

Acts 1:9-11

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/acts/acts-1/acts-19-11/>

The disciples watch as Jesus is lifted up into the sky and disappears behind a cloud. Angels tell the disciples that they shouldn't stand watching, they need to get about the business of obeying what Jesus told them to do, and that Jesus will return one day.

Jesus has just told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. After that, they are to be His witnesses all over the world. So *after He had said these things He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight*. Luke mentioned this event at the end of his gospel, but significantly expands upon the event here in Acts. Jesus was *lifted up*, meaning He ascended into the sky. The lifting up of someone into heaven has occurred at least once before, when Elijah went to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). It likely also occurred with Enoch (Genesis 5:24).

However, this is the first lifting up of someone who has been resurrected with a new spiritual body. There will also be a future lifting up into heaven of the two witnesses in Revelation, after they are resurrected (Revelation 11:12). At a point in the future there will be a great lifting up of living believers (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The disciples had seen many incredible miraculous sights throughout their time with Jesus: the healing of diseases, the multiplication of food, control over weather, demons cast out, Christ transfigured, resurrections from death. Still, they never stopped being amazed by such acts from God. They stood *gazing intently into the sky while Jesus was going*. Not only was this an awesome sight to see, it was probably sad. He was gone. Perhaps they thought He would shortly return. Or perhaps they thought Moses or Elijah might descend, as had occurred at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). The disciples had followed Him for three years, giving up their jobs and family life to learn from Him and do what He asked; they had mourned over His death and rejoiced over His resurrection. They did not expect Him to go away, though He had warned them of it many times. And now the Son of God was gone from the earth. He had returned to Heaven in His resurrected state to sit down at the right hand of God, as a reward for His faithfulness (Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 3:21). But the disciples remained on earth, and might have felt alone.

So God pushes them toward action, away from dwelling on the departure of Christ. As they *were gazing intently into the sky while Jesus disappeared into a cloud out of their sight*, God's messengers speak to them. Luke writes *behold* to draw our attention to what happens next: the disciples saw that *two men in white clothing stood beside them*.

In the Bible, men who appear from nowhere and wear *white* (or shining) *clothing* are typically angels ("angelos" means "messenger" in Greek). They ask the disciples, *Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven*. The message seems to be,

“Don’t just stand there gawking, get to work, so when Jesus returns He will find you faithful in carrying out His commands.”

One of the disciples, John, would eventually have a vision of Christ’s return. Jesus will indeed return among the clouds *just the same way* the disciples *watched Him go into heaven* (Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16).

Biblical Text

⁹ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹ They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”