FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Chapter 4: Ministry in Jerusalem

The church as a powerful evangelistic force in Jerusalem; the second Jerusalem outpouring; facing persecution

Day 1: Understanding Acts and Preparing for Pentecost · Day 2: The Spirit-Empowered Church in Jerusalem and Beyond · Day 3: The Gentile Mission and Paul's Missionary Expansion · Day 4: Paul's Missionary Journeys, Jerusalem and Rome

Day 5: Final examination (2026-10-09)

Based on Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission by Denzil R. Miller. Africa's Hope, 2017.

CHAPTER 4 · UNIT 2 · DAY 2

Ministry in Jerusalem

The church as a powerful evangelistic force in Jerusalem; the second Jerusalem outpouring; facing persecution

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Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 4)

Chapter purpose. This chapter shows that after Pentecost the church remained a powerful evangelistic force in Jerusalem: a second outpouring of the Spirit produced bold witness, signs and wonders, and faithful endurance of persecution, including Stephen's martyrdom.

After Pentecost the church is a powerful evangelistic force; this chapter shows that witness continuing in Jerusalem, including a second outpouring (Acts 4:31).

Bible reading: Acts 4:23-8:1

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 4:23-8:1. Each part of the lesson then has its own shorter reading: Acts 4:23-30, Acts 4:31-37, Acts 5:1-16, Acts 5:17-42, Acts 6:1-7, Acts 6:8-15, and Acts 7:1-8:1.

Learning Objectives

• Explain why Luke included a second outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem, and what personal and ministry lessons follow from it.

• Show how signs and wonders relate to the Holy Spirit and to the evangelistic success of the church.

• Explain why seven men were chosen to take care of the widows in Acts 6, what kind of men were chosen, and what resulted.

• Identify who observed Stephen's martyrdom, and how Stephen's dying impacted that person's life.

• Describe how a person can prepare to finish his or her life full of the Spirit.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 4:23-8:1

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 4:23-8:1. Keep your Bible open. The chapter reviews a shorter passage before each part of the lesson.

The Big Idea

Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time-only experience; it is a repeatable and ongoing experience, and the second Jerusalem outpouring resulted in ongoing Spirit-empowered witness in the city.

The Church as a Powerful Evangelistic Force

• Acts 3 and 4 show that after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the church became a powerful evangelistic force in Jerusalem.

• On the very first day, three thousand people were saved and baptized in water (and probably baptized in the Holy Spirit).

• A powerful Spirit-anointed witnessing community was created, with new believers being added to the church daily.

• The disciples' witness was characterized by powerful preaching and miraculous signs and wonders.

• At the Beautiful Gate of the temple, a forty-year-old man crippled from birth was healed through Peter and John. Peter proclaimed the gospel, and the church grew to five thousand men, besides women and children.

• Such success brought persecution from the Jewish religious leaders. The apostles were captured, threatened, and released. As the days went by, the persecution mounted.

• The disciples were not alone; the Holy Spirit was with them. Jesus had promised them power, and they had received that power when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

• Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time-only experience; it is a repeatable and ongoing experience.

• God was about to pour out His Spirit mightily again in Jerusalem. This second outpouring, which we are calling the second Jerusalem outpouring, would result in

ongoing Spirit-empowered witness in the city.

The Story: A Powerful Missionary Prayer (Acts 4:23-30)

After being threatened and released by the Jewish religious authorities, Peter and John returned to the company of believers and reported what the chief priests and elders had done to them. They then prayed a powerful God-centered missionary prayer, expressing their confidence in God and His providential dealings with man. They concluded their prayer with two requests: that God would give them boldness to preach the word, and that He would perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Jesus.

Commentary on Acts 4:23-30

4:24 They raised their voices together in prayer to God

• Throughout Acts there is a strong emphasis on prayer. Prayer is mentioned 33 times.

• Here, the disciples were in prayer when the Spirit was poured out.

• Their prayer was God-centered, rather than problem-centered. They focused their attention not on their own problems, but on the greatness and sovereignty of God.

4:25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit

• This phrase is an affirmation that Old Testament Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

• That same Spirit was now inspiring and empowering the apostles and other believers to fulfill God's mission.

4:28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen

• What had happened to Christ, and by implication what was happening to the disciples at this moment, was not accidental.

• It was part of God's providential dealings with them and with all people.

• As we seek to fulfill Christ's mandate to take the gospel to all nations, we can be assured that we are in God's hands and that He will providentially direct our paths.

4:29 Enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness

• The disciples did not ask for deliverance or even protection from harm.

• They asked for boldness to speak the gospel in the face of danger and threat.

• God answered their prayer by filling them with the Holy Spirit. Boldness is one manifestation of the power to witness promised in 1:8.

4:30 Stretch out your hand

• To ask God to stretch out His hand is to ask Him to manifest His presence through the power of the Holy Spirit.

• When the disciples asked God to stretch out His hand (v. 30), He answered by sending His Spirit (v. 31).

• In Scripture the hand (or arm, or finger) of the Lord is a metaphor often used for the power of the Holy Spirit (Joshua 4:24; 2 Kings 3:15; Isaiah 59:1; Ezekiel 3:14; 37:1; Luke 11:20; Acts 11:21; 13:11).

The Story: A Second Outpouring in Jerusalem (Acts 4:31-37)

The Lord answered the church's prayer in a dramatic way. He manifested His presence among them by shaking the place where they had gathered. God then filled everyone present with the Holy Spirit, and as on the Day of Pentecost, they began to proclaim the message of Christ boldly.

Because of this and other outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, great grace rested on the apostles, and they continued to preach the resurrected Christ. This fresh bestowal of the Holy Spirit, as on the Day of Pentecost, drew the church together in unity and loving concern for one another. Some even sold their houses and lands and gave the proceeds to the apostles to distribute to the needy among them. One man by the name of Joseph (or Barnabas) sold a field and gave the money to the apostles.

Commentary on the Second Jerusalem Outpouring

• The disciples' prayer was answered with a second powerful outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem.

• As with the first outpouring at Pentecost, this outpouring resulted in powerful

Spirit-anointed witness in Jerusalem.

• This is the second of seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts (compare with Table 2.1).

• Like the other six, it clearly illustrates Luke's empowerment-witness motif first presented in 1:8.

4:31 After they prayed

• The Holy Spirit came in response to the disciples' earnest prayer.

• Jesus taught us to ask for the Holy Spirit: "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9; compare v. 13).

The place where they were meeting was shaken

• Just as He had done on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit manifested His coming with a powerful demonstration of His power and presence.

• This is the second theophany in Acts, the first being at Pentecost.

• Some have identified the "place" (Greek topos) as the temple mount (compare Acts 2:46; 3:1; 4:1; 5:21, 25, 42). If this is the case, the shaking of the great stone walls and pillars of the temple must have been an awesome sight.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit

• The ultimate consequence of the Spirit's coming, as it was on the Day of Pentecost, was that the disciples were "filled with the Holy Spirit."

• Luke uses the term ten times in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52).

• Each time he uses the term, he uses it to describe an experience separate from conversion whose purpose is empowerment for prophetic vocational witness.

• Paul, on the other hand, uses the term only once in the context of Spirit-filled worship (Ephesians 5:18-20).

Spoke the word of God boldly

• The result of the believers being filled with the Spirit was bold, powerful Spirit-anointed witness (v. 33).

• The subject of their witness was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (that is, the

gospel).

• This is the same result as at Pentecost: the disciples were first filled with the Spirit, and they spoke in tongues "declaring the wonders of God" (2:11). Peter then preached a prophetic message resulting in three thousand people coming to Christ (vv. 14-41). Finally, a powerful witnessing community was formed, and many signs and wonders were done by the apostles (vv. 42-47).

• This is the pattern repeated throughout Acts: every time there is an outpouring of the Spirit, the result is Spirit-anointed missional witness.

4:32 One in heart and mind

• Unity was both a requirement and a result of their being filled with the Spirit.

• Before Pentecost "they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1, NKJV). After Pentecost they were "one in heart and mind."

• Their unity was around the mission of Christ. Such unity is essential to reaching the nations with the gospel.

4:33 Much grace was upon them all

• This phrase is a reference to their being filled with the Spirit (Luke 2:40; Acts 6:8).

• The preposition "upon" reminds us of Jesus' promise in 1:8 that the Holy Spirit would "come upon" them and give them power to witness (compare Luke 24:49).

The Story: Revelation and Witness (Acts 5:1-16)

The church's expanding witness was now threatened by wrongdoing from within. A man by the name of Ananias, along with his wife, Sapphira, were moved by Satan and conspired to deceive the congregation. They pretended to give the entire proceeds from the sale of a piece of property to the church; however, they held back part of the sale price for themselves. The Holy Spirit revealed their conspiracy to Peter, who challenged their deception, saying that they were lying, not only to men, but to the Holy Spirit as well. God then struck them down dead. As a result, great fear came upon the church and all who heard the story.

In spite of such wrongdoing from within and continued opposition from without, the church continued to prosper and grow. The apostles, still anointed by the

Spirit, did many miraculous signs and wonders among the people, and the believers continued to meet together in the temple under Solomon's Colonnade in the Court of the Gentiles. Because of the Spirit's mighty presence upon them, they were feared by some, yet held in high regard by all. Their numbers continued to grow as new believers, both men and women, joined their ranks. God worked extraordinary miracles through them. The sick were laid in the streets so that Peter's shadow might pass over them. Multitudes began to gather from the surrounding towns, and many brought their friends and loved ones to be healed and set free from demons. As had often happened in the ministry of Jesus, all were healed.

Commentary on Acts 5:1-16

A conspiracy is unmasked

• Not only did the Holy Spirit empower believers to effectively proclaim the gospel to the lost, He also enabled them to challenge threats to the spread of the gospel from within their own ranks.

• The story of Ananias and Sapphira is one such example.

5:3 Satan has so filled your heart

• Just as one can be filled with the Spirit, there exists the possibility that Satan (or his demonic agents) can also fill or influence one's heart (compare Luke 22:3, 31).

• Ananias and Sapphira's conspiracy was revealed to Peter by the Holy Spirit, for how else could he have known what was in their hearts?

• This incident is a Lukan example of the operation of the gift of distinguishing between spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10).

5:3, 9 You have lied to the Holy Spirit... you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord

• To sin against the work and mission of God is to sin against and test the Holy Spirit.

5:11 Great fear seized... all who heard about these events

• Like other Spirit-directed acts, this one resulted in witness. This time fear seized the people who heard.

• Such fear can be the beginning of the knowledge of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).

• In Acts the manifestation of God's power resulted in various reactions, including utter amazement (2:7; 3:10), being filled with awe (2:43), perplexity (2:12), hearts filled with praise to God (4:21), great fear (5:5, 11), great joy (8:8), astonishment (8:13), and saving faith (9:42; compare 1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

• We, like the first-century believers, should pray that God will "stretch out [His] hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of [His] holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:30).

Ongoing witness in Jerusalem (5:12-16)

• Acts 5:12-16 is one of fifteen summary passages that Luke inserts into the story of Acts.

• Other summary passages are 2:43-47; 4:4, 32-35; 5:42; 6:7; 8:4; 9:31; 12:24; 13:52; 14:6-7, 28; 15:35; 16:4-5; 19:20.

5:12 Many miraculous signs and wonders among the people

• Signs and wonders are an essential part of true gospel proclamation.

• According to Paul, the gospel has not been fully proclaimed until it has been clearly presented and powerfully demonstrated (compare Romans 15:18-19).

• Proclamation and demonstration are two sides of the same gospel coin.

• In evangelistic ministry, signs and wonders help to open the hearts of people to the message of the gospel.

• For an explanation of "miracles, wonders, and signs" see comments on Acts 2:22.

5:14 More and more men and women believed in the Lord

• Again, the result of Spirit-induced signs and wonders was witness, resulting in saving faith.

5:15 Peter's shadow

• Though the text does not explicitly state that anyone was actually healed by Peter's shadow, we can reasonably assume that some were.

• This manifestation of God's power fits into the category of "extraordinary

miracles," such as the curing of illnesses and exorcism of evil spirits by cloths that touched Paul's body (Acts 19:11-12).

• If God grants such miracles, we rejoice; however, they are not necessarily normative practice in the church.

5:16 From the towns around Jerusalem

• Witness in Jerusalem had now extended into the towns around Jerusalem, that is, into Judea.

• The fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in 1:8 continues.

The Story: Imprisonment, Release, and Witness (Acts 5:17-42)

Filled with jealousy, the Jewish religious leaders arrested the apostles and put them into jail. That same night an angel of the Lord freed them, commanding them to go, stand in the temple courts, and declare "the full message of this new life." The next morning, the apostles obeyed the angel's command and went into the temple courts. There they began teaching the people. When the Jewish leaders heard that the apostles were again in the temple teaching the people, they had them seized and brought before the council, where they ordered them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. However, Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men," and began witnessing to the council concerning the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. They then told the Jewish leaders to repent, declaring, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Some in the council wanted to have them executed. Calming them down, Gamaliel reasoned with them, saying, "If their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God" (vv. 38-39). The council then had the apostles flogged, ordered them to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles, however, rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer for "the Name." Day after day, "in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

Commentary on Acts 5:17-42

• The apostles were again hauled before the Jewish authorities and commanded not to preach the gospel.

• And again they refused, saying that they were subjects of a higher authority: God.

• In both instances, Luke attributes their boldness to the Holy Spirit (4:8, compare v. 31; 5:32).

5:17 Filled with jealousy

• As the church's numbers continued to increase in Jerusalem, so did the jealousy and resentment of the local religious authorities.

• Persecution continued to mount against the church. Throughout Acts, the gospel advanced in the midst of persecution.

5:19 Angel of the Lord

• The ministry of angels is mentioned at least eighteen times in Acts.

• The writer of Hebrews describes them as "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

• Angels have not been commissioned to preach the gospel. That is the job of the redeemed.

• In Luke-Acts, angels do participate in advancing the kingdom of God by observing (Luke 15:10), informing (Luke 1:11-19, 26-38; 2:8-14; 24:4-8; Acts 7:38, 53; 27:23-24), directing (Acts 1:10-11; 8:26; 10:3-6, 22; 11:13), comforting (Luke 1:26; 2:10; Acts 27:23), strengthening (Luke 22:43), and delivering (Acts 5:19; 12:7) the children of God.

5:20 Go, stand..., and tell

• The command of the angel to "Go" reminds us of Jesus' Great Commission, where He instructs His disciples to go to all nations and preach the gospel (compare Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

• As we go, we are to take our stand for Christ and tell His message to all who will listen.

5:32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit

• It is the Spirit who empowers us to witness for Christ (1:8). The Spirit himself also bears witness to Christ.

• He convicts the lost of their sins (Genesis 6:3; John 16:8), reveals Christ to them (John 16:13-15), and then regenerates those who repent and believe the gospel (John 3:6; Titus 3:5).

• The "things" to which we are called to witness are the message of Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of God.

• In doing this we must urge the people to repent and receive forgiveness for their sins (vv. 30-31).

Whom God has given to those who obey him

• In context, the obedience spoken of here is not a general obedience to the commands of God (though that application may be made), but rather a specific obedience to the command to be Christ's witnesses (compare vv. 28-29).

• The implication is that God will fill with the Spirit and empower those who are prepared to obey His command to preach the gospel to the lost (1:8).

5:40 They... had them flogged... and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus

• The persecution was escalating. The disciples received yet another ultimatum to stop preaching Christ.

• This time, however, the authorities had them flogged to emphasize their seriousness.

5:42 They never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news

• Before, Peter was afraid to witness for Christ (Luke 22:54-62); now he preaches boldly, even in the face of persecution and death.

• What made the difference? He had been empowered by the Holy Spirit (2:4), and he continued to walk in the Spirit.

• With this empowering came great zeal and boldness to preach the gospel (Acts 4:20; 31).

The Story: A Spirit-Guided Decision (Acts 6:1-7)

As the church in Jerusalem continued to grow, another dispute arose in their midst. Some of the Hellenistic Jews (that is, Jews who had adopted the Greek culture) complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. Directed by the Holy Spirit, the apostles developed a plan to address the issue. They said to the people, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables." They then instructed the church to choose seven men "full of the Spirit and wisdom" whom they would put in charge of the matter. The proposal pleased the church, and seven Spirit-filled men were chosen and appointed to the task. Because of this Spirit-guided action, the word of God spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly. Even a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Commentary on Acts 6:1-7

6:1 The number of disciples was increasing

• In spite of the hostility the church was facing, it continued to increase in numbers.

• The church's growth, however, brought new challenges. The many needs of the people began to distract the apostles from the ministry to which Jesus has called them: the proclamation of the gospel.

6:2 Not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God

• Like the apostles, the primary calling of ministers of the gospel is to proclaim the word of God.

• No matter what other responsibilities he or she may be given, it is never right for a minister or missionary to neglect the ministry of the Word.

• When this happens, the preacher of the gospel must take immediate steps to delegate the work to others in order to remain focused on the preaching and teaching of the word of God and prayer.

6:3 Seven men... full of the Spirit and wisdom

• Those chosen for leadership in the church should be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

6:6 Laid their hands on them

• In Acts, the laying on of hands often indicates that someone is being commissioned to service, as in this instance.

• Other such instances could include Ananias' laying hands on Paul (Acts 9:15-18; compare 26:15-18) and Paul's laying hands on the Ephesian disciples (19:6; see also the note in this book on Acts 8:17).

6:7 The word of God spread

• As a result of the apostles' Spirit-directed decision to appoint seven "deacons" to help them in the work, the word of the Lord continued to spread in Jerusalem.

• "The number of disciples... increased rapidly" in Jerusalem, and a "large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

• Two of these deacons (Stephen and Philip) would emerge as powerful evangelists and prophetic witnesses to the gospel of Christ.

The Story: Stephen's Spirit-Empowered Witness (Acts 6:8-15)

Stephen was one of the seven chosen to take care of the neglected widows. He was "a man full of God's grace and power," and through him, the Spirit did great signs and wonders among the people. Stephen's witness was opposed by a radical sect of Jews known as the Synagogue of the Freedmen. They were unable, however, to stand up against the Spirit or the wisdom by which he spoke. As a result, they began to stir up the Jewish elders and teachers, accusing Stephen of blasphemy. Soon after, they seized him and brought him before the Sanhedrin, where false witnesses testified against him. As Stephen testified, his accusers saw the Spirit come upon him so that his face appeared "like the face of an angel."

Commentary on Acts 6:8-15

• Having introduced his readers to the seven Spirit-filled "deacons," Luke now turns his attention to the Spirit-empowered ministry of two of them.

• The first is Stephen, "a man full of God's grace and power."

6:8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power

• Being full of God's grace and power is the result of one's being filled with the

Spirit (compare 4:31-33).

• Before Luke describes Stephen's ministry, he wants his readers to know that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit (see also v. 3).

• This is a consistent pattern in Acts. Luke always prefaces the description of one's ministry by showing that he was first filled with the Spirit.

• This includes Peter (2:4; 4:8), Stephen (6:3, 5), Philip (6:3-5), Paul (9:17-18), Barnabas (11:22-24), and Silas (15:32, implied).

6:10 His wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke

• Stephen's ministry was characterized by Spirit-inspired preaching.

• The Spirit gave him supernatural wisdom to confound his detractors.

• This could be a manifestation of the spiritual gift of the message of wisdom spoken of by Paul (1 Corinthians 12:8).

The Story: Stephen's Speech and Martyrdom (Acts 7:1-8:1)

When Stephen was given the opportunity to speak, he launched into a message telling the history of the Jewish people. He told the Jews that, although God continually reached out to them and sent leaders and prophets to them, they continually rejected His messengers. God called Abraham and made a covenant with him to bless his descendants. He blessed Isaac and Jacob and used Joseph to save their nation. God also called Moses to deliver them from Egyptian bondage. Yet some Israelites still rejected Moses, saying to him, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" Moses, however, continued to lead them and was used by God to do wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. Moses prophesied, "God will send you a prophet like me from your own people."

Stephen then told them of their fathers' rebellion against Moses and God: "They rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt." Neither did their fathers appreciate God's many other kind acts toward them, such as the tabernacle in the wilderness nor the temple, which He led Solomon to build. Even so, they should know "that the Most High does not live in houses made by men."

At this point Stephen began to drive his message home. He called his accusers "stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears." He told them that they

were just like their fathers, who always resisted the Holy Spirit. Their fathers even persecuted the prophets who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now they had committed the ultimate wrong: they had betrayed and murdered their promised Messiah!

Stephen's bold accusation infuriated his accusers. They became so enraged that they began to grind their teeth at him. Stephen, however, was full of the Spirit. He looked up to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. He cried out, "Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" This incensed his opponents even more. They covered their ears and began to shout at the top of their voices. They then dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (v. 59). Falling on his knees, he uttered a final prayer, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (v. 60), and died. Those who took part in the murder of Stephen laid their coats at the feet of a young Jewish Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus, who was consenting to Stephen's death.

Commentary on Stephen's Speech

• Stephen's speech is not so much a sermon as the inspired words of a prophet.

• Stephen did not try to plead his own cause or to mitigate his impending punishment. Instead, he spoke by the Spirit, boldly declaring God's message for the day.

• His message had strong missionary overtones. Stephen reminded the Jews how God often spoke to the fathers outside Jerusalem.

• Quoting from Isaiah, he insisted that the temple is not the way to God, for God is far too vast to be housed in any man-made building.

• The violent response Stephen received from the crowd was not unanticipated. After all, these were the same people who had condemned Christ to death.

• They leveled the same accusation against Stephen as they had against Jesus: blaspheming the temple.

• Stephen, however, felt that it was more important to declare the true message of God than to preserve his own life. By killing him, they did to him what they had always done to God's prophets.

7:37 God will send you a prophet like me

• This is a reference to Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15. Peter identified the "prophet like Moses" as Jesus, the Messiah (Acts 3:19-22).

• Both Jesus and Moses were Spirit-anointed prophets, for the Spirit of God rested upon both of them (Numbers 11:16-29; Luke 4:18-19), and by the Spirit they both performed miraculous signs and wonders (Acts 7:36; 10:38).

• Unlike Moses, however, the Spirit rested upon Jesus' ministry in full measure (Luke 4:18-19; John 1:32; 3:34 [KJV]).

• Just as God took the Spirit who rested on Moses and placed Him on the seventy elders in the wilderness, at Pentecost, and since Pentecost, God has taken the Spirit who rested on Jesus and put Him on Jesus' disciples.

• Moses' longing expressed in Numbers 11:29 ("I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!") was first fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18).

• The purpose of this transfer of the Spirit is the same for us and Jesus' disciples as it was for Moses' seventy elders: empowerment for service.

7:51 You always resist the Holy Spirit!

• Stephen, full of the Spirit, was very bold.

• He reminded the Jews how their fathers refused to obey the words of Moses who "was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself" (v. 35).

• Now they were rejecting the One greater than Moses, and in doing this, they were resisting the Holy Spirit just as their fathers had.

7:52 The Righteous One... you have betrayed and murdered him

• They had committed the ultimate transgression: they had betrayed and murdered the Righteous One, their promised Messiah.

Commentary on Stephen's Martyrdom

7:55 Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit

• Stephen is described as being "filled with" or "full of" the Spirit on this and two other occasions in Acts (6:3, 5).

• "Filled" indicates the process, "full," the resulting state.

• Stephen was full of the Spirit when he preached to the Jews. Now, as they begin to stone him, he remains full of the Spirit.

• The Spirit not only empowered Stephen's teaching and preaching, He also enabled him to stay true to God and the mission God had given him, even in the time of great trial.

Jesus standing at the right hand of God

• As he was dying, Stephen had a vision of the ascended Christ.

• When Jesus ascended, He sat down at the right hand of the Father (Luke 22:69; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Revelation 3:21).

• It is from this exalted position that He received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, whom He poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:33).

• What can account for Jesus, in this instance, standing at the right hand of God? It can only be that He is standing in honor of His faithful servant Stephen, the church's first martyr.

7:59-60 Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.... Lord, do not hold this sin against them

• Stephen died as Jesus died: both were full of the Spirit (compare Hebrews 9:14), both prayed for their executors (compare Luke 23:34), and both offered up their spirits to God (compare Luke 23:46).

• Stephen not only bore witness to Christ in his life and in his preaching but also bore faithful witness to Christ in his death.

8:1 Saul was there, giving approval to his death

• In 7:58 Luke said that "the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul."

• This young man would later, after he encountered the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus, become Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

• However, on this occasion, Saul was present "giving approval to [Stephen's] death."

• The courage and grace that Stephen displayed at this time must have profoundly

affected Saul and was likely a key element in his eventual surrender to Christ.

Conclusion

• In this unit we have looked at two powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit that took place in Jerusalem: Pentecost (that is, the first Jerusalem outpouring, 2:1-4) and the second Jerusalem outpouring (4:31).

• Both outpourings resulted in immediate Spirit-empowered witness in the city, and both demonstrate Luke's empowerment-witness motif introduced in 1:8: "You will receive power..., and you will be my witnesses."

• The powerful witness resulting from these two outpourings also began the fulfillment of the second part of Jesus' evangelistic agenda revealed in the second part of the verse: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea."

• The outpourings of the Spirit in Jerusalem served a second purpose. They prepared the church for the great persecution that was to come.

• Unknown to the believers in Jerusalem, a frenzy of violent persecution would soon break out against them. We will discuss that persecution and the church's response in the next chapter.

Important Terms

Second Jerusalem outpouring. The filling of the gathered believers in Acts 4:31, after they prayed. The place was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God boldly.

Empowerment-witness motif. Luke's repeated pattern: the Spirit comes, and witness follows.

Theophany. A moment when God shows His presence in a way people can see.

Proclamation and demonstration. Saying the gospel clearly, and showing the gospel by the Spirit's power. Both belong together.

Filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke's phrase for being empowered to speak for God. It is not the same as conversion, and it can happen more than once.

Hellenistic Jews. Jews who had adopted the Greek culture.

Gift of distinguishing between spirits. The Spirit showing a person what is truly of

God and what is not. Peter knew Ananias and Sapphira's lie this way.

Summary passages. Short reports Luke inserts to show how the church was progressing.

Key People

• Peter and John: Threatened and released by the Jewish authorities, they reported to the believers and joined a missionary prayer. Peter later challenged Ananias and Sapphira, and with the apostles refused to stop preaching Christ.

• Joseph (Barnabas): Sold a field and gave the money to the apostles after the second outpouring.

• Ananias and Sapphira: Moved by Satan, they conspired to deceive the congregation by holding back part of a sale while pretending to give the whole. The Spirit revealed the lie to Peter, and God struck them down dead.

• Gamaliel: A council member who calmed those who wanted the apostles executed, saying that if the work was of God, they would only find themselves fighting against God.

• The seven: Seven men "full of the Spirit and wisdom," appointed to take care of the neglected widows so the apostles would not neglect the ministry of the word. The textbook also calls them seven "deacons." Two of them, Stephen and Philip, became powerful evangelists.

• Stephen: One of the seven. "A man full of God's grace and power." He did great signs and wonders, spoke with wisdom the Spirit gave him, and became the church's first martyr, remaining full of the Spirit as he died.

• Saul of Tarsus: A young Jewish Pharisee. Those who stoned Stephen laid their coats at his feet. He was present, giving approval to Stephen's death. He would later become Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

• An angel of the Lord: Freed the apostles from jail and commanded them to go, stand in the temple courts, and declare "the full message of this new life." Angels are not commissioned to preach the gospel; that is the job of the redeemed.

Key Places

• Jerusalem: The city where, after Pentecost, the church became a powerful

evangelistic force, received a second outpouring of the Spirit, and faced mounting persecution.

• The Beautiful Gate of the temple: Where a forty-year-old man crippled from birth was healed through Peter and John, and a huge crowd gathered to hear the gospel.

• Solomon's Colonnade in the Court of the Gentiles: Where the believers continued to meet together in the temple as the apostles did many signs and wonders.

• The temple courts: Where the angel sent the apostles to teach, and where day after day they never stopped teaching and proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ.

• The towns around Jerusalem: Witness extended from Jerusalem into these towns, that is, into Judea. The fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in 1:8 continues.

Key Event

The second Jerusalem outpouring: after they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 4:31).

This is the second of seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts and the second theophany in Acts, the first being at Pentecost. It resulted in powerful Spirit-anointed witness in Jerusalem and illustrates Luke's empowerment-witness motif. Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time-only experience.

Key Verse

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

Acts 4:31

Remember This

• Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time-only experience; it is a repeatable and ongoing experience.

• Proclamation and demonstration are two sides of the same gospel coin.

• Spirit-empowered ministry is not for the apostles only; it is for all people.

Life Application: Seek a Fresh Infilling

• As we go into the world to preach the gospel, we can anticipate resistance. Sometimes we will even experience threats and persecution.

• When this happens, we should remain focused on the task that God has given us.

• We should go to God and seek Him for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

• Our prayer should not focus on our problems, but on God and His ability to take care of us and meet our every need.

Life Application: Frequent Infillings with the Spirit

• The apostles were first filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (2:4). Peter was again filled with the Spirit in 4:8. Now everyone in the body was again filled with the Spirit.

• It is essential for Christian workers to realize that they must experience frequent infillings with the Holy Spirit.

• They should not make the mistake of thinking that once they have been baptized in the Spirit, they have somehow arrived at the goal, and there is nothing more they need to do to maintain a Spirit-empowered life.

• Spirit baptism brings a Christian into a new relationship with the Spirit. That relationship, however, must be continually renewed.

• No matter how powerful one's initial infilling may be, if the experience does not find further expression in a life of sincere devotion, disciplined prayer, and committed witness, the power of the experience will soon fade. The Christian worker will lose the spiritual power he or she received.

Life Application: Spiritual Gifts in the Church and in the Marketplace

• We are called to be "competent as ministers of a new covenant... of the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

• God wants to demonstrate His grace and power through us in the manifestation of spiritual gifts.

• Such manifestations should occur both in the church (as with Ananias and Sapphira) and in the marketplace (as when the apostles performed many signs among the people).

• For this to happen, we must remain full of the Spirit and open to His voice.

• Such a release of spiritual gifts can bring great blessing to the church and result in a dramatic advance of the gospel.

Life Application: Preach in the Face of Adversity

• When the apostles were threatened and commanded to stop preaching the gospel, they did not stop.

• This was because they were full of the Holy Spirit and focused on the mandate of Jesus that they should be His witnesses.

• We too must remain full of the Spirit and focused on the mandate of Christ. If we will, we will courageously preach the gospel in the face of adversity.

Life Application: Release Spirit-Filled Workers

• The Spirit of the Lord not only empowers us to preach the gospel to the lost, He also directs us in administrating the work of the church.

• If the leaders of the church will be filled with the Spirit and follow the leadership of the Spirit, this will result in the church becoming more effective in its primary mission of taking the gospel to the lost and planting other Spirit-empowered missional churches.

• Pastors should not try to hold their lay people back from gospel ministry. They should rather ensure that they are filled with the Spirit and then release them to be used by God in whatever way He may choose.

Life Application: Spirit-Empowered Ministry Is for All

• Spirit-empowered ministry is not for apostles only; it is for all of God's people.

• Stephen was not an apostle, but God used him mightily.

• We have all been called to be His witnesses, and we have all been promised His power (1:8; 2:4, 38).

• God can use anyone who will open his or her life to Him, be filled with the

Spirit, and obey His command to share the gospel with others.

Life Application: Finish Full of the Spirit

• There are times when God calls upon us to preach the word, even in uncomfortable and dangerous situations. At such times we must never compromise the gospel message.

• We must be bold and always "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

• Such boldness in the face of danger comes when we are totally committed to the mission of God and, like Stephen, "full of God's grace and power" (Acts 6:8).

• We should guard ourselves against becoming like the Jews who "always resisted the Holy Spirit." It is possible that we too can resist the Holy Spirit.

• Just as the Pharisees rejected the Spirit-anointed ministry of Jesus, church leaders today can be tempted to reject the demonstration of the Spirit's power and the manifestation of spiritual gifts in the name of "sound doctrine" or social respectability.

• We should also realize that the Holy Spirit will never abandon us in our times of great trial. And neither will Jesus!

• Just as He honored Stephen in his death, He will honor us if we will remain faithful unto Him.

• Jesus promised, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10, NKJV).

• Sometimes a Christian's death or martyrdom has an even greater impact for Christ than his life. Truly, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church!

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. Why did Luke include a second outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem in his narrative? What personal and ministry lessons can we learn from this outpouring?

• 2. How are signs and wonders related to the Holy Spirit? How are they related to the evangelistic success of the church?

• 3. Why was it important that seven men be chosen to take care of the feeding of the widows in Acts 6? What kind of men were chosen? What was the result of this Spirit-guided action?

• 4. Who was there to observe Stephen's martyrdom? How did Stephen's dying impact this person's life?

• 5. How can a person prepare to finish his or her life full of the Spirit?

Quick Review

1. Which of the seven key outpourings is the second Jerusalem outpouring, and what was its result?

Answer: It is the second of seven. As at Pentecost, it resulted in powerful Spirit-anointed witness in Jerusalem (Acts 4:31).

2. What two requests did the disciples make in their missionary prayer after Peter and John were released?

Answer: That God would give them boldness to preach the word, and that He would perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Jesus.

3. How does Luke use the phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit" in Luke-Acts?

Answer: Ten times. Each time it describes an experience separate from conversion whose purpose is empowerment for prophetic vocational witness.

4. What kind of men were chosen to care for the neglected widows, and what was the result?

Answer: Seven men "full of the Spirit and wisdom." The word of God spread, the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

5. Who observed Stephen's martyrdom, and how did it affect him?

Answer: Saul of Tarsus was present, giving approval to Stephen's death. The courage and grace Stephen displayed must have profoundly affected Saul and was likely a key element in his eventual surrender to Christ.

Chapter Summary

Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time-only experience; the second Jerusalem outpouring resulted in ongoing Spirit-empowered witness in the city.

• After they prayed, the place was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God boldly. This is the second of seven key outpourings in Acts.

• Signs and wonders are an essential part of true gospel proclamation: proclamation and demonstration are two sides of the same gospel coin.

• Stephen, full of the Spirit, became the church's first martyr. Saul of Tarsus was there, giving approval to his death.

Seek frequent infillings with the Holy Spirit, remain focused on Christ's mandate to witness, and never compromise the gospel, even in danger.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

A second outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem filled the church again, produced bold witness and signs, and prepared the believers to face rising persecution, including Stephen's death.