

# Book of Acts Series - Part 1 | Visitation

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon explores the significance of the Holy Spirit's visitation in the early church as a means of experiencing God's presence and power today.*

**Duration:** 29:59

**Scripture:** Acts 2:1-4, Acts 3:19, Acts 4:31, Acts 10:44-45

**Topics:** "Book Of Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Symbala discusses the importance of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to be effective witnesses for Jesus. He explains that Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, allowing us to be free. After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to the disciples for 40 days, teaching them about the kingdom of God. Pastor Symbala also shares his personal experience of being visited by the Holy Spirit and emphasizes the need for repentance and conversion to receive times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

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## Transcript

Today we start a series on the book of Acts. And we're gonna go through June, July, and August, and however the Lord leads, not going verse by verse, but studying the book of Acts. The book of Acts is the fifth book in the New Testament, but it follows four books that are very similar, which are called the Gospels.

The Gospels are, let's say them together, Matthew, Mark, and John. Then comes Acts. Acts was written by Luke, who was not one of the 12 disciples, in fact was a later convert, and was a doctor.

His writing, his style of Greek, is different than other parts of the New Testament. And when he outlines a narrative or a story, he is a great historian. Very careful attention to details, for he researched and asked questions of people who were there when he wasn't there to give, with the help of the Holy Spirit, an accurate account of the early days of the Christian church.

He wrote the Gospel, the third Gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke. He wrote Luke, and he wrote Acts. Luke is the Gospel, he says, of what Jesus began to do and to teach when he was here on Earth.

But for those of you who are newer to the Christian message and the Christian faith, at the end of Jesus' life, he died on a cross. He gave up his life as a sacrifice for our sins, for your sins and my sins. He was

the lamb of sacrifice.

He was the substitute, so that God judged Jesus for my sins. Oh my goodness. God judged and condemned Jesus for our sins, so that we could be free today.

How many are thankful for that? Say amen. And that's why we love him, and those of you visiting, you see people lifting their hands. We love him because he first loved us.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared off and on for about 40 days to the disciples. He didn't stay with them. He had his resurrection body, very mysterious part of Scripture.

He could just appear in a room, then disappear. 40 days, he saw the disciples and he talked to them about the kingdom of God. And then, the book of Acts begins with telling us that he then brought them together on a mountain and said, I'm gonna leave you now, but wait in Jerusalem, because even though you have the right message, the gospel, you understand the meaning of my life and death and resurrection, you need something else to be effective witnesses for me, and that is the power, invisible, not muscle power, not engine power, spiritual power to fight spiritual battles.

You're gonna receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and then you'll be witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the other parts of the earth, including Ethiopia. The book of Acts, which was written about 40 years after Jesus' resurrection by Luke the physician, who was probably a convert of the Apostle Paul, who we'll learn as we go through the book of Acts more about. This book tells us the birth of the church and how the message spread without Jesus being there.

Jesus was not there physically. The Father had sent the Son, but now the Son left and he sent the Holy Spirit, who is the forgotten part, member of the Trinity or the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, the one who's emphasized the least in our liturgy, in our singing, in our doctrinal books. Our understanding is the Spirit.

We kind of get a grasp on God the Father, that he sent his Son. More books have been written about Jesus than anyone who ever walked on earth, but this invisible third person, and he's a he, not an it, he, the Holy Spirit, is what many people think the book of Acts is about. In fact, the book of Acts, some say it's the Acts of Jesus after he left.

Some say it's the Acts of the early church and the apostles. Others say, no, it's the Acts of the Holy Spirit working through his people. And one of the things that the book of Acts gives us, which has almost been totally lost to the contemporary Christian church, and it's been lost for hundreds of years, at certain times it's been accented a little bit, but for the most part, what I'm about to talk to, some of you might not even be familiar with this thought, but it's very prominent in the book, is what I would like to call this message, first part of the study in the book of Acts, which is visitation, visitation.

It's not the visitation that we have here in the church. People go to prison to visit inmates, share Jesus. We have a ministry that goes to shelters.

They do visits. We have a ministry that goes to hospitals. They do visitation, senior citizens' homes.

This is a different kind of visitation. So I'm gonna pick just four places in the book of Acts, little snapshots, where it brings out this thought of Holy Spirit visitation. And then we'll discuss the fact of it and the why behind it.

So let's look first at the birth of the church, which is found in Acts 2. When all the day of Pentecost came, when the day of Pentecost, Pentecost was a Jewish feast. It's not a word to be used in our vocabulary. Pentecostal is a very poor word.

It doesn't mean anything in the Bible. Pentecost was a Jewish feast 50 days after Passover. So 50 days after Passover, the time that Jesus died, they were all together in one place.

Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And all of them were filled, became controlled by, filled with the Holy Spirit, this person, this invisible person.

And they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now we jump to chapter three, and this is part of Peter's second sermon in the book of Acts. And as he's preaching, he says these words to a crowd that has gathered.

Repent, therefore, that means turn around, away from your old life, your sins. Repent and be converted, change direction, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Not one time, not be just converted, but be converted so that times of refreshing can come from the presence of the Lord, from the Holy Spirit.

Then in Acts chapter four, after the first persecution of the church, they gathered to have a prayer meeting like we're gonna have on Tuesday. And they cry out to God because they've been threatened with death or being tossed out of town. And they know they have to stay and witness, but it's hard, so they pray.

And after they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. They were all filled, the place was shaken, and they had a visitation, a new one. These are the same guys who are in Acts two who started the church, Peter, James, John, the mother of Jesus, Mary, and some women, they were there in Acts two, and now another group of disciples is praying in Acts chapter four.

And finally, Acts 10, this is the part of the sermon. Peter is preaching to the first Gentile unbelievers, and now he's told them about Jesus. And while Peter was still speaking these words, man's name was Cornelius, he was a Roman centurion.

He had gathered a large crowd in his house. Peter came and told them about Jesus. And while he was still speaking these words about Jesus, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

The circumcised believers, that's the Jewish believers, who had come with Peter, they were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. So there are other places in the book of Acts and other places in the New Testament that reference what I wanna talk about, but I wanna talk about the visitation of the Holy Spirit to weak Christians. Every summer when I was growing up, my mother, to get a rest from me and my sister would send us to Connecticut, to Milford, Connecticut, where my late aunt and uncle lived.

I grew up on Parkside Avenue between Bedford and Flappish, and all I knew was a concrete playground and apartment buildings and kind of like a brownstone for a family that I grew up in. We just all lived on the first railroad apartment floor, my brother and my sister, my mom and my dad. And every summer when school had ended, for at least a week, sometimes 10 days, they would send us away, my dad would drive

us up or someone would get us, and I would go to Milford, Connecticut.

That was country to me, I thought I was in Idaho. When you're in Brooklyn all your life and you go to Milford, Connecticut, and there's a long gravel road going up a hill, woods on both sides, I went into that house and my aunt and uncle would set up cots in the garage. I had never been in a garage.

We slept, my cousin Bruce, sometimes another cousin or a friend, we would sleep in the garage at night. And I would hear crickets. There are no crickets on Parkside Avenue between Bedford and Flappish.

So I heard my first crickets. And I would run out barefoot, following the example of my cousin who could do that, but his feet had gotten tough from that. I had Brooklyn feet.

And I would run out and feel the wet dew on the grass, something I had never experienced. These memories are still vivid in my mind. And when he would walk on the gravel, oh my goodness, I'd be going like that and he would just, it didn't even bother him.

I would walk in the woods and I didn't know anything about poison ivy because there is no poison ivy on Parkside Avenue where I grew up. But oh, did I learn about poison ivy. On Sunday, they would take us to church.

And maybe I was nine or 10. I was not yet 11. And there was a Sunday night service that my aunt took me to in Milford, Connecticut.

I wasn't paying much attention because I didn't do that when I was in church. I was hyperactive and just busy doing things, trying to let the time go by. I don't know who preached, but someone preached.

I don't know who led the worship. Those things are irrelevant. But I remember sitting, my aunt was on the right on an aisle about the second row of this little tiny church.

There were not pews, there were seats. And as the people began to sing and worship and praise God, something happened. I knew it.

And you couldn't con me because I was just a troublesome kid. And suddenly everybody got lost just worshipping God, praising God. People began to weep for joy, not because of sadness.

And I threw down whatever I had. And I knew someone, something had come into that room. I knew that.

This was not mysticism because no one told me to expect anything. And it went on for minutes and minutes of worship and praise. And I remember turning to my aunt May and saying, auntie, what is that? And she looked at me and she said, Jimmy, that's the presence of the Lord.

As I looked at her, I was trying to figure out what she meant. But I knew something was happening. Even in my little heart, I could feel it becoming tender.

And there was a sense of awe and majesty. What happened that day, and think how vividly I remember. She was sitting on my right.

I can still remember every, so many details of that because that is still in my heart today. Now, that's happened to me many, many, many times in my life, a visitation of the Holy Spirit. Well, Pastor Cimbala, I thought God is everywhere.

Are you making, is this some emotional thing? No, no one was yelling in the mic. It wasn't church culture. It wasn't praise God, how are you? And everybody getting worked up.

It was nothing like that. Sometimes when the Spirit comes, it makes us loud. Sometimes when the Spirit comes, you can hear a Pindra.

But when the Spirit comes, He comes. But how does He come? Because He's everywhere at the same time. God is omnipresent.

So the Bible tells us that no matter where you go, the bottom of the ocean, wherever you might go, God is there. But the visitations that the Bible is talking about here is when the Holy Spirit chooses to manifest Himself and make Himself known to a person or to a group of people. And those are awesome moments.

Now, I know for a lot of you, you say, I don't even know what you're talking about. I never heard that in the church I grew up in. Nobody in my church is waiting for a visitation or a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

But what do these verses mean then? Explain that to me if you believe in the Bible. They were all in one place in one accord. And then the place where they were, they heard something from heaven.

You see, when the Holy Spirit comes, it's not man anymore, it's God. It's not computers. It's not pulpit oratory.

It's not humanity dominating. It's, oh my goodness, God is here. Peter says in that sermon, when you repent and you receive Jesus as your Savior, you know what you can experience? Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

Working in you, coming in a collective corporate meeting like this, or walking on a road or taking a shower in the morning, God can come to you and He can make Himself known. The Bible tells us when they were persecuted, they got together and prayed. And after they prayed, not while they were praying, after they prayed, they felt a shaking.

Again, the Holy Spirit was doing something. Now notice, you can't put this in a formula and you can't say when God comes and the Holy Spirit shows Himself, this is what will happen. There'll be a sound of a mighty rushing wind.

No, that never happened again in the entire book of Acts. The building will shake. No, that's not found elsewhere.

I remember the gospel singer years ago, Steve Graham, came to sing at our church. So he was praying with us in the office before the meeting and he didn't know that the subway ran underneath our church. And we were all praying and Pastor Ware, God bless him, was praying and leading out in prayer.

And while he was praying and we're all in a circle, the whole, my office did like this. We all just ignored it because when you're used to hearing the subway, you don't even hear it anymore. Am I right? We got through praying, get ready for the service and when the prayer ended and everyone left and he was alone with me, he said, Pastor Simla, I have been in some prayer times in my life.

Does that always happen when you pray in your office? I said, no, no. That's the three train, brother. It has nothing to do with God.

Lastly, when Peter is preaching at Cornelius' house, while he's preaching, notice the unexpected. You can't control the Holy Spirit. You can't manipulate him.

He wants to manipulate us. It's not emotionalism. It's not something worked up on the organ.

No, no, no, no. Has nothing to do with that. The worship leader can't do it.

The preacher can't do it. But I remember turning to my aunt and saying, Aunt May, what is that? And with tears in her eyes, she turned to me and said, Jimmy, that's the presence of the Lord. It just comes back as God is my witness.

She says, you know, Jimmy, sometimes when he comes, it's quiet. Sometimes you cry and other times you just wanna shout. And she just nodded her head.

I didn't comprehend it, but I never forgot it. I never had ever a question about the existence of God in my life because when you experience God, who can talk you out of that? Come on, does somebody say amen? When you experience God, who can talk you out of that? Now, what's the purpose of God wanting to come like that, visitations of the Holy Spirit to us individually? I wonder if the question was asked of some of us. When was the last time you had a visitation of the Holy Spirit? To the early believers, that would be a normal question.

They would talk about that. Today, we've made it much more cerebral, north of the neck, and to us, Christianity is about doctrinal statements and Jesus was born of a virgin, crucified under Pontius Pilate, then rose on the third day, ascended to the right hand of the Father. And we have doctrine, which is so important.

But let's talk in closing about the reasons for these wonderful visitations, manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Number one, reality. The Holy Spirit was sent to prove to people that God is real.

Now, the natural person can't receive these things, but to us who are believers, we're supposed to be enjoying the presence of the Lord. We're supposed to love these wonderful invasions that come in our heart. How many have ever had the Holy Spirit work this way? You read a verse in the Bible.

You've read it 30 times before, and suddenly as you read it, boom, the lights go on, and you go, oh wow, it means that. How many have ever had a moment like that? That's a kind of moving of the Holy Spirit, bringing enlightenment. Without that, we just read verses, get proud we know so much and become self-righteous and judge other people.

But when the Holy Spirit teaches you the Bible, it humbles you, it breaks you. You say, no, I esteem that person better than myself. So reality of God, the reality of God.

The early Christians experienced God. I know this is totally left field to some of you. I feel that as I'm speaking.

But they experienced God. You say, well, you can't go by experience. You're right, you can't.

You go by the word of God. But God sent the Holy Spirit so we could experience Him. Oh man, how many love to experience God and that joy and that peace that He brings? Because remember, they didn't study Jesus, they experienced Jesus when He was here on earth.

My wife said something good to me the other day. Yesterday, she's reading some book where the person said, and this is so good, when somebody's thirsty, they don't study pictures of water. When you're starving, you don't want to study a menu.

You don't want to talk to a chef about how he makes it. You want to eat. All in favor say aye.

Aye. The study of God is important. Understanding the Bible, I'm trying to help you understand it, myself understand it better now.

But without experiencing God, religion becomes dry, dusty, self-righteous, merely intellectual. That's why theologians who don't experience God but study the Bible for years, they can end up being some of the least Christ-like people in the whole world. By the way, this is the history of revival.

Revival, as we're gonna find out as we go through the book of Acts, revivals are those times when people get so sick and tired of religion without reality, without the Holy Spirit, that we had a great awakening in America. We had a second great awakening. We had a Welsh revival.

We had the revival in Hebrides. We had, if you study church history, all these awakenings of revival. What is it? People get so tired of going to church without experiencing God that they say, God, open the heavens and please come down and pour out your spirit and now convict the sinner and now revive those who believe in you.

Give us the joy that we've lost. Show us that you're real. We wanna experience you.

Just think, today when you woke up, God wanted you to experience him today. You might not wanna experience God, but he wants you to experience him. Secondly, not only reality, but refreshment.

Repent, turn to the Lord so that seasons of refreshing can come from the presence of the Lord. You see, brothers and sisters, when you walk with Christ, you fight spiritual battles. Am I right or wrong? We wrestle not against, but against principalities and powers.

The life of faith has battles in it. You get let go from your job. The new job doesn't come.

The enemy is whispering all kinds of things. You get tired inside. You have an autistic child.

You have a marriage under stress. You have mean people who work with you and they hurt you and it's hard to keep going. Don't tell me it's not hard to keep going.

It's hard to keep going. But oh, there's seasons of refreshing that come from the presence of the Lord. It's like a cool glass of water on a hot day.

It's like a breeze that comes. The word there, seasons of refreshing, means like a cool breeze on those days when you're just sweaty, working out in a field and then a breeze comes and you go, oh yeah. Some of you are here today.

You not only needed to be reminded of the reality of God, some of you are so tired and fatigued. Some of you are so hurt and wounded, struggling, and God sent the Holy Spirit so that you could have seasons of refreshing. You could be renewed day by day by the Spirit, as Paul says.

He said, no, outwardly we're perishing, but inwardly, in the inner person, we're being renewed every day by the Holy Spirit. Seasons of refreshing that come from the presence of the Lord. You're looking at a man now who has no right to be here.

I was the least Christian of my mother's three children. I wasn't a strong believer in high school or college. I've made all kinds of mistakes as a pastor.

I've faced challenges that you couldn't believe and had to raise monies and see people try to come to Christ. And so many times I've gotten fatigued and tired and I felt I can't go on, I can't go on. And anybody here ever get to a place where you wondered if you could just keep going on? Just lift your hand if you're with, right? But how many times, when the choir's singing, when you're singing alone with God somewhere, the Lord will just come.

Seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Last thing, visitations of the Holy Spirit not only remind us of the reality of God, otherwise you just get into this mental state that Christianity is like Mormonism or Jehovah Witnesses. We have a book and we have a doctrinal statement.

We do have a book and we have a doctrinal statement, but we have a living God. He's not dead, he's alive. Can we put our hands together? He's alive, he's alive, he shows himself alive.

That's not going by emotions now, so don't dismiss me and say he's preaching emotionalism. I'm not, I dread, I detest emotionalism. Worked up, frenzied, I don't like that at all.

It's always frightened me since I was a child. But oh, when God comes. But then there's restoration, where God restores lost joy, lost peace.

Anybody here maybe today, you've lost your peace. I know you're a Christian, you love the Lord, the Holy Spirit dwells inside of you, but you need a visitation, a fresh wind, fresh fire touching your life so that you can get back that joy and that peace that the enemy's trying to steal from you. Your arms are getting a little tired, you need endurance.

Maybe there's a calling on your life that God wants you to do something. Enemies distracted you and discouraged you. You know who has been sent to get you back on the right track? It's the Holy Spirit.

That's why God gives us the book of Acts, so that we can learn that we're not alone. Jesus said, I'm leaving you, but you won't be alone. No, I've been with you, but the Holy Spirit will be in you.

I'm just reminded now of times in my life when they're just indelible, just indelible, when God just came and visited me. I need to Him to visit me again. Anybody here like me today? You would love a visitation from the Lord.

You know, when the Lord comes, the Holy Spirit comes, preachers get small. When the Lord comes, problems get small. See, when the Holy Spirit visits you, your problem was a mountain.

All you have to do is get in God's reality, and then you see your problem is this big, and God is bigger than the universe. Can we say amen to that? That only comes by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. When the personality of the preacher dominates or the worship leaders, when they become the stars in Christianity, that's a sad day.

What would I wanna get taken up with some preacher for? He's made of clay like the rest of us. Why would I wanna be running after some worship leader or some Christian celebrity? One second in the presence of God and everybody else is just so little. Am I right here, brothers and sisters? So what I wanna do is I wanna worship today and wait with you and just say, God, come.

Wouldn't it be nice if the Brooklyn Tabernacle of Pastor Symbol, if you and I, all of us, had a fresh visitation of the Lord? Things happen, oh, do things happen. And when you say, why is all these blessings coming? Why are people getting converted? Why is the prayer meeting growing? Why are people more, you can't explain it. If you can explain it, then God's not doing it.

When God is doing it, you can't explain it. It's something from heaven. Let's close our eyes.

If you're here today and you're just kinda beat down, dry, tired, maybe battling with discouragement, anybody here that would say, Pastor, as you close the meeting, I wanna be up there singing with you. I wanna be worshiping and waiting. Now look, here's the qualifications.

You can't be living in known sin. You can't be saying, no, I'm gonna resist God. I'm gonna have God but my sin too.

You can't do that, you can't do that. You have to turn from that and say, Jesus, I know you shed your blood for me and I wanna walk in the light, but I do need your help, Holy Spirit. I need your refreshing.

I need your reality. I need your restoration. I need to get back to that place that I once experienced with you.

You can just get out of your seat and come right to the front, from the balcony or downstairs, Pastor. That message was from me. At first, I wasn't sure what you were talking about, but now that you explained it from the Bible, I want to experience God in a new way through the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, we thank you for teaching us from the Word today that we don't have to live alone. We can have you. No matter who else turns on us, who else ignores us, you love us, and we worship you today.

We worship you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we ask you to visit our church. We ask you to visit our lives.

We ask you to visit the choir, the singers, the pastors, the deacons, the deaconesses, the sound people, the people in the balcony, the people downstairs. God, what can we do without you? What can we do without you, Lord? We are so helpless. We're so hopeless, Lord.

Can we put our hands together and just praise him? Come on, as we clap, let's give him a hallelujah or praise the Lord. We bless you out loud, Lord.

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