

Scandalous Part 3

Unexplained Phenomena

Acts 1-2

Memory Verses: Acts 1:8

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Over the past two weeks, over the Easter season, we've been discussing scandals. Scandals are all over the place, especially during these days of Covid quarantine. For example... 3M, one of the companies that makes the medical masks that are so desperately needed right now to fight off this disease, has been making a lot of masks... but instead of giving them to those in need here in the U.S.... they've been shipping them out to the rest of the world in secret. Also, did you hear that in New York city where the outbreak is the worst, hospitals are being told to report any unidentified death as a Covid death... skewing the numbers in an attempt to make things look worse and paint a more negative picture of how President Trump has handled the pandemic.

Everywhere you turn scandal. But once again, these scandals have nothing on the Easter story. Just here in the Bible account of Easter we have conspiracy, plots, false testimonies, phony trials, illegal beatings, middle of the night meetings, spies, alien appearances, missing bodies, and coverups galore. When it comes to the plot to kill Jesus, the mistrial and murder of Jesus, and the missing body and resurrection of Jesus... let's just say... you can't make this stuff up.

But... I want you to remember something very important. Jesus wasn't murdered simply by men who were threatened by him, and Jesus' body didn't go missing simply because it's a cool story. No... all these things happened because if they hadn't then you couldn't have salvation. Jesus allowed himself to be killed because through his death our debt is paid in full. Jesus rose from the grave because through his resurrection we are justified and given new life. And perhaps that is the greatest scandal.... that Jesus, the most innocent man of all time would give his life for those of us who were not innocent at all... and that he would raise from the grave to give new life to those who deserved death. Its a scandal of grace that he died and rose in my place.

But the scandal doesn't end there! As we move beyond the death and resurrection of Christ we come to a very mysterious and magical chapter where things get even more unexplainable. To help paint the picture I want you guys to watch this clip... **Unexplained**

Phenomena Clip

And that's just a small amount of some of the unexplainable what

is happening in our world. Now turn over with me to the book of Acts and I want to start reading in **Acts 1:2-11**.

So after Jesus rose from the dead, he presented himself alive for 40 days to a lot of people and gave them many proofs that he was indeed alive. He then tells his followers to stay in Jerusalem and wait for a mysterious power that he referred to as being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Now of course the disciples and followers were familiar with the Holy Spirit... but being baptized with the Holy Spirit... well thats something completely new... but we'll get into that phenomena in a little bit.

What I want us to see here at the start is... the promise of power. We all want more power don't we? I don't know about you but I feel weak a lot of the time. If only I could have more power right? Jesus is promising us some... and not just a power boost... but unexplainable, phenomenal power! What could you do with this power?

This morning I want us to understand something about the scandal of Easter. I don't fully understand it... I can't fully explain it.. It is a phenomena that... **The Death of Jesus Pays Our Debt, The Resurrection Provides Us New Life, But the Ascension Empowers Us To Do The Impossible.** Lets look at three unexplained phenomena in the first two chapters of Acts this morning and the power they provide us as believers.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first unexplained phenomena that I want us to explore is the Ascension and the power that it supplies those of us who are in Christ. **Jesus Ascended To Give Us The Power To Connect With God**. First, look at what happens in **vs 9**. Jesus is lifted into the clouds. What? He just takes off... into the sky? Okay. Now I don't know if you guys know this but... people don't fly. In fact...no one's ever done it... except Jesus... right here. I love how casual he does it too. He's like... sorry guys, but I'm not taking over the Roman government, I'm sending you some power, peace.... flies off into the clouds! *Hey Jesus... where you... he's gone! This is the scandal of a man who can fly.

And then, not that that isn't crazy enough but then two strangers just magically appear and assure everyone that Jesus will come back. Where do these guys dressed in white keep coming from? Aliens! Angels! Crazy!

So this is definitely a unique experience... that we aren't going to logically or scientifically explain... so let's look beyond the event to the reason behind it. Why exactly did Jesus fly up into the sky leaving his disciples and ministry behind? The answer is... To fill all things. Look with me at **Ephesians 4:8-10** (quoting **Psalm 68:18**) where Paul says that the ascension was necessary to "fill all things." The fulfillment of the chosen one was, in part, to fix the curse by re-establishing the connection of mankind to God.

So how does flying into the sky fill all things and re-establish our

connection with God? Well, let's connect the dots. Look with me at **John 20:17**. He says, "I haven't ascended yet but will be going to my father – your father, my God – your God." In a sense, by establishing that God is their father, he is saying.. I'm going to re-establish the relationship of men with God. In **Hebrews 1:3b** we see that after his death and resurrection (purification for sins) he sat down (after ascending) at the right hand of God (the Majesty on high). And lastly look at **Romans 8:34**. He ascended to the right hand of God to make intercession for us. Jesus had to ascend into the heavens to sit at the right hand of God to make intercession on our behalf to God the Father, re-establishing the connection to God that we lost in the Garden of Eden. **When Jesus died he took away our debt but we still needed new life. When Jesus rose he gave us new life but we still needed to connect with God. The ascension fills all things!**

What exactly is intercession? It is when someone goes to bat for you. It's when someone speaks on your behalf and pleads your case. If someone started bad mouthing my wife and I overheard it... I would confront them and tell them how they are so wrong. I would be interceding on her behalf. Now Jesus is constantly pleading our case to God as Satan accuses us. He is consistently showing God his blood that covers our sins and makes us clean. And he is unceasingly bringing our prayers before the throne of God night and day. You can see how Jesus restores our relationship and connection to God the Father! That's real power! You see, you can't do it without him. There is no way in this world that you could ever reconnect to God without Jesus. **The Death of Jesus Pays Our Debt, The Resurrection Provides Us New Life, But the Ascension Empowers Us To Do The Impossible.**

The second unexplainable phenomena that I want us to look at is when the Holy Spirit indwelt mankind at the day of Pentecost... and gave us another incredible power. **Jesus Sent The Holy Spirit To Give Us The Power To Connect To The World**. Look with me at **Acts 2:1-19**. This is crazy. A rushing wind from nowhere, tongues of fire dividing and resting on people, people filled with Holy Spirit and acting drunk at noon, and the ability to speak and hear other languages. If you didn't see it you wouldn't believe it. I mean... this is real superhero power type stuff.

But why the ability to be able to speak a new language and hear a new language without actually learning it. I mean.. it's pretty cool, but it's not like flying or invisibility or superhuman strength. Also, it seems that it was just for the people at this event and perhaps for specific instances like this one... but not for everyone at all times. The thing to recognize is that this event is descriptive not prescriptive. It is what happened, but not what must happen to you. Some use this event to say that if you don't speak in tongues then you aren't really filled with the Holy Spirit. Listen,

we don't have to speak in tongues to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we simply need to be saved. **The power of the Holy Spirit in us can do some real powerful things at specific times – but it does one thing all the time – it gives us the ability to connect to the world**.

So why the ability to speak and hear another language. Why is that so important that when the Holy Spirit dropped like a bomb... this ability was the outcome? Why prophecy, why visions... why any of these signs? Because they all connect us to the world. All of these gifts are meant to bring us closer together as a people. They are all tools used to take the Gospel to people who do not know Jesus. God wants us to be able to tell people who don't know him... about him. People of different cultures, languages, and countries.

The point is this... the power of the Holy Spirit produces salvation in the lost. Look at what happens next. Peter preaches to the masses gathered to see this phenomena in **vs14-40** and 3000 people were saved on the spot. This wasn't because Peter was a phenomenal preacher. No, it was because he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. The greatest gift you have ever been given is the Holy Spirit because... yes he comforts you, yes he gives you peace, yes he gives you direction... but most importantly he gives you the boldness and the ability to reach people with the Gospel.

Look at **Acts 1:8** again. This is the key verse of this entire event. The Holy Spirit is the power to reach the world. With this power each and everyone of us can be witnesses of the Gospel first where we are... right here in Danville, at your job, in your neighborhood, in your school. And then to our state, and then our country, then our continent, then our world. **Everyone who is equipped with the Holy Spirit has all they need to draw people to Christ**. Get this... reaching the lost without the Holy Spirit empowering you...is impossible. **The Death of Jesus Pays Our Debt, The Resurrection Provides Us New Life, But the Ascension Empowers Us To Do The Impossible.**

The last unexplained phenomena we need to look at this morning is the way the church was formed and functioned. This is a crazy power. **Jesus Sent The Holy Spirit To Give Us The Power To Connect To The Church**. **Read Acts 2:42-47** There is no doubt that the holy spirit transforms us in ways we could have never seen coming. In our natural state we are selfish, independent people. We are survivalists willing to do whatever it takes to get ahead the guy next to us. But when the Holy Spirit comes in our lives we are transformed, to selfless, communal, risk takers willing to do whatever it takes to help our friends and share the Gospel. This is crazy... why? Because people don't just change. You see.. **the power of the Holy Spirit is the only thing that can change a person completely!**

And a group of people definitely can't change. But look at what happens to these people when they come together. They are a complete

unity. They are together in worship, prayer, the word, serving, giving... you name it and they are in it... fully connected together. Listen... you know this... You can't have church unity without the power of the Holy Spirit! You've seen how hard church can be, you've seen how many churches are falling apart and in need of revitalization. You have seen the miracle of a church that can change. It's a miracle when a church functions biblically. **A unified, healthy, and biblical church is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit working through individuals for the good of all. The Death of Jesus Pays Our Debt, The Resurrection Provides Us New Life, But the Ascension Empowers Us To Do The Impossible.**

Application

Look at this scandal... look at this unexplainable phenomena. Look at this power! Some people want power to do what they want... the Holy Spirit gives us the power to do what Jesus wants! And what he wants is the impossible! Intercession with God, an evangelized world, a unified church! It would take a pretty crazy power to do all that! The ascension and baptism of the Holy Spirit provides us with so much power.

Do you feel that power...have you tapped into it. The bible says we can quench the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives if we are not feeding on the power source of Christ. The less you read the Word, the less you pray, the less you serve, the less you worship... the less access to this power you will have. Perhaps you need to commit to connecting to the power of Christ and you will reignite the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Or... Perhaps you aren't a believer and thats why you don't have this power! This morning you can have it simply by trusting in the salvation of Jesus Christ. He died, rose, and ascended so that you can have salvation from sin and death, so that you could have new life today, and so you can have a power to be transformed and transform the world.

Conclusion

For those of you who are believers and have been baptized by the Holy Spirit... How are you using this power? Are you growing in your connection to God? Are you sharing the Gospel? Are you being the church we see in Acts 2? **the most unexplainable phenomena in the history of the world is a changed heart and a unified church. The Death of Jesus Pays Our Debt, The Resurrection Provides Us New Life, But the Ascension Empowers Us To Do The Impossible**