FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Day 1 notes

Chapters 1, 2, 3

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 1 · UNIT 1 · DAY 1

Introduction to Acts

Definitions of terms, the purpose of the study, facts about Acts, issues of interpretation, and the focus of Acts

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 1)

Chapter purpose. This chapter introduces the book of Acts: who wrote it, why we study it, how it must be interpreted, and the missions focus that runs through the whole book.

This is the first lesson of the course. It lays the foundation for everything that follows, especially the meaning of Acts 1:8.

Bible reading: Acts 1-28 (the whole book, in one sitting)

The author strongly recommends that at this point in your study you read through the entire book of Acts in one sitting. This takes about two-and-one-half to three hours and gives you a broad overview of the book.

Learning Objectives

• Explain why "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" is a more fitting title for the book than "The Acts of the Apostles".

• Distinguish between mission and missions as the author uses these words.

• Give reasons why it is important to study and teach the book of Acts.

• Explain how Acts 1:8 serves as the interpretative key to the book of Acts.

• Identify the missions focus of Acts.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 1-28 (the whole book, in one sitting)

Read the entire book of Acts in one sitting, about two-and-one-half to three hours. As you read, note recurring themes: the work of the Holy Spirit in giving power and direction to believers, the proclamation of the gospel, the triumph over

persecution, and the kingdom of God.

The Big Idea

In the book of Acts the Holy Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of missions.

A Better Name for the Book

• The title "The Acts of the Apostles" is not the best name for the book.

• A better name would be "The Acts of the Holy Spirit", since He is the central character and champion of the book.

• The human main characters change as the story progresses: Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul.

• The divine Hero, the Holy Spirit, remains constant. Throughout Acts He takes center stage, filling, giving power, enabling, and directing the work.

• Because the Holy Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of missions, the author subtitles this book "The Spirit of God in Mission".

Mission and Missions

Mission

• Mission means God's mission or purpose, sometimes called the missio Dei, from a Latin term.

• God's mission is to bless all the peoples of the earth through the seed of Abraham, that is, through Jesus Christ (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; compare Galatians 3:16).

• Stated another way, God's mission is to redeem and call unto himself a people from "every tribe and language and people and nation" on the earth (Revelation 5:9; 7:9).

• Jesus gave the Great Commission to direct the church in fulfilling that mission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

Missions

• Missions means all the church does to fulfill the mission or purpose of God.

• This includes such things as giving, going, and praying for missionaries.

The Orientation of This Study

• Some Christians read Acts only as history and do not expect the Spirit to work the same way today.

• Others ask, why not today? Why can the twenty-first century church not receive the same Spirit in the same way, and so experience the same power, glory, and guidance as the early church? The author believes it can, and should.

• This study is a vocational commentary: it is purposely targeted toward those actively involved in gospel ministry.

• Again and again we ask, "How should their ministries impact and influence our ministries today?"

• The goal is more than knowledge about the early church. It is to have the same spiritual experiences those first believers had, and to put their practices into our own lives and ministries.

Why Study Acts?

• First, a proper understanding of Acts greatly helps our understanding of the rest of the New Testament. Acts serves as an essential bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles.

• Second, Acts helps us see what the early church looked like, and gives us a model of what the church should look like today.

• Third, Acts gives us a strategy, or plan, for missionary outreach.

Questions Acts Answers About the First Believers

• What were the central or core values and priorities of the first believers?

• How did they minister, and what moved them to do as they did?

• What were the secrets of their great evangelistic and missionary successes?

• What were the essential experiences and common practices of the first church?

• What challenges did they face, and how did they meet those challenges?

Acts as Missionary Strategy

C. Peter Wagner calls the book of Acts "God's training manual for modern Christians". He says that Acts "is intended to be a pattern of how the kingdom of God would be spread worldwide through the centuries until Jesus returns.... The Gospel of Luke tells what Jesus did, and Acts tells us what He expects His followers to do both then and now".

Acts not only tells how the early church preached the gospel and evangelized the then-known world, it gives us an enduring strategy of how we can effectively do missions today.

Background: Authorship, Date and Purpose

Authorship

• Most New Testament scholars identify Luke as the author of Acts, the same Luke who wrote the Gospel bearing his name.

• External evidence includes the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170) and the writings of Irenaeus (A.D. 180).

• Internal evidence: both Luke and Acts are addressed to the same person, Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1).

• The famous "we" passages show Luke was a fellow traveler and missionary associate of Paul (Acts 16:10-12; 20:5-16; 27:1-28:16).

• Paul called Luke his "dear friend" and identifies him as a medical doctor (Colossians 4:14), and one of his "fellow workers" (Philemon 24).

• Luke is the only Gentile writer in the New Testament and, for that matter, the entire Bible.

Date and Purpose of Writing

• Acts was written around A.D. 65, about 37 years after the Spirit was first poured out on the Day of Pentecost.

• Luke was therefore writing to a second generation of Christians who were not present at Pentecost.

• He possibly wrote from Rome, where the book of Acts ends and where he spent considerable time with Paul.

• His readers were probably Gentiles and Greek-speaking Jews living far from

Jerusalem, undergoing persecution, and had lost their missionary vision and zeal, with less emphasis on the empowering work of the Spirit.

• Luke certainly wrote to teach history, but his primary intent was to call the church back to its pentecostal and missionary roots.

• He further wrote to teach that the empowering presence of the Spirit comes from a powerful spiritual experience he calls "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16), which he presents as separate from salvation, accompanied by speaking in tongues, and given to empower believers for effective witness.

Interpreting Acts: Three Insights and Two Tools

To interpret Acts properly, one must understand that it belongs to the literary genre of historical narrative. Each of the four New Testament genres, Gospels, Epistles, apocalyptic writing and historical narrative, requires its own interpretative approach.

Three Important Insights

• The literary unity of Luke-Acts. Acts is the second part of a two-part work. Acts 1:1 calls the Gospel of Luke Luke's "former book".

• The theological character of Acts. Luke wrote not only as a historian but as a Spirit-inspired theologian, so Acts, properly interpreted, is a legitimate source for normative doctrine.

• The theological independence of Luke. We must not impose Paul's teaching on Luke without first letting Luke speak for himself. Only then can we harmonize the two and get the New Testament's full teaching on the Holy Spirit.

Two Important Tools

• Biblical theology. The biblical theologian approaches Scripture diachronically, that is, across time, seeking how God has progressively revealed himself, and allows each biblical author to speak for himself.

• Narrative theology. An orderly approach to interpreting the historical portions of Scripture, using the literary principles and rules an author employs in composing historical narratives.

The Interpretative Key

Many Bible commentators have cited Acts 1:8 as the key verse of the book. We call it the interpretative key to Acts, because this verse helps to "unlock" our understanding of the entire book. It does this by introducing two key concepts.

1. The Empowerment-Witness Motif

• The first and most important concept is in the first half of the verse: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses..."

• A motif is a pattern of words, concepts, or events repeated throughout a work.

• This pattern is repeated again and again as we progress through Acts.

• This pattern reveals Luke's primary intent in writing the book: to call the church of his day, and ultimately the church of every day, back to its pentecostal and missionary roots.

2. A Table of Contents for the Book

• The second part of Acts 1:8 serves as an outline, a sort of table of contents, for the book: His followers would be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth".

• It also reveals the book's missionary orientation. Luke wrote Acts to record the missionary advance of the church to the ends of the earth.

The Holy Spirit Pattern

Figure 1.2. The empowerment-witness motif: the pattern Luke repeats throughout Acts.

• Holy Spirit: The Spirit comes on believers

• Power: "You will receive power"

• Witness: "You will be my witnesses"

• Mission: The gospel advances to the nations

Acts 1:8 as the Outline of the Book

Using the second part of Acts 1:8, the book of Acts can be outlined in three movements.

Passage · The Witness of the Church · Period

• Passage: Acts 1:1-8:1. The Witness of the Church: In Jerusalem. Period: The Jewish mission

• Passage: Acts 8:1-12:25. The Witness of the Church: In Judea and Samaria. Period: The transitional period

• Passage: Acts 13:1-28:31. The Witness of the Church: To the ends of the earth. Period: The Gentile mission

Eight Guidelines for Interpreting Acts

• All Scripture, including the historical portions, is inspired by God and is useful for doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16).

• Luke's writings belong to the literary genre of historical narrative.

• Luke wrote as a Spirit-inspired historian, a Spirit-inspired theologian, and a Spirit-inspired missiologist or student of missions.

• The disciplines of biblical theology and narrative theology must be employed in interpreting Acts.

• Luke had his own Spirit-inspired agenda and purposes in writing Luke-Acts.

• Luke, like any biblical writer, must first be understood on his own terms, and only then should his teachings be related to those of other biblical writers.

• In writing his histories, Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was selective and subjective in his choice of material.

• Luke's primary intent for writing Acts is revealed in Acts 1:8.

The Missions Focus of Acts

• Luke wrote as a Spirit-inspired missiologist, a student of missions. Missionary themes dominate the book.

• Luke has much to say about the Gentile nations, mentioned forty-four times in Acts, and the church's responsibility to reach them (Acts 1:8; 13:46; 26:20; 28:28).

• He structures the entire book of Acts around Jesus' strategic missionary

pronouncement in Acts 1:8.

• In chapter 19 he summarizes Paul's missionary strategy, a strategy the apostle used throughout the Roman Empire.

• Understanding the missions focus of Acts is essential to understanding the message of Acts.

Conclusion

Acts can therefore be properly viewed as a missions manual. In it you can find methods and strategies to guide you in fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ. It is more than the simple story of the missionary advance of the first-century church; it is a divinely-inspired guidebook of how that advance was accomplished in the first century and how it should be accomplished today.

Important Terms

Mission. God's own purpose: to call a people to himself out of every nation.

Missions. Everything the church does to carry out God's mission.

Missio Dei. Latin for the mission of God.

Hermeneutical issues. The problems we run into when working out what a Bible passage means.

Literary. To do with books and writings.

Genre. A kind or type.

Literary genre. A type of writing, such as history, poetry or letters. Each type has its own rules of interpretation.

Theological. To do with the study of God and God's dealings with people.

Historical narrative. A true story told as history. Acts belongs to this type of writing.

Biblical theology. Reading the Bible across time, letting each writer speak for himself.

Narrative theology. An orderly way of interpreting the story parts of the Bible.

Normative doctrine. A teaching that applies to everyone, in every time.

Subsequence. The teaching that Spirit baptism comes after, and is separate from, being born again.

Initial evidence. The teaching that everyone baptized in the Spirit will speak in tongues.

Motif. A pattern that keeps repeating through a book.

Interpretative key. The verse that unlocks the meaning of the whole book. For Acts, this is Acts 1:8.

Key People

• The Holy Spirit: The central character and champion of the book, revealed in Acts as the Spirit of missions.

• Luke: The author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. A medical doctor, Paul's dear friend and travel companion, and the only Gentile writer in the Bible.

• Theophilus: The man to whom Luke addressed both volumes. The name means "lover of God". Probably a Greek believer of wealth and influence, and Luke's literary patron.

• Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul: The human main characters, who change as the story of Acts progresses.

Key Places

• Jerusalem: Where the witness of the church begins: the Jewish mission (Acts 1:1-8:1).

• Judea and Samaria: The second stage of witness: the transitional period (Acts 8:1-12:25).

• The ends of the earth: The ultimate scope of God's mission: the Gentile mission (Acts 13:1-28:31).

• Rome: The capital city of the Roman Empire, where the book of Acts ends.

Key Event

The writing of Acts, around A.D. 65, to call the church back to its pentecostal and missionary roots.

Luke wrote to a second generation of believers who were under persecution and had lost their missionary vision and zeal. By telling them how the church began, and how it triumphed in the power of the Spirit, he hoped to encourage them to do the same.

Key Verse

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

Remember This

• The Holy Spirit is the divine Hero of Acts. He is the Spirit of missions.

• Mission is God's purpose. Missions is what the church does to fulfil it.

• Acts 1:8 is the interpretative key to Acts.

Life Application

The author states the aim of this study plainly: the goal is more than simply to gain knowledge about the early church. It is to have the same spiritual experiences those first believers had, and to put into practice in our own lives and ministries the same practices they put into theirs.

• Ask the question the author asks of every passage: how should their ministry influence my ministry today?

• Do not read Acts only as history. Expect the Spirit to work in the same way today.

• Treat Acts as a missions manual, and look for methods and strategies for fulfilling the Great Commission.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. Why would "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" be a more appropriate title for the book of Acts than "The Acts of the Apostles"?

• 2. Give three reasons why it is important to study and teach the book of Acts.

• 3. How can the book of Acts serve as a book of missionary strategy for the church today?

• 4. How does Acts 1:8 serve as the interpretative key to the book of Acts? How can you use this concept in your study of the book of Acts?

Quick Review

1. Who wrote the book of Acts?

Answer: Luke, the same author as the Gospel of Luke. He is the only Gentile writer in the Bible.

2. To whom is Acts addressed?

Answer: Theophilus, whose name means lover of God.

3. What is the difference between mission and missions?

Answer: Mission is God's own purpose, the missio Dei. Missions is all the church does to fulfil that purpose.

4. What literary genre does Acts belong to?

Answer: Historical narrative.

5. Which verse is the interpretative key to Acts?

Answer: Acts 1:8.

Chapter Summary

The Holy Spirit is the central character of Acts, and Acts is the story of His work in the mission of God.

• Luke wrote Acts around A.D. 65 to call the church back to its pentecostal and missionary roots.

• Acts belongs to the genre of historical narrative and must be interpreted using biblical theology and narrative theology.

• Acts 1:8 gives both the empowerment-witness motif and the outline of the whole book.

Acts is a missions manual. Study it to find the methods and strategies God uses to advance His mission through a Spirit-empowered church.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Acts is the Spirit-inspired story of the Spirit-empowered mission of the church, and Acts 1:8 is the key that unlocks it.

CHAPTER 2 · UNIT 1 · DAY 1

Preparation for Pentecost

The background of Pentecost, Jesus' departure, the Upper Room experience, and the selection of Judas' replacement

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 2)

Chapter purpose. This chapter studies Acts 1, which serves as a programmatic introduction to the whole book. It sets the tone, states Luke's purpose in Acts 1:8, and shows how the disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Spirit.

Chapter 1 introduced Acts 1:8 as the interpretative key. Chapter 2 now works through Acts 1 itself and shows how that key verse writes the programme for the entire book, and how the disciples obeyed the command to wait.

Bible reading: Acts 1:1-26

Read the whole of Acts chapter 1 before the lesson. Parts of this chapter cannot be fully understood without a clear and current recollection of the biblical text.

Learning Objectives

• Explain the five functions the first eleven verses of Acts perform in Luke's narrative.

• Explain Jesus' final command to His church and how it fits with His command to go.

• Describe the meaning of being "baptized in" the Holy Spirit.

• Name the seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts.

• Show from Luke-Acts how prayer is associated with receiving the Holy Spirit.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 1:1-26

Keep your Bible open to Acts 1 throughout this lesson.

The Big Idea

The mission of God can only be successfully accomplished in the power of the Spirit.

Acts 1:1-11: A Programmatic Introduction

The first eleven verses of Acts serve as a programmatic introduction to the entire work. They set the tone and "write the program" for all that will follow.

Five Functions of Acts 1:1-11

• They summarize and finalize the work of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Luke (vv. 1-2).

• They serve as a narrative bridge between Luke's two volumes (compare Luke 24:44-53).

• They reveal Luke's authorial intent and introduce the key theme of the work (1:8).

• They provide a "table of contents" for the book (1:8).

• They introduce five overarching themes that will reappear throughout the book (vv. 1-11).

The Story: Acts 1:1-3

Luke begins his book by reminding his readers of his former work, the Gospel of Luke. He summarizes Jesus' ministry as a ministry of "doing" and "teaching." After His resurrection, Jesus remained with His disciples for forty days teaching them about the kingdom of God. Then as His concluding act of ministry, Jesus gave final instructions through the Holy Spirit to His apostles.

Commentary on Acts 1:1-3

1:1 Theophilus

• Luke addresses his book to Theophilus, the same man he calls "most excellent Theophilus" in Luke 1:3. In Acts the title "most excellent" is used of nobility and political leaders (Acts 24:3; 26:25).

• Theophilus, which means "lover of God," was probably a Greek believer, a man of considerable wealth and influence, and Luke's literary patron.

• Although Luke and Acts are addressed to a single person, they were written to a larger audience. More broadly, Acts has a message for all "lovers of God."

1:1 In my former book

• Luke's "former book" is his Gospel, which described what Jesus began to do and teach before His ascension.

• The implication is that this second volume is about what Jesus continued to do and teach after His ascension.

• In Luke, Jesus carried out His ministry through the direction and power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18-19; compare Acts 10:38). In Acts He continued His ministry through His church, which was also directed and empowered by the Spirit.

• The phrase "do and teach" summarizes Jesus' entire ministry. It was a ministry of powerful words and mighty works.

1:2 Instructions through the Holy Spirit

• Even after His death and resurrection, Jesus still carried out His ministry under the impulse of the Spirit.

• The Holy Spirit's active role in empowering and inspiring ministry is a key theme of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

• As the Superintendent of the Harvest, the Holy Spirit, having anointed and guided Jesus' ministry, will now anoint and guide the global mission of the church.

1:3 He showed himself... that he was alive

• At the very beginning of Acts, Luke refers to the death and resurrection of Jesus. These two pivotal events represent the core of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-6) and the paramount message of the church.

• Luke immediately informs his readers that the church's witness is to the gospel, and that the central message of the gospel is the death and resurrection of Christ. This is the message we must forcefully and faithfully proclaim to the nations.

1:3 Spoke about the kingdom of God

• The kingdom of God is the overarching context for the book of Acts.

• Luke shows this by using a narrative strategy known as inclusio: framing his story inside key parallel statements about the kingdom of God (1:3; 28:23, 31).

• Once he does this, it is no longer necessary to mention the kingdom each time it applies. The kingdom of God is assumed to be the context of everything within the frame.

• Luke uses the phrase kingdom of God thirty-two times in his Gospel. For Luke, to proclaim the kingdom is equivalent to preaching the gospel (Acts 8:12; 28:23, 31).

The Story: The Spirit Is Promised (Acts 1:4-8)

During His last meeting with His disciples, Jesus gave them final instructions. They were to wait in Jerusalem for the promised outpouring of the Spirit. In a few days they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit. As a result, they would receive supernatural power, enabling them to take the gospel to Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

When the disciples asked Jesus about Israel's future participation in the kingdom of God, He instead pointed them to the task at hand: Spirit-empowered witness to the nations.

Commentary on Acts 1:4-8

1:4 "Stay!" and "Go!"

• Jesus issues a final command before returning to the Father: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised." This parallels Luke 24:49: "Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

• During the past forty days Jesus had repeatedly told His disciples to "Go!" With each restatement of the Great Commission is a command to go (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

• But now, in His final words, He commands them, "Stay!" The lesson is this: before they could effectively obey the first command, they would have to explicitly obey the second.

• Jesus left His church with a humanly impossible task, the evangelization of all nations before He comes again. It was a job beyond their capability and ours. They would therefore need supernatural help.

• We too, if we are going to effectively reach the lost with the gospel, must carefully obey both commands.

1:4 The gift my Father promised

• The phrase translated "the gift my Father promised" (Greek ten epangelian tou patros) is literally "the promise of the Father."

• Jesus is likely referring to the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit in Joel 2:28-29, since that was the passage Peter quoted at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18).

• He could also have been referring to His earlier promise that the "Father in heaven [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

• Joel generalized the promise: it is for "all people." Jesus specified: although the promise is potentially for all people, it is specifically for those children of the Father who earnestly ask for it (Luke 11:9-13).

1:5 Baptized in the Holy Spirit

• This phrase could be better translated "baptized in (Greek en) the Holy Spirit."

• Just as John baptized in water, Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit. This statement references John the Baptist in Luke 3:16.

• In this metaphor Jesus is the baptizer and the Holy Spirit is the element into which one is baptized.

• Paul uses the same metaphor for a different baptism, baptism into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). In Paul's metaphor the Spirit is the baptizer and the body of Christ is the element.

1:6 Restore the kingdom to Israel

• The disciples were correct in connecting Jesus' teaching concerning the Holy Spirit with the kingdom of God; however, their timing and focus were wrong.

• Jesus' immediate concern was that they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit so they might receive power to participate in advancing God's kingdom on the earth.

1:8 You will receive power, and you will be my witnesses

• Acts 1:8 serves as the hermeneutical key to the book of Acts, and can be divided into two parts.

• The first half reveals Luke's empowerment-witness motif: "you will receive power," and as a result, "you will be my witnesses." This is the key to Luke's primary intent in writing Acts, and is repeated many times throughout the book.

• The second half ("in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth") functions as a programmatic outline for Acts. It writes a program or "table of contents" for the entire book.

• The second part also reveals Luke's secondary purpose: to trace the church's geographical progress from Jerusalem to Rome, and to show how the church moved from being a localized Jewish sect into a universal body of believers, encompassing both Jews and Gentiles.

• To the ends of the earth. The ultimate scope of God's mission is "the ends of the earth" (Greek eschatou tes ges). Every person from every nation and language and from every age in history is the object of His loving concern and grace. Every person must therefore hear the good news of Christ. It is for this great purpose that the Spirit empowers Christ's disciples.

Table 2.1: The Seven Key Outpourings

The empowerment-witness pattern of Acts 1:8 is most dramatically demonstrated in seven key outpourings. Each of these outpourings resulted in powerful missional witness. Note that the author places the Antiochian "outpouring" in quotation marks.

· Outpouring · Scripture · Period in Acts

• #: 1. Outpouring: Pentecost, the first Jerusalem outpouring. Scripture: Acts 2:1-4. Period in Acts: The Jewish mission

• #: 2. Outpouring: The second Jerusalem outpouring. Scripture: Acts 4:31. Period in Acts: The Jewish mission

• #: 3. Outpouring: The Samaritan outpouring. Scripture: Acts 8:14-17. Period in Acts: The transitional period

• #: 4. Outpouring: The Damascene outpouring. Scripture: Acts 9:15-18. Period in Acts: The transitional period

• #: 5. Outpouring: The Caesarean outpouring. Scripture: Acts 10:44-48. Period in

Acts: The transitional period

• #: 6. Outpouring: The Antiochian "outpouring". Scripture: Acts 13:1-3. Period in Acts: The Gentile mission

• #: 7. Outpouring: The Ephesian outpouring. Scripture: Acts 19:1-7. Period in Acts: The Gentile mission

Life Application

The command of Jesus to wait for the promise of the Father was not only for those first disciples in Jerusalem. It is also for all believers of every age until Jesus comes again (compare Luke 11:9-13).

We, like those early believers, must seek the face of God until the Holy Spirit comes upon us. Only then will we be adequately equipped to be His witnesses at home and "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Story: Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11)

Having promised His disciples power, Jesus ascended into heaven. As He disappeared from their sight, two men (angels) appeared before them. The angels challenged them, "Why are you standing here staring into the sky? This same Jesus will come again in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Commentary on Acts 1:9-11

1:9 He was taken up

• Jesus' ascension receives only brief mention in the Gospels (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51). Here Luke adds more detail.

• Jesus was "taken up before their very eyes," that is, He ascended visibly and bodily into heaven.

• In Acts this story sets the stage for the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (2:33). It is one of the "many convincing proofs" that Jesus was alive (1:3).

1:11 Why do you stand looking?

• These words of the angels come as a challenge to the staring disciples.

• While there is an appropriate time to stand and gaze on the Lord's glory (2

Corinthians 3:18), such activity can never serve as a substitute for obedience to His clear commands.

• The disciples had been commanded to return to Jerusalem and wait to receive power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5), and they needed to obey quickly.

• Throughout Acts, angels intervened in the mission of God. They often urged the disciples to "go" and bear witness to Christ (5:19-20; 8:26).

1:11 This same Jesus will come back

• This statement introduces the eschatological context of the book of Acts.

• Since "this same Jesus... will come back," there is an urgency about the disciples' mission.

• The entire book of Acts, as well as the entire New Testament, has an eschatological, or last-days, context: "He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything" (Acts 3:21).

• Luke spoke often on eschatology and the second coming of Christ (Luke 12:35-40; 13:34-35; 21:25-36; 22:16; Acts 1:10-11; 2:17; 3:19-21).

Further Insight: Five Key Themes Introduced in Acts 1

The first eleven verses function in Acts much as a legal or academic abstract. They outline the major elements of what is to follow. Five key themes are introduced which occur again and again throughout Acts.

• The kingdom of God. Luke mentions it twice in these verses: in verse 3 Jesus "spoke about the kingdom of God"; in verse 6 the disciples inquired about the restoration of "the kingdom to Israel."

• The global mission of the church. Jesus told His disciples that "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (v. 8). Acts is principally the story of the church fulfilling its God-ordained mission of taking the gospel to the nations.

• The necessity of Spirit empowering. In verses 4-5 Jesus commanded them to wait for the gift the Father promised, and in verse 8 promised them power. The mission of God can only be successfully accomplished in the power of the Spirit.

• The Holy Spirit guiding the work of missions. Verse 2 says Jesus gave orders to

the disciples through the Holy Spirit. Throughout Acts one reads of the Spirit inspiring, guiding, and directing the work of missions. Luke presents Him as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• The urgency of the missionary task. In verse 11 the angels chided the disciples: "Men of Galilee,... why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus... will come back." In Acts the work of missions is carried out in anticipation of Christ's soon return.

The Story: In the Upper Room (Acts 1:12-26)

In obedience to Jesus' command, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. There they entered an upper room where they resided, prayed, and conducted business.

In their group were the eleven apostles: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. Also with them were Mary the mother of Jesus, Jesus' brothers, and a group of women. The total number of believers was about 120. "They all joined together constantly in prayer" (1:14).

One day Peter stood and proposed to the group that Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Jesus and then committed suicide, be replaced. His replacement must be a man who had been with the disciples during Jesus' entire ministry. The group then nominated two men, Joseph called Barsabbas and Matthias. After prayer, they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias, who was added to the eleven apostles.

Commentary on Acts 1:12-26

1:13 Upstairs to the room where they were staying

• About 120 disciples gathered with the apostles in the upper room (v. 15).

• Their time was divided between this venue and the temple courts. In the upper room they gathered for prayer and business. They also "stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:53).

1:14 Constantly in prayer

Luke consistently associates the reception of the Holy Spirit with earnest prayer.

• The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus "as He was praying" (Luke 3:21).

• Before the Day of Pentecost the disciples were "continually at the temple praising God" (Luke 24:53) and "constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14).

• Saul spent three days in prayer before Ananias laid hands on him to receive the Spirit (9:9, 11).

• Cornelius "prayed to God regularly" (10:2), and Peter also prayed in preparation for the outpouring at Caesarea (v. 9).

• At Antioch the Spirit moved as the church worshiped, prayed, and fasted (13:1-2).

• The Holy Spirit came upon the Samaritans, Saul, and the Ephesian disciples when they were being prayed for (8:17; 9:17-18; 19:6).

• Anyone who desires to be filled with the Holy Spirit should thus commit himself or herself to earnest and expectant prayer to God.

1:14 Along with the women

• Women were among those who were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost.

• Throughout his two-volume work, Luke often focuses on the significance of women in fulfilling the mission of God (Luke 8:1-3; 23:49, 55; 24:1-12, 22; Acts 5:14; 8:12; 16:13-15; 17:4).

• He makes it clear that women can be filled with the Spirit and effectively used by God in gospel ministry (Acts 1:14; 2:17-18; 18:18-19, 26; 21:9).

1:22 One of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection

• In the upper room Peter makes it clear that "it is necessary" to choose a replacement for Judas.

• One reason was to return the number of disciples to the original twelve.

• But the key reason for the choice seems to be witness to the gospel, for Peter said that the one chosen "must become a witness... of his resurrection."

Important Terms

Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the baptizer and the Holy Spirit is what the believer is immersed in. It brings power for witness.

The promise of the Father. The gift Jesus told the disciples to wait for, that is, the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Inclusio. A writing technique where an author frames a story between two matching statements, so the idea in those statements covers everything in between.

Episode. One specific story inside a bigger series of stories.

Superintendent of the Harvest. Luke's picture of the Holy Spirit as the one who directs and oversees the work of missions.

Eschatological. To do with the last days and the return of Christ.

Key People

• Jesus: Gives final instructions through the Holy Spirit, promises power, then ascends bodily into heaven.

• The eleven apostles: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

• Mary the mother of Jesus, and the women: Present in the upper room. Women were among those filled with the Spirit at Pentecost.

• Peter: Proposes that a replacement be chosen for Judas, whose key qualification is witness to the resurrection.

• Matthias: Chosen by lot to replace Judas Iscariot, and added to the eleven apostles.

• Joseph called Barsabbas: The other man nominated to replace Judas.

Key Places

• Jerusalem: Where the disciples were commanded to stay and wait for the gift the Father promised.

• The Upper Room: Where about 120 believers resided, prayed, and conducted business.

• The temple courts: The disciples "stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:53).

Key Event

Jesus commands the disciples, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised," and then ascends into heaven.

Jesus had repeatedly said "Go!" Now He says "Stay!" Before they could effectively obey the first command, they had to explicitly obey the second.

Key Verse

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about."

Acts 1:4

Remember This

• Jesus said "Go", but first He said "Stay". Obey the second command in order to obey the first.

• The mission of God can only be successfully accomplished in the power of the Spirit.

• Luke consistently associates the reception of the Holy Spirit with earnest prayer.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. To whom is the book of Acts addressed? Was it meant only for him? How might it be relevant to you?

• 2. What was Jesus' final command to His church before returning to heaven? How can this command be reconciled with His repeated command to "go"? How does this command apply to the church today?

• 3. Describe the meaning of "baptized" in the Holy Spirit.

• 4. Cite several texts in Luke-Acts that associate prayer with receiving the Holy Spirit. How do these texts apply to the church today?

Quick Review

1. How many believers gathered in the upper room?

Answer: About 120.

2. Who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot, and how?

Answer: Matthias, chosen by lot after prayer.

3. What was the key qualification for Judas' replacement?

Answer: He had to become a witness of the resurrection of Jesus.

4. In the metaphor of Spirit baptism, who is the baptizer and what is the element?

Answer: Jesus is the baptizer and the Holy Spirit is the element into which one is baptized.

5. How many key outpourings of the Spirit does the author identify in Acts?

Answer: Seven.

Chapter Summary

Before the church could go, it had to wait. Spirit empowering is the necessary preparation for mission.

• Acts 1:1-11 is a programmatic introduction that writes the plan for the whole book and introduces five key themes.

• Jesus commanded the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high".

• Luke identifies seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts, each resulting in powerful missional witness.

Commit yourself to earnest, expectant prayer for the Holy Spirit, because the reception of the Spirit is consistently associated with prayer in Luke-Acts.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Acts 1 gives the programme for the whole book: wait for the Spirit, receive power, and be witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER 3 · UNIT 2 · DAY 1

The Day of Pentecost

The Spirit poured out at Pentecost, Peter's Spirit-inspired witness, the promise of the Spirit, a new prophetic community, and Spirit-empowered witness in Jerusalem

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 3)

Chapter purpose. This chapter examines the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and observes how it resulted in immediate, powerful, prophetic witness in the city. It also looks at the nature of that witness, which included Spirit-inspired proclamation and also Spirit-empowered demonstration.

In the last chapter we observed the church getting ready for Pentecost. Jesus commanded His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This chapter takes up the outpouring itself and the witness that followed.

Bible reading: Acts 2:1-4:22

Before beginning these lessons, read Acts 2:1-4:22. Each part of the lesson also has its own shorter reading: Acts 2:1-13, Acts 2:14-36, Acts 2:37-41, Acts 2:42-47, Acts 3:1-26, and Acts 4:1-22.

Learning Objectives

• Explain why the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the defining event in the book of Acts.

• State whether the 120 spoke in tongues before or after they were filled with the Spirit, and explain the significance of this fact.

• State the purpose for which the Spirit was given at Pentecost (Acts 1:8).

• Name the prophet Peter quoted at Pentecost and describe what that prophecy said would result from the Spirit being poured out on people.

• Show from the context of Acts 2:38-39, and from Peter's refilling in 4:8, that Luke is speaking of empowerment rather than conversion.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 2:1-4:22

Read the whole assignment before the chapter. Then read each shorter portion before its own part of the lesson: Acts 2:1-13, Acts 2:14-36, Acts 2:37-41, Acts 2:42-47, Acts 3:1-26, and Acts 4:1-22.

The Big Idea

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the defining event in the book of Acts.

The Story: The Spirit Is Poured Out (Acts 2:1-13)

On the day of the Jewish feast of Pentecost, God poured out His Spirit on the gathered disciples. The Spirit's coming was accompanied by two remarkable phenomena: a sound from heaven like the blowing of a mighty wind, followed by the appearance of a mass of flames that came to rest above the group. The mass then divided itself into individual tongues of fire, with one tongue coming to rest on each disciple.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the wonders of God in various Gentile languages. These languages were recognized by Jewish pilgrims who had gathered for Pentecost from throughout the then-known world. The crowd's reaction to the disciples' speaking in tongues was mixed: some were amazed, asking, "What does this mean?" Others mocked.

Commentary on Acts 2:1-13

2:1 When the day of Pentecost came

• Pentecost was one of three annual pilgrim feasts of the Jews which every Jewish male in the area was required to attend. The other two pilgrim feasts were Passover and Tabernacles.

• The word "Pentecost" (Greek pentecostos) means fiftieth. Pentecost took place fifty days after Passover.

• It was also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), and the Feast of First Fruits (Exodus 23:19).

• Tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims gathered from all over the Roman Empire to attend this important feast.

2:1 They were all together in one place

• The place where the disciples gathered is traditionally believed to be the upper room mentioned in 1:13.

• More recent scholarship has generally located the place of the Spirit's outpouring as the temple mount, probably in the Court of the Gentiles, since this was the only building in Jerusalem large enough to contain the crowd of possibly thirty to forty thousand people who gathered to hear Peter's sermon.

• About three thousand were saved at the conclusion of Peter's sermon. If that number represented ten percent of the crowd, then the size of the crowd must have been at least thirty thousand.

• Luke also says that the disciples spent considerable time in the temple before Pentecost (Luke 24:53).

• Wherever the disciples gathered, they were there in obedience to the command of Jesus to wait in Jerusalem to be "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; compare Acts 1:4-8).

2:2-3 A violent wind... tongues of fire

• The outpouring of the Spirit was accompanied by two supernatural wonders, one "in the heaven above," the other "on the earth below" (2:19).

• These wonders indicate that a theophany, a visual manifestation of the presence of God, was occurring.

• The first wonder was a sudden sound from heaven "like the blowing of a violent wind." This deafening blast was likely heard throughout Jerusalem, especially on the temple mount, where it occurred (v. 6).

• The origin of the sound being "from heaven" indicates that God had come powerfully on the scene. It reminds us of the words of Jesus: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it" (John 3:8, NKJV).

• As Jesus had earlier breathed on the eleven disciples, God was now breathing on

the 120 (compare John 20:20-22; Job 4:9; 33:4), and His breath sounded like a violent wind from heaven.

2:2 The missional purpose of the wind

• The sound of a mighty wind speaks to the missional purpose of the Spirit's outpouring, as first revealed in 1:8.

• Wind is one of the most powerful elements in all of nature, as recent hurricanes have underscored.

• Jesus said that the global missionary work of the church is to be carried out in the power of the Spirit.

• He also described the Spirit's redemptive works as like the wind, sovereign in their movement and ceaseless in their activity (compare John 3:8).

• The Spirit works tirelessly throughout the world inspiring and empowering the church, revealing Christ to the lost, and drawing people unto Him.

2:3 Tongues of fire

• A second wonder occurred at Pentecost: the appearance of "what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them" (v. 3).

• Judging from the wording of the text, the appearance of fire first came to rest over the disciples' heads as one great fiery mass. It then divided itself, and an individual tongue of fire came to rest on each of the waiting disciples.

• In the Old Testament, fire is sometimes used as a symbol of God's presence (Exodus 3:2; 19:18).

• According to Stanley Horton (1996, 31), "The fire here signified God's acceptance of the Church Body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 3:16), and then, the acceptance of the individual believers as also being temples of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)."

• No longer would people be required to come to the temple in Jerusalem to meet the living God, but now "living temples" of God would take the gospel to all nations in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit

• The Holy Spirit, who had come upon the disciples, now entered into them and

filled them with His power and presence.

• The disciples' being "filled with the Spirit" is a direct fulfillment of Jesus' command and prophecy in Acts 1:4-8, where He described their coming experience as receiving "the gift my Father promised" (v. 4), being "baptized with [in] the Holy Spirit" (v. 5), and as the moment "when the Holy Spirit comes upon [them]" (v. 8).

• In Acts, Luke often uses these and other select terms interchangeably in describing the experience of Spirit baptism.

• The purpose of their being filled with the Spirit is not for conversion but empowerment for missional witness, as Jesus predicted in 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses."

• The metaphor of being "filled with the Spirit" suggests the pervasiveness of the experience. When one is baptized in the Spirit, the Spirit fills and pervades every area of his or her being.

• Each time in Acts that the Spirit of God was poured out on a group of people, they were all filled (2:4; 4:31; 8:17; 10:44; 19:6, implied), thus indicating that the experience is for all believers.

• Every believer must be filled with the Spirit because every believer is called to be a witness for Christ (Acts 1:8).

2:4 Began to speak in other tongues

• The 120 disciples' speaking in tongues at Pentecost was the immediate and direct effect of their being filled with, or baptized in, the Holy Spirit.

• This is the first of three explicit references to people being filled with the Spirit and speaking in tongues in Acts (compare 10:46; 19:6).

• On two other occasions in Acts where people are initially filled with the Spirit, speaking in tongues is a logical implication (8:17-19; compare 9:17-18 with 1 Corinthians 14:18).

• Luke presents speaking in tongues as the universal sign of one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• The disciples' speaking in the tongues of the surrounding Gentile nations (fifteen

are mentioned) testifies to the purpose of the gift. It reminds us of Jesus' ultimate focus in Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8 on "all nations" and "the ends of the earth."

• The purpose of Spirit baptism, as presented by Luke both in his gospel and in Acts, is empowerment for missional witness.

2:5 From every nation under heaven

• Luke informs his readers that people "from every nation under heaven" were gathered on the Day of Pentecost. Luke uses hyperbole to make a point.

• According to John R. W. Stott (1990, 68), "Although all the nations of the world were not present literally, they were representatively."

• The list of nations in verses 9-11 points back to the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10 and includes descendants of all three of Noah's sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

• We are reminded of Jesus' words that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

2:6 Each... in his own native language

• The missional purpose of Spirit baptism is again emphasized in this verse.

• Those who spoke in these fifteen languages, as well as those who speak in the thousands of other languages throughout the world, are all objects of God's loving concern.

• They must all, therefore, remain the focus of the church's mission (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 5:9; 7:9).

2:11 Declaring the wonders of God

• Having been filled with the Spirit, the 120 begin to declare the wonders of God to the gathering crowd in their own native tongues.

• While many have interpreted the disciples' speaking in tongues as Spirit-inspired praise, the text clearly indicates Spirit-empowered proclamation.

• Whether worship or proclamation, the purpose is witness, for why else would the Spirit have caused them to speak in the languages of those gathered for the Feast of Pentecost?

Further Insight: The Significance of Pentecost

Is Pentecost the "birthday of the church"?

• This is a widely accepted opinion concerning the Day of Pentecost.

• Many contemporary pentecostal scholars, however, reject this view, pointing out that there is no scriptural text stating that this is the case.

• The church, rather than being born at Pentecost, emerged when Jesus first began to call His disciples to follow Him (compare Matthew 4:18-22; 9:9; 18:17).

What Pentecost is

• Pentecost is the moment in time when the church was first empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out its God-given mandate to take the gospel to all nations (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8).

• Pentecost should thus serve as a lasting model for the church of every age until Jesus comes again (Acts 1:11).

• Believers today should ask for, and expect to receive, the very same empowering experience as those first-century believers at Pentecost. And they should expect it for the same purpose: empowerment for mission.

Pentecost and conversion

• Pentecost is an early indication in Acts that Spirit baptism is an experience distinct from conversion.

• The disciples were already converted before Pentecost.

• Their command from Jesus was not to wait for the new birth, but to wait until they were empowered by the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8).

• The experience, in Luke's view, is not for sinners but for God's children (Luke 11:9-13; compare John 14:7).

The Story: Peter's Spirit-Inspired Witness (Acts 2:14-36)

Responding to the cry of the gathered crowd (2:12, "What does this mean?") Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, stood and addressed them. He informed them that the disciples were not drunk, as some had asserted, but full of the Spirit, as prophesied by the Hebrew prophet Joel.

According to Peter, these disciples' filling with the Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. It was also an indication that the last days had surely arrived. Quoting the ancient prophet, Peter proclaimed that the experience was not only for these disciples, but for all people: men and women, old and young, rich and poor, until Jesus comes again. As a result of this outpouring, the door is opened for all people to call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

Having explained the meaning of the events of Pentecost, Peter launched into a proclamation of the gospel. He began by recounting the ministry of Jesus, noting that it was accredited by miracles, wonders, and signs. His crucifixion, though carried out by wicked men, was part of God's plan. And His resurrection was inevitable, since it was "impossible for death to keep hold on him."

Peter cites two Psalms of David (Psalms 16:8-11; 110:1), claiming that these prophecies could only have been speaking of Christ, who alone was resurrected and exalted to the right hand of God. There, He received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, which He had now poured out on these disciples. Peter concluded: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (2:36).

Commentary on Acts 2:14-21: Prophecy Fulfilled

• Just as Jesus' Nazareth Proclamation (Luke 4:18-19) interpreted and explained the meaning of His anointing with the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River (3:21-22), Peter's Pentecost Proclamation interpreted and explained the meaning of the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost.

• Just as Jesus' anointing was for missional witness ("The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor..."), the disciples' empowering at Pentecost was also for missional witness (Acts 1:8).

2:14 Peter... raised his voice and addressed the crowd

• As Jesus had promised, the outpouring of the Spirit resulted in powerful Spirit-anointed witness.

• The Greek word from which "addressed" is translated (apophthengomai) is the same word translated "enabled" in 2:4.

• Peter was not merely preaching a sermon, at least not in the traditional sense. He was uttering forth, the literal meaning, a Spirit-inspired prophetic message.

• This is therefore a Lukan example of the gift of prophecy in action. Luke defines prophecy as Spirit-empowered proclamation of the gospel.

• The primary purpose of Spirit baptism is kerygmatic (the Greek word meaning proclamation), bringing inspiration and empowerment to bear effective witness to the gospel.

2:16 This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel

• In explaining the meaning of the disciples' reception of the Spirit, Peter quoted from Joel 2:28-29.

• The disciples' speaking in tongues was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would "pour out [His] Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:17-18).

2:17 The last days

• The context of Acts is eschatological, the biblical study of the last days, just as is the context of the entire New Testament.

• The events of Pentecost demonstrate conclusively that the last days had indeed dawned. They began with the first coming of Christ and will continue until He comes again.

• The last days are thus defined as the Age of the Spirit.

• The missionary ministry of the church in Acts is carried out in anticipation of Christ's soon coming (Acts 1:11).

2:17 I will pour out my Spirit on all people

• Under the old covenant, the Spirit was given to select individuals, at select times, for select purposes.

• Now the Spirit is poured out generously on all people.

• The gift of the Spirit is therefore universally available to all who will sincerely ask for it (Luke 11:9-13).

2:17 Your sons and daughters will prophesy

• The gift of the Spirit, and its empowering result, is available to women as well as men.

• Luke sees women as equal participants in the church's prophetic mission of taking the gospel to all nations (compare Luke 1:41-42; 2:36; Acts 18:26; 21:9).

2:18 And they will prophesy

• These words are not found in Joel's prophecy but were added by Peter as he spoke under the Spirit's inspiration.

• The apostle seems to be making the point that the disciples' speaking in tongues was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

• Speaking in tongues is thus identified as prophetic, or Spirit-inspired, speech.

• Pentecost is the initial fulfillment of Moses' wish that "all the Lord's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29).

• The age of the prophethood of all believers had dawned (Stronstad, 2003). The unique sign of this new community of prophets is speaking in tongues.

2:20 The coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord

• Luke again emphasizes the eschatological context of the book of Acts.

• Spirit-empowered witness to the nations must continue until Christ returns.

2:21 Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved

• The ultimate purpose of the Spirit's outpouring is to bring people to faith in Christ.

• The Spirit-empowered witness of the church will result in people calling on the name of the Lord and being saved.

Commentary on Acts 2:22-36: The Gospel Proclaimed

The "apostolic kerygma"

This Spirit-anointed message of Peter, along with his message in 3:11-26, establishes a pattern for preaching the gospel in Acts. This pattern is often called the "apostolic kerygma."

• The proclamation that Jesus is Lord and Christ, who was crucified, raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Father (2:22-36; 3:13-15).

• An announcement that the Spirit has been poured out on all believers (2:16-18, 32-33; 3:19).

• An encouragement to expect the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38-39).

• A declaration that Jesus will return (3:20-21).

• A call to faith and repentance (2:36-38; 3:19).

• All these elements should be found in our preaching today.

2:22 Jesus... a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs

• Jesus was the central message of all apostolic preaching.

• Peter is saying that God placed His stamp of approval on Jesus' life, ministry, and message by working through Him in miracles, wonders, and signs.

• These miraculous works, according to Luke, were done through the power of the Spirit (Acts 10:38).

• The Spirit who had worked through Jesus was now working through His Spirit-empowered servants. The Spirit would accredit their message in the same way He had accredited Jesus' message.

• A "miracle" (Greek dynamis) is a demonstration of God's power.

• A "wonder" (Greek teras) is the effect of the miracle on the hearts and minds of the observers.

• A "sign" (Greek semeion) is a miracle that attests to or confirms the message of the gospel and demonstrates the power of the kingdom of God.

2:24 Nailing him to the cross... God raised him from the dead

• The death and resurrection of Christ are two essential elements of all gospel preaching (compare 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

2:32 We are all witnesses

• Being a witness is a central theme in Acts. The theme was first introduced in 1:8.

• In Acts, Jesus' disciples are called witnesses at least fourteen times (1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39, 41, 43; 13:31; 14:17; 22:15; 23:11; 26:16).

2:33 The promised Holy Spirit

• This phrase references Jesus' command in 1:4 to wait for the "promise of the Father" (1:4, NKJV; compare Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 2:33, 39).

• The promise of the Father is the promise that God's people will be baptized in and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8; compare Luke 3:15-16; 24:49).

• The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was Jesus' final redemptive act, alongside His death, resurrection, and ascension. This outpouring fulfilled His promises made in John 14:16 and Acts 1:4-5.

2:36 Both Lord and Christ

• The conclusion of the matter is that Jesus is both Lord (Greek Kyrios) and Christ (Greek Christos), or Messiah.

The Story: The Promise of the Spirit (Acts 2:37-41)

Hearing Peter's Spirit-inspired explanation of the events of Pentecost and his proclamation of the gospel, many in the crowd were deeply moved and began to cry out to the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied that they must repent of their sins and follow Christ in water baptism. Then they too could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only could they receive, but everyone from every place and age who will meet these conditions can receive the same gift.

Because of the powerful demonstrations at Pentecost and Peter's powerful proclamation of the gospel, about three thousand people believed in Christ, repented of their sins, were baptized in water, and were added to the church.

Commentary on Acts 2:37-41

• Pentecost is the first example in Acts of Luke's empowerment-witness motif introduced in Acts 1:8.

• The disciples' being filled with the Holy Spirit resulted in powerful prophetic proclamation of the gospel (2:14-41), which then resulted in an immediate and ongoing harvest of souls (vv. 41, 47).

2:37 Brothers, what shall we do?

• Those who listened to Peter's Spirit-anointed message were "cut to the heart," that is, they were brought under strong conviction by the Holy Spirit (compare John 16:8-11).

• As a result, they cried out, "What shall we do?" What they meant was, "What can we do to receive the Messiah and experience what we have seen?"

2:38 Repent and be baptized

• The imperative "repent" (Greek metanoesate) occurs five times in preaching in Acts (2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20).

• Repentance and faith are the essential requirements for salvation (Acts 20:21; compare Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:15), and water baptism is the first step of obedience.

• Water baptism is "the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21) and an outward symbol of the inner work of conversion.

2:38 The gift of the Holy Spirit

• Those who had been born again could now receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

• The gift (singular) of the Holy Spirit is not to be confused with the gifts (plural) of the Spirit. This is the gift of the Spirit himself.

• In Luke's usage the gift of the Spirit is an empowering experience separate from conversion, the purpose of which is empowerment for witness.

• In Acts 1:4-5 Jesus equates it with the promise of the Father and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which the disciples would receive at Pentecost. He said that the reception of this gift would result in power to witness (v. 8).

• It is the same gift that the new believers will receive in Samaria (8:14-17) and the Gentiles will receive in Caesarea (10:44-45; 11:17).

2:39 For you and your children and for all who are far off

• The gift of the Spirit is for all people of every generation until Jesus comes again.

• The phrase "all who are far off" is a reference to the Gentiles (compare 22:21).

2:41 Three thousand were added

• As a result of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the powerful Spirit-empowered witness that followed, three thousand people followed Peter's instructions and were added to the church.

• It is also likely that these same three thousand people were baptized in the Holy

Spirit on the same day, since they followed the instructions of Peter in verse 38 (compare v. 41).

The Story: A New Prophetic Community (Acts 2:42-47)

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost resulted in the creation of a new prophetic community. This community of Spirit-baptized prophets was characterized by devotion to God, to the truth, and to one another.

It was also characterized by the divine presence, evidenced by signs and wonders. The community's powerful inner and outer witness produced continual growth as "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Commentary on Acts 2:42-47

2:42 They devoted themselves

• The inner life of the new prophetic community was one of devotion.

• This devotion was fourfold: to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

• This dynamic community life was the result of the Spirit's working in them individually and in their relationships with one another.

• Their devotion was sustained through ongoing prayer and commitment to the mission of God.

2:43 Many wonders and miraculous signs

• Just as Jesus' ministry was attested to by miraculous signs, so was the ministry of His followers.

• According to Luke, both were the result of their being filled with and empowered by the Spirit.

2:44 Every day they continued to meet together

• The inner life of the new prophetic community was also marked by a strong bond of unity and togetherness.

• This togetherness included daily gatherings in homes and in the temple courts.

• In their home cells they ate and shared communion together. In their public

meetings they gave witness to Christ.

• Always, their gatherings were filled with praise and joy.

2:47 Enjoying the favor of the people

• In accordance with Luke's missionary and Spirit-oriented theme in Acts, the believers' Spirit-generated community life served as a powerful witness to those outside the community of faith.

• People were attracted to the church, and "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

The Story: Spirit-Empowered Witness in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1-26)

At the hour of prayer, Peter and John met a beggar at the Beautiful Gate (the entrance to the Court of the Women) in the temple at Jerusalem. The beggar asked them for money. Peter, however, gave him something better. Through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he took the beggar by the hand and lifted him up; immediately, the man's feet and ankles were healed. In excitement, the man began running through the temple courts praising God.

Because of the healing of the beggar, the people came running to Peter and John. Just as he had done on the Day of Pentecost, Peter seized the opportunity to preach the gospel. He told the people that it was neither his nor John's own power or holiness that had made the man walk. It was the power of the name of the resurrected Jesus.

He then declared the gospel to them, saying that Jesus' death and resurrection were foretold by all the prophets and calling on them to repent of their sins. If they would do this, their sins would be blotted out and God would send "times of refreshing" upon them. They should also look for Jesus to come again from heaven.

All of this, Peter explained, had been foretold by Moses, Samuel, and the other holy prophets. God had even promised Abraham that through his offspring (that is, Jesus) all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. They must now repent. If, however, they did not turn from their wicked ways, they would be cut off.

Commentary on Acts 3:1-26

• Luke concluded his account of the outpouring at Pentecost with a summary statement: "Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles" (v. 43).

• Now he gives a more detailed account of one of those miraculous signs, the healing of a crippled beggar.

• This healing occurred as a result of the disciples being filled with the Spirit at Pentecost. And, as on the Day of Pentecost, it resulted in powerful witness to Christ.

3:6 What I have I give you

• This phrase spoken by Peter ("what I have") is a reference to the power of the Holy Spirit that he and the other disciples had received on the Day of Pentecost.

• It is only because they had been filled with the Spirit that they could say with confidence, "Look at us!" (v. 4).

• What they had received, however, was not for their own personal blessing. It was power to give away, to bless others. It was primarily to bear witness to Jesus.

3:6 In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

• All the ministry of the early church was done in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 3:16; 4:10, 18, 30; 5:40; 8:12, 16; 9:27; 10:48; 15:26; 16:18; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13; 26:9).

• This means that the church acted under His authority and followed His directions.

• As the disciples submitted themselves to Jesus and His mission, they received authority from Him to act in His name.

3:10 Filled with wonder and amazement

• Seeing the lame beggar leaping and praising God in the temple courts, the people were filled with wonder and came running together to find out what had happened.

• At that moment a "faith shift" took place in their hearts. These people who had previously been hostile to or disinterested in the message of Christ suddenly became vitally interested.

• This illustrates the value of miraculous signs and wonders in the evangelistic and missionary work of the church.

Peter's second Spirit-inspired message (Acts 3:11-26)

• Luke presents a second example of preaching in the New Testament.

• As at Pentecost, Jesus is the central theme of the message.

• Also, as in Peter's Pentecost message, there is a promise of the Spirit for those who will repent and follow Christ.

3:15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead

• Again, Peter's message centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus. To neglect this essential theme is to miss the very heart of the gospel.

• We are witnesses of this. Spirit-empowered witness is a central theme of Acts.

• We know that Peter's witness in this instance is Spirit-empowered because it was preceded by the miracle of healing the crippled beggar (3:1-8).

3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God

• As in all apostolic proclamation, Peter called his hearers to repentance.

• The call to repentance and faith is an essential component of all true gospel preaching.

• The gospel call is "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21, NKJV; compare Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:15; Acts 19:4; Hebrews 6:1).

3:19 Times of refreshing may come from the Lord

• This metaphor refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

• We can expect God to continue to send times of refreshing (outpourings of the Spirit) on the church until "he may send the Christ," that is, until Jesus comes again.

• This verse echoes Acts 2:38 because it calls on people to first be saved ("Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out") and then to receive the Holy Spirit.

• This turning to God, and the resultant outpouring of the Spirit, can be both individual and corporate.

3:20 That he may send the Christ

• This phrase reminds us of the eschatological (last days) context of the book of Acts.

• Because Jesus is coming again, the church must go quickly to fulfill the mission of Christ (compare 1:11).

3:25 Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed

• The global mission of Christ, as expressed in 1:8, was not a new development in God's redemptive plan. It was rather a restatement of God's eternal mission from the beginning.

• Peter is referring to God's promise to Abraham that through his "offspring" (Christ), "all peoples on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; Galatians 3:8, 16).

• From the beginning, God's concern has always been for all the nations of the earth.

• The book of Acts is the story of how the early church went about fulfilling that mission. It is a model of how the church should go about fulfilling the mission of God until Jesus comes again.

The Story: Spirit-Inspired Witness Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-22)

Peter and John were arrested for preaching Christ in the temple courts and placed in jail for the night. The next morning they were asked to explain their actions. Peter, again filled with the Holy Spirit, answered that it was "by the name of Jesus of Nazareth" that the crippled beggar had been healed, and it was by that same name that they were preaching the gospel to the people.

He boldly declared, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

The Jewish leaders again commanded the two apostles to stop preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus. Peter and John, however, replied that they could not help speaking about what they had seen and heard. After being threatened a final time, they were released.

Commentary on Acts 4:1-22

• The jailing and threatening of Peter and John in these verses is the first incident in Acts of overt persecution against the church.

• The church's ability to resist and triumph over persecution is a dominant theme of the book.

• Luke's message seems to be this: as the church moves in the power of the Spirit and remains focused on the mission of God, it can triumph and progress, even in the face of persecution.

4:2 Teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead

• Note that the apostles' focus remained on the teaching and proclamation of the gospel.

4:4 The number of men grew to about five thousand

• The growth of the church is an important concern of Luke.

• In a short time it had grown from the original 120 (1:15), to 3,120 (2:41), and now to 5,000, excluding women and children.

• As the church moved in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, it continued to grow and prosper (2:47; 5:14; 6:1-7; 8:6-8; 9:35-42; 11:21-26; 12:24; 13:49; 14:1, 21; 16:5; 17:4; 19:18-26).

• It had now grown to the point that it became a threat to the religious establishment in Jerusalem.

4:8 Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit

• Luke again emphasizes the fact that the ministry of the early church was energized and empowered by the Spirit.

• This was not the first time Peter had been filled with the Spirit, since he had already been filled at Pentecost. He is now re-filled, or anointed, by the Spirit for ministry.

• Peter's being filled with the Spirit, as at Pentecost, results in bold, anointed proclamation of the gospel.

4:10 It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

• When asked by what power or what name they had healed the lame man, Peter focused the people's attention on the real star of the show, that is, on Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

• It was through His power and His holiness that the man was healed.

• The people were not to look to Peter or to the other apostles but to Jesus, who was the real power and authority behind their ministry.

4:12 No other name... by which men must be saved

• Jesus is humankind's only means of salvation.

• He is the Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 4:14) and the one Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).

• There is no salvation apart from Him (John 14:6).

4:20 We cannot help speaking

• The disciples could not restrain themselves. They were driven by an inner compulsion to testify concerning Jesus.

• This inner compulsion came from knowing who He was and what He had commissioned them to do, and from being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Figure 3.1: Judaism in the First Century

Figure 3.1. Judaism in the First Century. The textbook lists this figure under Chapter 3 in its List of Figures, Maps, and Tables.

Important Terms

Pentecost. A Jewish pilgrim feast held fifty days after Passover. On this day the Spirit was poured out.

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

Kerygmatic. To do with proclaiming or preaching the gospel.

Apostolic kerygma. The pattern the apostles followed when they preached the gospel in Acts.

Prophecy. Preaching the gospel under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Miracle. A display of God's power.

Wonder. The effect a miracle has on the people who see it.

Sign. A miracle that confirms the gospel message.

The gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit himself, given as an empowering experience after conversion. Not the same as the gifts of the Spirit.

Times of refreshing. Fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit on the church.

The last days. The period that began with the first coming of Christ and runs until He comes again.

Key People

• The Holy Spirit: Poured out at Pentecost, filling all of the disciples and empowering them for missional witness.

• The 120 disciples: All filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in other tongues and declared the wonders of God to the gathering crowd.

• Peter: Full of the Holy Spirit, he uttered forth a Spirit-inspired prophetic message at Pentecost, preached again after the healing at the Beautiful Gate, and answered the Jewish leaders when filled with the Spirit again in 4:8.

• John: With Peter at the Beautiful Gate and before the Sanhedrin. Arrested, threatened, and released with Peter.

• Joel: The Hebrew prophet Peter quoted at Pentecost (Joel 2:28-29), who prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit on all people.

• The crippled beggar: Begged at the Beautiful Gate. His feet and ankles were healed in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and he ran through the temple courts praising God.

• The Jewish leaders: Arrested Peter and John, commanded them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, threatened them, and released them.

Key Places

• Jerusalem: Where the disciples waited in obedience to Jesus' command, and

where the first outpouring took place.

• The upper room: Traditionally believed to be the place where the disciples gathered (1:13).

• The temple mount: Where more recent scholarship generally locates the Spirit's outpouring, probably in the Court of the Gentiles.

• The Court of the Gentiles: The only building in Jerusalem large enough to contain a crowd of possibly thirty to forty thousand people.

• The Beautiful Gate: The entrance to the Court of the Women in the temple at Jerusalem, where Peter and John met the crippled beggar.

Key Event

The outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost: all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.

The Holy Spirit, who had come upon the disciples, now entered into them and filled them with His power and presence. The purpose of their being filled was not conversion but empowerment for missional witness, as Jesus predicted in 1:8.

Key Verse

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... began to speak in other tongues."

Acts 2:4

Remember This

• The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the defining event in the book of Acts.

• The sound of a mighty wind speaks to the missional purpose of the Spirit's outpouring.

• Luke presents speaking in tongues as the universal sign of one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• Pentecost should serve as a lasting model for the church of every age.

• Pentecost is the first example in Acts of Luke's empowerment-witness motif.

Life Application: Wait for the Empowering

• Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel. And yet, He was insistent that they not begin the task until they had first been "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

• We, like those first-century disciples, have also been commanded to take the gospel to all nations. And we, too, must obey the command of Jesus to wait for the Spirit's empowering.

• This empowering comes as a result of one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• This powerful experience is as essential a requirement for ministry today as it was for the disciples then.

Life Application: Keep the Gospel Central

• God's will for His church is that it be a Spirit-empowered community of last-days prophets dedicated to carrying the message of Christ to the ends of the earth before He comes again. If that is the case, then we must each dedicate ourselves to that all-important task.

• The gospel, which is the message of Jesus, must remain the central message of the church today.

• At the heart of the gospel message is Christ's death for our sins, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-7).

• We must never forget that it is this message, preached in the power of the Spirit, that will open the door for people to be saved.

• We must never neglect this message. We must never be so foolish and shortsighted as to replace it with other less important messages, no matter how appealing they may seem at the time.

Life Application: Two Great Responsibilities

• As preachers of the gospel we have two great responsibilities.

• The first is to clearly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to point people to His salvation.

• The second responsibility is to immediately lead these new members of the

Christian family into the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

• Being born of the Spirit will prepare them for heaven. Being filled with the Spirit will prepare them for Christian service.

Life Application: Be the Community of Christ

• Our witness to the world involves more than proclamation; it also involves being the community of Christ.

• As God's Spirit-filled prophetic community, our association with one another and the world must be characterized by devotion to Christ, to one another, and to the word of God.

• Our gatherings should be filled with the presence of God and the joy of the Lord. Christ must be at the center of all we do.

• His life and presence should be demonstrated by wonders and miraculous signs.

• Such a church will be a powerful witness to those outside and will draw people into itself.

Life Application: What I Have I Give You

• Believers today, like Peter, should be able to say to nonbelievers in need, "What I have I give you."

• Like Peter, we must also remain full of the Holy Spirit so that when the need presents itself, we will be ready to minister in His power.

• We can do this only as we act in the name of Jesus, that is, under His authority and in obedience to His commands.

• If we will do this, we, too, can expect the Lord to do signs and wonders in confirmation of His Word.

• As we go about preaching the gospel, we should think very carefully about the content of our message. It is not enough that we simply "preach the Bible."

• Certainly, we must preach the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, NKJV); however, we must center our message on Christ. We must clearly explain the meaning of His death and resurrection.

• The apostolic kerygma, that is, the preaching of the apostles, as found in Acts,

must serve as a model for our evangelistic and missionary teaching and preaching today.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. Did the 120 speak in tongues before or after they were filled with the Spirit? What is the significance of this fact?

• 2. For what purpose was the Spirit given at Pentecost? (Acts 1:8)

• 3. Which prophet did Peter quote at Pentecost? According to this prophecy, what would be the result of the Spirit being poured out on people?

• 4. How does the context of Acts 2:38-39 indicate that Peter is talking about empowerment rather than conversion?

• 5. What does Peter's refilling with the Spirit in 4:8 indicate about the Spirit-filled walk?

Quick Review

1. What does the word Pentecost mean, and when was the feast held?

Answer: Pentecost (Greek pentecostos) means fiftieth. It took place fifty days after Passover.

2. What two supernatural wonders accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit?

Answer: A sound from heaven like the blowing of a violent wind, and what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

3. What is the purpose of being filled with the Spirit, according to Luke?

Answer: Not conversion, but empowerment for missional witness (Acts 1:8).

4. Which prophet did Peter quote at Pentecost?

Answer: Joel. Peter quoted Joel 2:28-29 in Acts 2:17-18.

5. How many people were added to the church at the end of Peter's sermon?

Answer: About three thousand, bringing the church to 3,120.

Chapter Summary

Pentecost is the exciting story of how the first church was empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill its mandate to bear witness to Christ in the city of Jerusalem.

• Pentecost began the fulfillment of Christ's promise in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem."

• Once empowered by the Spirit, these believers gave powerful witness to the gospel through bold Spirit-anointed proclamation and through mighty demonstrations of God's power.

• Luke presents speaking in tongues as the universal sign of one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit, and the purpose of Spirit baptism as empowerment for missional witness.

The message of Jesus is the only message that will lead people to heaven, so ask for the same empowering the first believers received, and give the same witness they gave.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

At Pentecost the Spirit was poured out, the disciples were all filled and spoke in other tongues, and the result was bold prophetic witness that added about three thousand people to the church.