tares. Kingdom of God, kingdom of God, kingdom of God. That is the gospel according to Jesus.

Here's what he means by it. "Hey, you guys remember all those hopes you had for the future that God would do when God's kingdom came? Those are starting with me. If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come among you. Demons, get out of here. Don't wonder where the kingdom of God is; the kingdom of God is in your midst." That's the kind of stuff Jesus says.

What Jesus is saying is, "I have begun the end in my ministry. In the future you hope people will be resurrected. I'm resurrected. In the future you hope people will be healed. Sick person, get up and walk. In the future you hope demons will be crushed. Demons, you're out of here. Get cast out. In the future you hope God's Spirit will be given. You see that in the book of Acts." In Jesus' ministry the end has begun, and that's what he's announcing.

The gospel is a much bigger cosmic message that your individual salvation plays a part in. You get to be a part of this bigger message of what God is doing in your salvation, but *he's* doing it. It's *his* gospel. It's what he's doing in reconciling the world to himself. That's what Jesus preaches, which is incredible and very powerful when you realize what he's saying by that.

By *kingdom of God* or *kingdom of heaven*, he's not meaning that as a synonym for heaven or something like this. He's saying, "Those prophetic promises in Isaiah and Daniel are beginning in me." But church, have they been completed yet? No. We still see the wolf eat the lamb. Let me give

you a great illustration of this. This isn't my illustration; a lot of theologians have said this. The kingdom of God is a lot like the difference between D-day and V-day in World War II.

D-day is when the Allied troops take that beachhead at Normandy, and that battle symbolizes the beginning of the end. Once that battle is won, the war has begun to end. Hitler will eventually be defeated. The Third Reich will eventually fall, because Normandy was invaded. That's the beginning of the end. But will soldiers still die? Yep. Is there still a battle to be fought? Yep. In the meantime, they press on.

Now contrast that with V-day, Victory Day, when the war is over. There's drinking and laughing and dancing in the streets, and there is absolute peace, and the wolf lies down with the lamb. That's the idea. In the ministry of Jesus, D-day has happened. In his death, burial, and resurrection, he has dealt a death blow to the Devil.

Though the Devil, in some senses, has already been defeated, we are still waiting for that final consummation. We see that the future has broken forth into the present, but we're still waiting for V-day. We live in the most exciting time to be born in world history. If you're going to sign up for World War II, let me tell you when you want to sign up for the army: after D-day. That's what's going on in the ministry of Jesus.

Now I want you to see something, and tell me if you see the relevance for Acts. I want to read you a bunch of passages from Acts. Do you see these two things over here on the left, for the age to come, kingdom of God? Part of the Jewish hope in the Old Testament is that the gospel would go to all nations and then Gentiles would worship the one true God of Israel, that the Gentiles would flock to Zion, to use Old Testament language.

With that in mind, let me read you some passages in Acts, and you'll see why I went here first. I just want you to see the gospel spread like a wildfire throughout all these regions. I'm just going to read some of them, and I'm just going to shoot them at you really quickly. We see the gospel go to Galatia and Phrygia. Acts 18:23: **"After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples."**

Corinth and Ephesus. Acts 19:1: **"And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples."**

Asia. When it says *Asia*, don't think Japan. *Asia* means like the eastern edge of the Roman Empire, so like Turkey.

Acts 19:10: **"This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."** Macedonia and Greece. Acts 20:1-2: **"After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece."**

Philippi and Troas. Acts 20:6: **"...but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days."** Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea. Acts 21:7-8: **"When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea..."**

I could keep going on. I'm not going to keep going on to read all of them, but I want to read one more to you. It's at the very end of the book of Acts, and it says this. Acts 28:30-31: **"He [Paul] lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."**

Here is why I teach you Isaiah to teach you Acts: because you see in Acts the beginning of the fulfillment of what's going on in Isaiah. It's not just that the church multiplies because we're supposed to and that's cool; it's that the church multiplies, thus sayeth the Lord. It's that the church multiplies as part of the gospel. God had promised to Abraham that through his seed all of the nations would be blessed.

The gospel is not just something we *take* to the nations; it's something that in God's mind *includes* all of the nations. I didn't want you, as I went through this and said, "Look, the church is going everywhere," to just say, "Yes, Zach. The church should go different places." I want you to see that God is in the business of putting the world back to rights through Jesus. We see the beginnings of that in Jesus' ministry, and we see it continuing through Acts. It also should play a part in *your* life.

Let me say it this way: multiplication is a gospel issue. You witnessing to your coworker is a gospel issue. Your Home Group multiplying is a gospel issue. The Denton roll-off, what we're doing with

Denton, is a gospel issue. You having kids and teaching them the faith is a gospel issue. You can't separate the Christian life from that. We have a tendency to do that.

I have a fear that a lot of people walk out of here saying, "Zach, that's great. I learned more about the Bible, more about the gospel, more about the kingdom. What's the practical?" I want to fight against that mentality, because most of the Bible is not written to tell you something you need to do; it's written to tell you something God has done. Most of the Bible is not prescriptive commands; it's a description of what God has done.

I don't want to just give you something you can check off your box; I want you to realize the age in which you live, where the beginning of the end has begun, that we live in the end times now, and have for 2,000 years, because God is putting the world back to rights through Christ, and he's going to use you to play a small part of that. That's a much bigger message.

If you are not a Christian in here today, let me present a message to you. It's the message of the kingdom. It's the gospel of the kingdom. This is the message: There's only one God, one true eternal God. He is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit. Has always been so, will always be so. His name is *Yahweh*. This King creates heaven and earth as his kingdom. He creates it for his glory, and he creates humans who are not gods. We're creatures, but made in his image.

Here's what that means, by the way. It means a lot of things. Here's the primary thing it means to be made in the image of God: that you are to rule and reign for his glory. He is a King, so he creates humans as kings and gives us a kingly commission: "Subdue the earth. Rule over it. Be fruitful and multiply. Put my little image bearers, my little kings, everywhere."

Instead of being faithful to this King, we give our allegiance to a different kingdom. The Serpent comes in, and at that point, Adam and Eve, instead of reflecting and imaging God, decide to image the Devil. They decide they will rebel against God's kingdom, and the Devil sets up *his* kingdom. When Adam and Eve sin, it's not just sin; it's treason, because it's against a king. It's not just sin; it's civil war, because it's against a king. The Enemy sets up his kingdom.

But because this king is loving, he selects Abraham and says, "You know what, Abraham? Your descendants are going to be as numerous as the stars in the sky, and 'kings will come from your body.'" He takes David who's a king and says, "King David, you're going to never fail to have a king rule on the throne."

The second person of this Trinity, one who has always been God, comes down, and while still remaining God, takes on humanity, adds humanity to him. He proclaims, "The kingdom of God has begun in me." The way this King secures victory over rebellious sinners, over the Enemy who has enslaved us, is by dying on a cross, and he's resurrected. He's vindicated. The Father says, "You are my Son. You are the King. You are vindicated. You are lifted up, and everyone who's in you will also be one day lifted up."

My offer to you if you're not a Christian is this: King Jesus offers you a full pardon. King Jesus is a loving and merciful King, and if you will but forsake your sin, if you will repent of sin, if you will forsake your own righteousness, if you will forsake your own attempts to clean yourself up and earn God's favor and throw yourself on the mercy of King Jesus, he will give you a full pardon. He will give you a certificate of your citizenship in his kingdom. That's what he offers to you, and he's a good King.

Part of the reason we don't like authority is that we're sinful, but the other part is that we've seen authority abused. Let me give you some great news. Being under God's authority is a really good thing, because he's a perfect King. His reign and his rule is also what's best for you. Does Eden look better than it does today? Yeah, because God is ruling and reigning and there's no opposition. Jesus has come to get us back to Eden and something even better. We start in a garden, but we end with a city. Mission accomplished because of Jesus.

So that's my encouragement to you. If you're wondering why you're here today and you're not a Christian, let me just answer that question. You're here to become a Christian. That's why God has you here. I'm not joking. That's why God has you here. If you're wondering, "What does God want from me?" he wants you to become a Christian.

He wants you to repent of your sin, cry out to Jesus as Lord, receive his forgiveness, follow him, and become a part of his kingdom. Here's the good news: Jesus enjoys giving out citizenship. He enjoys forgiving sin. He appeals to you as the loving King. What kind of King would die for his citizens? We have one. Let me end with this little illustration, and then we'll jump into Communion.

In the first century at the time of Christ, Israel had already been conquered by Rome. They were conquered under Pompey, actually. The Jews, obviously, did not like being conquered by Rome, so there was this rebel group of Jews that was rebelling against Roman rule and Roman authority. So

the Romans hired a young Jewish historian. His name is Josephus. We know a lot about the first century because of Josephus' writings.

They hired this young Jewish historian, Josephus, to go talk to his fellow Jews. They said, "Listen, these Jews are rebelling against the kingdom of Rome. You're a Jew. Josephus, go talk to them and see if you can talk them down. See if you can get them to submit." So Josephus goes to this rebel group of Jews, and these are the words he says to them in Greek: "*Metanoesein kai pistos emoi genesesthai.*" Here's what that means in Greek: "Repent and believe in me."

That's the language in the first century that Josephus uses to tell this rebel group to lay down their weapons and follow this kingdom. Can you think of anyone else in the New Testament who might say something like that? Jesus. And guess what? He means the same thing Josephus does by "Repent and believe in me." He means, "Lay down your weapons. Stop fighting against the kingdom of God. Stop your rebellion. Stop and join the kingdom."

Like Rome would crush the Jews, God's kingdom will crush all. Lay down your rebellion. Lay down your fighting against God, and join his kingdom. If you're struggling and saying, "Zach, I want to; I just don't know what to do," ask Jesus for help. He does it for you. He saves. He redeems. He cleanses. He gives you the Holy Spirit by which you can follow him. Ask him for help. He's a loving King. Lay down your weapons. Join the kingdom of God. He offers that to you. Let me pray for us, and then we'll do Communion.

Father, there is none like you. You are loving. You are good. You are kind. I thank you for Jesus your Son whom you've sent to die on our behalf, to live the life we should have lived, to begin the kingdom. I thank you, Jesus, for being a good King, that you secure your victory in dying for us and in being raised. I pray that you would hasten your return. We thank you for D-day. We wait for V-day.

We thank you for your mercy. Thank you for all that you've done. I pray now, Spirit, that you would move in our hearts, that you would break chains, that we would not be so introspective and self-focused, that we realize that God has won the victory and God has become King, so everything is going to be okay. We love you. It's in Christ's name, amen.