

05.04.2025 - Transcribe - Stargazer or World Changer

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It is great to be with you this morning, and I do thank you for the opportunity to be here. I would like to invite you, if you would, to open your Bibles to Acts chapter 1 this morning. Acts chapter 1. If you need a Bible, I believe that there are Bibles in the pew there for you to use.

Acts chapter 1, we're going to begin reading in verse 1. Acts chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. Acts chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, but ye shall receive power.

After that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

I would like to read that last verse again to you this morning, as it is the primary driver of our, of the message this morning, and which said, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the time that we have this morning, that we could open your word. Lord, we ask that you would do a work in our hearts, that you would do a work in my heart as we open your word this morning.

We understand your word is powerful. We know your word is powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. And we ask God this morning that your word will pierce our hearts, that you will speak to us, that we will know that we have met with you, that you will stomp on our toes as needed, that you will convict.

Lord, if there is one here today that does not know you, I pray that today would be the day. We thank you and we praise your name. Amen.

This morning, I would like to take you back to a scene that took place about 40 days after the resurrection of Christ. I want you to try and picture what was taking place here. Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

It is amazing to me that even historical evidence, not talking about biblical evidence, even

historical evidence will allow for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If anyone would just take a valid look at the history and the evidence of that time, Jesus came out of that tomb. He walked on earth for about 40 days according to our text today.

During that time, he met with people, he taught with people, he lived a life here on this earth. 40 days after the resurrection, Jesus and his disciples found themselves on a mount. The disciples did not know exactly what was going to take place.

In fact, that's very obvious by their question, Jesus, will you now restore the kingdom to Israel? They did not know what was exactly taking place here that day, but it was going to be a life-changing, momentous day. It was going to be one of those days that you would experience that you will never forget. I have been told that if you lived back in the 19... I got my math, my dates wrong, but if you lived when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, it was a day you would never forget.

For many people, 9-11 is a day they will never forget. I remember when I was a child, and I don't remember the exact year, but the Challenger space shuttle blew up. It was a day that you will never forget.

There are some days that are like that in our lives. They're just so... sometimes we don't even recognize it at the time, but they're days that we will never forget. The disciples did not know when they got up this morning that this day was going to be one of those days.

It was going to be a day that they would look back to for the rest of their lives, a day that they would never forget. They found themselves on the mountain. They found themselves listening to Jesus and asking questions as they had done, really, for the last 40 years or 40 days, as they sought to understand more of Jesus's plan for this world.

While they were there, Jesus gave them very clear instructions. I want to look back with you in our text today, beginning in verse 4. I want you to notice these instructions, because they come into play here in just a couple of verses. And being assembled together with them, verse 4, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, Ye have heard of me, for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

I want to stop right there for a minute. I want you to get an idea of what was taking place. They were outside the city of Jerusalem.

They were on a mountain, and they were sitting there listening, or they were standing there listening to Jesus teach and preach. And Jesus said, I want you to stay in Jerusalem. I want you to stay here until the promise of the Father, which you and I know today was the coming of the Holy Spirit, was the day of Pentecost.

It was a day that was going to take place in 10 days. While he yet spake, the Bible says, verse 9, and when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, Jesus spoke these things, and while they beheld, while they watched him, he was taken up and a cloud received him in their sight.

The Bible says that they watched as Jesus was taken into heaven.

However, instead of immediately obeying the instructions of Jesus and returning to Jerusalem and waiting, they stood around, as I believe I would have also, gazing into heaven. They were just so amazed at what had taken place. They were dumbfounded.

They were just standing there gazing into heaven. They were so amazed at what had taken place that they risked becoming stargazers instead of world changers. In the book, *The Return of Christ*, the scene is described in this way.

The disciples were looking at Jesus. The verbs used here are rather graphic. The first verb means to see or look with the eyes.

The next word means to rivet one's eyes on something or someone. It was used in medical terminology to describe an unnatural gaze, an unnatural fixed look. They were looking with their eyes.

They were stretching with their eyes. They were just glazed over watching Christ rise into heaven. Now, we know, as Paul Harvey used to say, the rest of the story.

Two angels came and effectively challenged them to obey the commands of God. They came and in verse 11, it says, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? The angels came down and said, Jesus gave you clear command. You are supposed to return to Jerusalem and you are to wait.

Now, why are you just staring off into space? May I suggest to you today that many believers are doing exactly what the disciples did. We're going through our lives, living our lives, effectively just staring off into space, amazed at what Christ has done for us, but we're just sitting there just, when it comes to our service for him. The angels came down and said, these two angels came down and effectively said, get off your rump, get your feet moving.

It is time for you to obey and go back to Jerusalem. The disciples heeded the exhortation of the angels and the result of their obedience was literally changing their world. We know this because just a few years later in Acts chapter 17, the enemies of Christ, the enemies of the apostle, the enemies of the work of God, said this testimony.

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also. Let me remind you this morning that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus is the same as he was back in eternity.

Jesus today is the same as he was when he was here on this earth. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Just as he used the early Christians to change their world, he desires to use you and I today to change our world.

Just as he gave the early Christians power through the Holy Spirit to affect people's lives, he

gives the same power is available to us today. We can sit back and say, yeah, we live in a difficult age, and we do. But may I suggest that every age, every time, every generation is difficult.

Jesus is the same. He wants us to turn our world upside down for him. He wants us to turn our world, or should I say right side up? So this is my question.

This is what I want you to think about this morning. If this is to be true of us, if you and I are going to be world changers, if you and I are going to have the impact on this world that God desires for us to have, what needs to take place in our lives? I want to give you three things this morning. The first thing that needs to take place is you need to see Christ.

You need to see him. Look in our text this morning with us in verse 11, which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven. The disciples saw Christ.

They lived with him, they talked with him, they interacted with him, they saw him physically. Thomas put his hand in his side. They had the privilege of seeing Christ.

Now, we all recognize today that we cannot see Christ in the same manner that the disciples saw him, but we can see him today. He has revealed himself to us. Remember, the Christian faith is not a philosophy.

It's not even a religion. The world has it all wrong. They call Christianity a religion.

Christianity is not a religion. It is a relationship. It is a relationship with God himself.

God desires to make his presence real to you. He desires for you to see him. And he tells us that if we will honestly seek him, he will reveal himself to us.

As we consider the idea of seeing Christ, I want you to consider with me a Bible character that saw him. This event took place in the Old Testament. This event took place in what might be a familiar passage of Scripture for you.

The Bible character is a guy by the name of Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet of God. Isaiah was a preacher of God's word.

Isaiah was a person that proclaimed God's message to the people. And when we come to Isaiah chapter 6, we read, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting above a throne high and lifted up. And his train filled the temple.

Isaiah says, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw God. I saw God for who he was. I saw God in all of his holiness.

I saw God in how wonderful he is and how awesome he was. High and lifted up. He goes on to

say, above it stood the seraphims.

Each one had six wings, and with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.

And the post of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, woe is me, for I am. May I suggest to you this morning that when you truly see God for who he is, the creator of the universe, God himself, when you truly see God for who he is, it reveals to us who we are.

There are many of us that like to think that we're a good person, that we're good people. And if we compare ourselves to the world around us, to society in general, we probably are. But the Bible says that there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

You see, if we compare ourselves to God, there is no comparison. If we compare ourselves to the holiness of God, our holiness, our righteousness just falls by the wayside. If we recognize how great God is, how sinless he is, it reveals to us effectively how horrible we are.

Isaiah, when he saw God, he said, woe is me, for I am undone. Let me ask you this morning, have you come to a place where you have seen God for who he is, and you've recognized your own sinfulness? You've gotten past this idea that I'm a good person, that I live a good life, and you recognize that you are a sinner, that you have disobeyed God's commands? The Bible says, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is not one person sitting here today, myself included, that can honestly say that we are without sin.

Have you come to the place where you have seen God for who he is and seen yourself for who you are? A sinner. When Isaiah saw God that day, the Bible tells us that one of the seraphims flew, having a live coal in his hand, which had taken from the tongs off the altar, and he laid it on his mouth. We have a picture of the cleansing power of God.

You see, God does not want you to remain a sinner. God does not want you to remain in your sin. God died on the cross so that you could have your sins forgiven.

God shed his blood so that you could go to heaven to be with him someday. We have a picture of the cleansing power of God here when Isaiah saw God. But I want you to notice what his response to that cleansing was.

When he saw God, he saw God for who he was. He saw himself for who he was. And then he saw the need of the world.

And he said, here am I. Send me. We have a similar situation, and I'm not going to take the time this morning to develop it, but we have a similar situation with the conversion of the apostle Paul, previously known as Saul, in the book of Acts. When Saul saw God for who he was, he said very similarly, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? You see, when we see God for who he is, it

changes our life, and our focus changes, our mindset changes, our worldview should change, the way we interact with the world around us should change, and no longer is life centered on me and what I want.

It's now centered on him and what he wants. If we're going to change our world, we must see him. Secondly, and I'm going to be quick, we must grasp the promise.

Verse 11, which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven. The angels came back and said, hey, hey guys, what are you doing here? Why are you just standing here? Why are you just staring off into space? Jesus is coming back. This was not a new promise.

The Old Testament prophets spoke in this language. Enoch, even in the book of Genesis, Enoch, the Bible tells us, prophesied of these saying, behold, the Lord cometh with 10,000 of his saints. This was not something new for them.

They knew this, but they had to be reminded. I have often threatened, and God has never allowed me to do it, to preach a sermon entitled, The Things That We Say We Believe, But We Really Do Not. Let me give you an example.

We say we believe in an everlasting place of eternal punishment called hell, but if we really honestly believed that, how would that change your interaction with the person that you work with, or the people at the grocery store? If you honestly believed that they were going to die and go to hell, how would that change your interaction to them? One of those things that we say that we believe that we often do not is the imminent return of Christ. We understand that the Bible teaches that Christ can return at any moment, but also often we live as if we have eternity for this life. You say, Brother Elliot, what do you mean? Well, let me try and give you an example.

Let me try and put it in different words for you, if I may. We live our life as a life of procrastination, saying, I have tomorrow. We never actually say it, but we think it, we do it, we live it.

I have tomorrow. I have tomorrow to go to my neighbor. I have tomorrow to tell my family member.

I have tomorrow to pass out that tract. I can work with that person tomorrow. Somebody wiser than me once said, tomorrow never comes.

And what effectively happens is that tract never gets passed out. That person never gets the gospel presented to them. That door never gets knocked because tomorrow never comes.

May I suggest to you that if we live in light of the promise that we may not have tomorrow, that today may be the only day that we have. If we truly, honestly believe it and we live our life like

it, it will change our interactions with everyone around us. I've done a fair amount of traveling and I've seen a fair amount of church signs.

Some are humorous. I saw one that said, don't let worries kill you, let the church help. Others tend to be more serious.

I saw this one, Rapture Preparation Center, get right for the flight. I honestly believe that if we would just grasp this one central promise that Christ could return even yet today, it would radically change our lives. If we knew that we did not have a tomorrow, it would totally, completely change the way we approach the world around us.

The early Christians lived in constant expectation of the rapture. They were looking for it. They expected it at any time.

To use a modern day terminology, they did not keep a bucket list. They did not keep a list of people that they would like to share the gospel with. They went and told them.

They didn't need to keep a list because they were active in sharing their faith. So let me ask you this question this morning. What are you waiting on? What are you waiting on to share the gospel with your co-worker? What are you waiting on to share the gospel with your neighbor? What are you waiting on to share the gospel with your family? What are you waiting on? What are you waiting on to start giving to missions? What are you waiting on to spend time in prayer as God has commanded us praying for laborers that others may go? God can come back at any time.

We do not know the time or the seasons. He could come back yet today. Are you ready to face him? James said, whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow, for what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.

If we're going to change our world, we must see Jesus for who he is. And when we see Jesus for who he is, we will see ourselves for who we are. There's not one of us here today that can say that we are a good person when we compare ourselves to Jesus Christ.

There just is no comparison. And when we experience his cleansing, when we have his righteousness imputed onto us or given to us, it's not because I've done anything great or you've done anything great. It's because of what he has done on the cross.

It should create a desire within us to spread the good news, to say, here am I, Lord. Use me. We're going to change our world for Christ.

We're going to truly follow him. We need to see him. We need to grasp the promise.

He is coming back. You can take it to the bank. It's as good as a check drawn on Bill Gates' bank account.

You can take it to the bank. He is coming. Just because he has not come back in the last 2,000

years does not mean that he's not coming.

He is coming back. I believe it's going to be soon. The last thing that we need to see, and I'm just going to just going to briefly mention it, we need to recognize the purpose.

We need to recognize the purpose of why God has left us here. You see, he did not leave you here to serve yourself. He did not leave you here to have the American dream.

He did not leave you here for just to live a normal life. He left you here for a purpose. And he tells us exactly what that purpose is.

I don't care if he has called you into full-time Christian service. I don't care if he has placed you in a secular occupation. You have the same purpose as I have.

He has called us here for the same exact reason. He says, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. You see, I believe that one of Satan's biggest lies for Christians today is a division between secular and sacred.

We have a secular life and then we have our church life. Let me tell you, that's not the way God intended it to be. He did not say, if I have called you into full-time Christian service, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

You don't find that anywhere in this book. He did not say, if I have called you into ministry, live a holy life. You will not find that in this book.

He did not say, if I have called you, if I've placed you in my service, in a visible role as a minister, he simply said, go. He left us here with a purpose. He said in the book of John, as the Father hath sent me, so send I you.

He left us here with a to be a light to a lost and dying world. It's easy to understand why the disciples were gazing dumbfounded, staring off into space. I have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that if I was there on that hillside that morning or that afternoon, whatever time of day it was, I would have been exactly the same way.

Just standing there, staring dumbfounded, looking into space, simply amazed and overwhelmed and not even totally understanding what had just taken place. I'm thankful for the two angels that came and basically knocked the apostles upside the head with a two by four, not literally speaking, but knocked them upside the head with a two by four and said, hey, wake up. It's time for you to do what you know you're busy now.

May I suggest sometimes we need a two by four to say it's time to wake up. It's time to wake up. Have you seen him? Has there been a time in your life when you have saw yourself for who you are and who he is? Have you accepted him as your personal Lord and savior today? If not, the Bible says that he stands open with wide open arms ready to receive whosoever will.

I'd like to invite you to call upon him this morning. Believer, he is coming back. You do have a

purpose.

As long as you have life and breath in this body, there is somebody you can share the gospel with. May I encourage you this morning, be a star, be a world changer instead of a star gazer.
Pastor.

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