

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Bible Jam Session 11– Spring 2022



MAY 3, 2022

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The Open Tomb

Warm-up Activity: (5 minutes)

In the space below, write the different ways you know of that our congregation extends the “open tomb” into our congregation, community, and the world around us. You can work alone or together, as you wish.

Then, in the space that follows, write down one or two things that you do in your personal life that expresses the symbolism of the “open tomb”. For this part of the reflection, work by yourself.

Check-in:

Check in and as you do, share one items that you have written for each category. If someone has already mentioned it, please share it again.

[Greg Boyle](#) 1:00 – 4:31 – On Language and Bridging the Divide

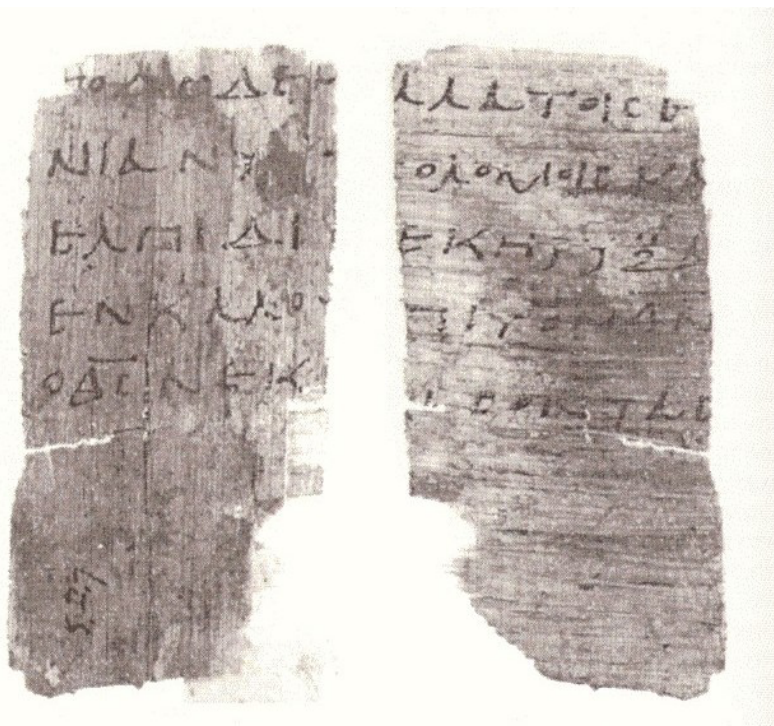
“Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship” was presented on April 30, 2019, by Gregory Boyle; founder of Homeboy Industries and best-selling author. In this presentation, Gregory Boyle will share how compassion, kindness, and kinship are the tools to fight despair and decrease marginalization. Through his stories and parables, all will be reminded that no life is less valuable than another.

[Greg Boyle](#) 3:00: Healing Power of Spirituality: Grasping the Language

Imagine...

Imagine that we are the Apostles, the Evangelists the followers of Jesus in the time after his crucifixion. If you were a “Greg Boyle of the day” or a “Mary – mother of James; Paul...” and you had a chance to give a video interview... what would you say the purpose of what you were doing was; how would you explain yourself and your purpose in the world?

Take a few minutes and jot down some notes:



Acts 26:7-8, 20 on Papyrus 29 (CE 250)

From various sources:

The Acts of the Apostles is the fifth book of the New Testament and tells the story of the founding of the Christian Church and the spread of its message throughout the Roman Empire.

It is the second part of the Gospel of Luke, written sometime between 80 – 110 in the Common Era (C.E.)

The first part of the Gospel of Luke tells the story of how God fulfilled God's plan for the world's salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the promised messiah (anointed one).

Acts continues the story of Christianity in the 1st Century and begins with the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

According to sources: (en.wikipedia.org and others)

Background:

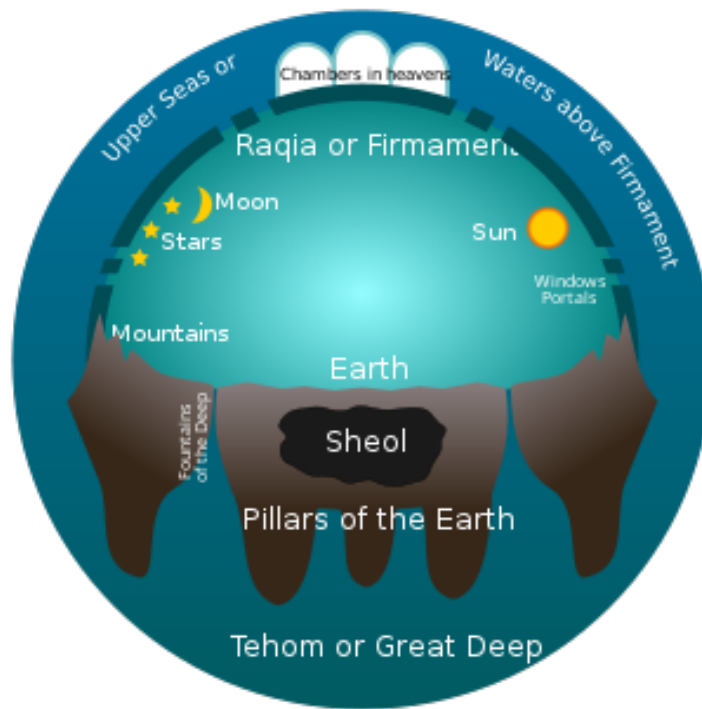
"Ascension stories were fairly common around the time of Jesus and the gospel-authors, signifying the deification of a noteworthy person."

"Another function of heavenly ascent was as a mode of divine revelation reflected in Greco-Roman, early Jewish, and early Christian literary sources, in which particular individuals with prophetic or revelatory gifts are thought to have experienced a heavenly journey during which they learned cosmic and divine secrets."

Cosmology:

"The cosmology of the author of Luke-Acts reflects the beliefs of his age, which envisioned a three-part cosmos with the heavens above, and Earth centered on Jerusalem in the middle, and the underworld below.

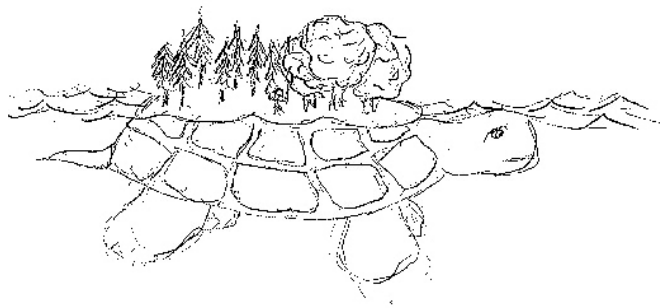
“Heave was separated from the Earth by the firmament. The firmament a vast solid dome created by God on the second day of the creation of the world to divide the primal sea into upper and lower portions so that dry land could appear.”



In modern times, a literal reading of the Ascension-stories has become problematic, due to the differences between the pre-scientific cosmology of the times of Jesus, and the scientific worldview that leaves no place for a Heaven above earth. Theologian James Dunn (a British New Testament scholar) describes the Ascension as at best a puzzle and at worst an embarrassment for an age that no longer conceives of a physical Heaven located above the Earth.

Similarly, in the words of McGill University's Douglas Farrow, in modern times the Ascension is seen less as the climax of the mystery of Christ than as "something of an embarrassment in the age of the telescope and the space probe," an "idea [that] conjures up an outdated cosmology."

Yet, according to Dunn, a sole focus on this disparity is beside the real importance of Jesus' Ascension, namely the Resurrection and subsequent exaltation of Jesus. Farrow notes that, already in the third century, the Ascension-story was read by Origen of Alexandria (an early Christian scholar (185-253 C.E.) in a mystical way, as an "ascension of the mind rather than of the body," representing one of two basic Ascension theologies. The real problem is the fact that Jesus is both present and absent, an ambiguity which points to a "something more" to which the eucharist gives entry.



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The Ascension of Jesus is traditionally celebrated on the sixth Thursday after Easter (May 26). The traditional site of the Ascension is Mount Olivet.

Most Christians believe Jesus did initially die but was then resurrected and ascended into heaven.

The minority views that Jesus did not die are known as the "swoon hypothesis" and Docetism.

Mary the mother of Jesus is considered in Eastern orthodoxy to have died prior to being assumed into heaven. Roman Catholicism affirms that Mary, the mother of Jesus, suffered death prior to her assumption. Protestants generally believe that Mary died a natural death like any other human being and subsequently entered heaven in the usual manner.

Acts of the Apostles – Chapter One (Selected)

In my earlier account, Theophilus, I dealt with everything that Jesus had done and taught, from the beginning until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After the Passion, Jesus appeared alive to the apostles—confirmed through many convincing proofs—over the course of forty days and spoke to them about the reign of God.

On one occasion, Jesus told them not to leave Jerusalem. “Wait rather, for what God has promised, of which you have heard me speak,” Jesus said. “John baptized with water, but within a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

While meeting together they asked, “Has the time come, Rabbi? Are you going to restore sovereignty to Israel?”

Jesus replied, “It’s not for you to know times or dates that Abba God has decided. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and even to the ends of the earth.”

Having said this, Jesus was lifted up in a cloud before their eyes and taken from their sight. They were still gazing up into the heavens when two messengers dressed in white stood beside them. “You Galileans—why are you standing here looking up at the skies?” they asked. “Jesus, who has been taken from you—this same Jesus will return, in the same way you watched him go into heaven.”

The apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a mere Sabbath’s walk away. Entering the city, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying—Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew; James ben-Alphaeus; Simon, a member of the Zealot sect; and Judah ben-Jacob. Also, in their company were some of the women who followed Jesus, his mother Mary, and some of Jesus’ sisters and brothers. With one mind, they devoted themselves to constant prayer.

...the choice fell to Matthias, who was added to the eleven apostles.

<https://youtu.be/CGbNw855ksw>