FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Full student notes

Fourteen chapters from Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission

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.

Lec SK. KIERU
Student notes for class and revision

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.

CHAPTER 4 · UNIT 2 · DAY 2

Ministry in Jerusalem

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

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

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.

CHAPTER 5 · UNIT 3 · DAY 2

Persecution and Witness

The witness of scattered believers, Philip's Spirit-empowered witness in Samaria, the Samaritan outpouring, and Philip's Spirit-directed ministry in Gaza

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 5)

Chapter purpose. This chapter shows how the church responded to the savage persecution that broke out in Jerusalem: the scattered believers preached everywhere they went, Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and Peter and John came so the Samaritans could be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The last two chapters showed how two (and probably many more) mighty outpourings of the Spirit made the Jerusalem church a mighty evangelistic force in the city. Those same outpourings also prepared it for the persecution that now scatters it into Judea and Samaria, the next item on Jesus' "Acts 1:8 agenda".

Bible reading: Acts 8:1-40

Read Acts 8:1-40 before beginning this chapter. The chapter then asks you to review or read each portion again as you reach it: Acts 8:1-4, Acts 8:5-8, Acts 8:9-25, and Acts 8:26-40.

Learning Objectives

• Explain why Luke would include the story of the persecution and scattering of the Jerusalem church in his narrative.

• Show how the church's scattering into Judea and Samaria relates to Jesus' statement in Acts 1:8.

• State the indications in the text that the Samaritans were truly saved as a result of Philip's ministry.

• Explain why the apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria, and what the Samaritan outpouring accomplished.

• Explain how the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch is an example of a "divine appointment".

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 8:1-40

Read the whole of Acts 8 before the lesson. Each part of the lesson has its own portion to review: Acts 8:1-4 for the witness of scattered believers, Acts 8:5-8 for Philip in Samaria, Acts 8:9-25 for the Samaritan outpouring, and Acts 8:26-40 for the road to Gaza.

The Big Idea

The church transitioned from a Jewish sect to an international missionary force.

The Transitional Period Begins

• In the last two chapters we saw how, as a result of two (and probably many more) mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit on the church in Jerusalem, it became a mighty evangelistic force in the city.

• The church was equipped to fulfill its mission of reaching the people of Jerusalem (1:8), but it was also prepared for what lay ahead.

• The Jerusalem Christians were soon to experience a savage outbreak of persecution that would cause them to flee for their very lives.

• The believers were unaware of what was to come, but God knew. He was preparing them by filling them again and again with His Holy Spirit.

• The time had come for the church to move to the next item on Jesus' "Acts 1:8 agenda", the evangelization of Judea and Samaria.

• We are calling this the transitional period of the book of Acts (see Table 2.1). It is the time period when the church transitioned from being a purely Jewish sect to an international missionary force.

• During this period three powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit occurred. Each served to prepare the church for its upcoming Gentile mission, which will be

discussed in Unit 4.

The Story: The Witness of Scattered Believers (Acts 8:1-4)

On the same day Stephen was stoned, a great persecution led by Saul of Tarsus broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Saul began moving from house to house, assaulting and arresting Christian men and women and putting them into prison. Many believers fled for their lives from Jerusalem, scattering throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Amazingly, they preached the gospel everywhere they went! The apostles, however, remained in Jerusalem, enduring the full force of the persecution.

Commentary on Acts 8:1-4

• The Jews' pent-up anger and resentment against the church suddenly erupted into a frenzy of violent persecution.

• Until now, the church had reached out to Jews only. Later in 13:1-4, the church would launch its Gentile mission. However, before that could happen, it needed to go through a period of transition.

8:1 Persecution broke out against the church

• The persecution was fierce and violent. Its source was the Jewish religious elite.

• The church's response to persecution is a major theme in Acts. Luke records how persecution came repeatedly against believers (compare Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-40; 6:12-15; 7:54-60; 8:1-3; 9:23-30).

• This realization helps us to understand Luke's intent in writing Acts. His original audience was likely enduring persecution, and as a result, it had significantly limited its evangelistic and missionary work.

• Luke wrote to address this unacceptable situation. He wrote to show how believers could triumph over persecution: by being filled with the Spirit and by remaining focused on Christ's mission to witness to all peoples before He comes again.

8:1 Scattered throughout Judea and Samaria

• Because of the persecution, the church was scattered throughout Judea and

Samaria.

• This scattering represents a major step forward in the church developing from a regional Jewish sect to a universal body of believers. It is the next step in the fulfillment of Jesus' agenda as stated in Acts 1:8.

• It is also the church's first venture into non-Jewish missions, and it challenged the long-held prejudices that Jewish Christians had brought into the church from their religious and cultural past.

8:4 [They] preached the word wherever they went

• The persecution of the church did not have the result hoped for by the Jewish authorities. Instead of stamping out the movement, it only scattered the embers of evangelism.

• Those who were scattered faithfully preached the gospel wherever they went.

• Some have said that the persecution was an act of God designed to compel the church to do what it was otherwise unwilling to do, that is, preach the gospel outside Jerusalem.

• The true message found in this story, however, is that believers of any church, if they will be filled with the Spirit and remain true to Christ's commission, can triumph over adversity and remain effective witnesses for Christ.

• What caused these persecuted believers to keep preaching, even during a time of great persecution and trauma? It was the empowerment by the Holy Spirit (2:4; 4:31).

The Story: Philip's Spirit-Empowered Witness in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8)

Philip, one of the scattered believers, went to a city in Samaria and began preaching Christ. His Spirit-empowered preaching was accompanied by miraculous signs, including the healing of paralytics and cripples and the deliverance of people from demonic possession. Because of this, great crowds of people gathered and listened intently to his message. A great soul harvest resulted as people believed Philip's message about the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Philip baptized those men and women who received Christ as Savior.

Commentary on Philip in Samaria

8:5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there

• The proclamation of Christ (that is, the gospel) is again emphasized.

• Jesus said that His disciples would be His witnesses (1:8). Two implications flow from this truth: (1) they would be witnesses for Him, that is, they would be His representatives, and (2) He would be the subject of their witness.

• Philip represents both concepts.

8:6 Crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did

• Philip's witness, like that of Jesus, was not in word only but also in works (compare Acts 1:1). His Spirit-inspired proclamation was accompanied by powerful miraculous signs generated by the Spirit.

• The value of signs and wonders in evangelism is illustrated in this story. Because the crowds saw the miraculous signs of Philip, they gave heed to what he said.

• True gospel preaching always involves both a powerful proclamation of the gospel (a truth encounter) and mighty demonstrations of kingdom power (a power encounter); compare Romans 15:18-19.

8:8 Great joy

• The Samaritans' great joy is the result of their experience of salvation and the knowledge of sins forgiven.

• Joy is also a sign of the Spirit of God working in one's life (Luke 10:21; Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; 15:13; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

8:12 They believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ

• We have here a description of true saving faith: the Samaritans put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (compare 16:31).

• The preaching of the good news of the kingdom of God is synonymous with preaching Christ (28:23, 31).

Baptized, both men and women

• Philip, a man "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3), would have never baptized these new believers in water had they not been truly converted.

• Luke again specifically mentions women. Since they were baptized in water, it must also be true that they, along with the men, were converted and later received the Holy Spirit when Peter and John prayed for them (v. 17; compare 2:38).

• It also follows that the women received the Spirit for the same purpose as the men: power to proclaim Christ (1:8).

The Story: The Samaritan Outpouring (Acts 8:9-25)

News soon arrived in Jerusalem that Samaria had accepted the word of God. None of the Samaritans, however, had received the Holy Spirit. This circumstance so concerned the apostles that they sent Peter and John to pray with them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Upon arriving in Samaria, Peter and John began laying their hands on the new Samaritan Christians. One after another they received the Holy Spirit. Then, after praying with them, the apostles joined the Samaritans in proclaiming the gospel to the residents of the city. On their way back to Jerusalem, Peter and John preached the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Among those who had responded to Philip's preaching in Samaria was a sorcerer by the name of Simon. Because of his occultic displays of power, Simon was followed by many and was even known as the "Great Power" (some versions, "Great Power of God"). Simon nevertheless believed Philip as he preached, and therefore he was baptized. Amazed by the miracles God was working through Philip, Simon followed him everywhere. Then when Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed with the Samaritans to receive the Spirit by laying their hands on them.

Simon was especially impressed. He offered to buy this ability from the apostles. But Peter rebuked him, saying, "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!" Peter told Simon that he could have no part in such a ministry because his heart was not right with God but rather was full of bitterness and captive to sin. Therefore, he needed to repent of his wickedness. Simon was filled with fear and asked Peter to pray for him.

A Missing Ingredient (Acts 8:14-16)

• How the apostles must have rejoiced when they received the news of the great soul harvest in Samaria. The gospel had been clearly and powerfully proclaimed, people had been miraculously healed and delivered, and many had been baptized in water.

• Upon closer examination, however, the apostles in Jerusalem realized that a vital ingredient was missing from the Samaritan revival: no one was being filled with the Holy Spirit.

• In the apostles' minds this was a serious issue, for everyone who receives the gospel must also become a proclaimer of the gospel. The same applies to communities of believers. Wherever the gospel goes to, it must go from.

• For this to happen, those who receive the gospel must also be empowered by the Spirit, as was promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

• According to the plan of Jesus, the church's witness was to begin in Jerusalem and then proceed into Judea and Samaria. It was not, however, to stop there. It was to spread from there until it reached the "ends of the earth".

• The issue was so serious that the apostles sent their two most prominent members, Peter and John, to Samaria to pray with the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit.

8:14 Samaria... accepted the word of God

• There is no indication in the text that the Samaritans' conversion was defective in any way, as some have claimed.

• They had truly believed in Christ and acted on the demands of the gospel.

8:15 They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit

• As will later be the case with Paul in Ephesus, the apostles' first order of business upon arriving in Samaria was to see that those who had received Christ were immediately baptized in the Holy Spirit, as were the believers on the Day of Pentecost.

• The reason for this insistence was not to complete the Samaritans' salvation but to ensure that they had been empowered by the Spirit to carry the gospel to others.

8:16 The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them

• Though these Samaritans had been truly converted, they had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit as prescribed by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

• Note that Luke uses the same terminology here ("come upon") as Jesus used in 1:8, where He said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you," indicating that their experience with the Spirit was the same, and for the same purpose, as the believers at Pentecost.

They had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus

• The Samaritans' baptism in water is a clear indicator that they had been truly converted before the arrival of Peter and John.

• Philip, a man "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3), would never have baptized them in water had they not been truly converted.

Samaritans Receive the Spirit (Acts 8:17, 25)

• The Samaritan outpouring is the third key outpouring of the Spirit in Acts. It is the first outpouring during the transitional period (see Table 2.1).

8:17 Placed their hands on them

• The apostles laid hands on the Samaritans for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

• Some today have claimed that people could only receive the Spirit if the apostles (or their representatives) laid hands on them. Is this true? No, since in Acts some were filled with the Spirit without the laying on of hands (2:4; 10:44), and one was filled when someone other than an apostle laid hands on him (9:17-18).

• We lay hands on people to encourage them to be filled and, to a certain degree, to impart the Spirit to them.

• Another important reason we lay hands on people to receive the Spirit is to commission them to service, as was the case with the seven deacons (6:6), Saul (9:15-17), and the Ephesian believers (19:6).

• It was probably the case here also. Peter and John were not only praying for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit, they were also commissioning them to missional witness (compare 1:8).

• Everyone who receives the Spirit is thus commissioned as Christ's witness.

They received the Holy Spirit

• This is not the moment of the Samaritans' conversion. That had already occurred when they believed and received the message of Christ preached by Philip.

• This is rather the moment when they were empowered by the Spirit for witness.

8:25 Testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord

• The Samaritan outpouring is another important example of Luke's empowerment-witness motif as stated by Jesus in Acts 1:8: "You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses."

• The apostles' testimony and proclamation in this case seems to be directed not at the Samaritan Christians (whom they had likely taught on other occasions), but toward the non-Christian residents of Samaria.

• Proclamation in Acts is always directed at those who are lost (4:2; 5:42; 8:5, 25; 13:5, 38; 17:3, 23; 20:27; 26:23).

• Acts 8:25 contains the first mention of the phrase "the word of the Lord" in Acts. In Acts the phrase is synonymous with the gospel (compare Acts 13:44, 48-49; 15:35-36; 16:32; 19:10, 20).

• It is used interchangeably with the phrase "the word of God" (Acts 4:31; 6:2, 7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 46; 17:13; 18:11). The "Lord" in the phrase "the word of the Lord" is to be understood as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages

• Not only did the apostles join with the Samaritans in preaching the gospel in Samaria, but on their return trip to Jerusalem they began preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

• This is the first time the apostles preached to anyone other than pure-blooded Jews.

• It seems that they received a "reciprocal blessing" when they prayed with the Samaritans to receive the Spirit. They, too, were empowered anew and inspired to preach the gospel to the lost.

• Those who pray with others to receive the Spirit are themselves blessed.

Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-11, 13, 18-24)

• Why did Luke include the story of Simon the Sorcerer in the book of Acts? It seems that he included this narrative as a warning to those who would be tempted to seek the power of God for personal gain.

• The ministry of Simon is contrasted with the ministries of Philip, Peter, and John, who were used by the Spirit to bring life and blessing to others. Simon, on the other hand, sought the power of God for personal gain.

8:13 Simon himself believed... And he followed Philip

• It is difficult to determine whether Simon was truly converted. If he was, his commitment to Christ was very shallow.

• It seems that he was more interested in following Philip and observing his miracles than he was in following Christ.

8:18 Simon saw that the Spirit was given

• The Samaritans' experience of receiving the Spirit must have been dramatic and observable, for when Simon saw what had happened, he wanted to buy the power from the apostles (v. 18).

• It is likely that Simon saw the Samaritans speaking in tongues, as the 120 on the Day of Pentecost (2:4), the Gentiles at Caesarea (10:46), and the twelve Ephesian believers (19:6) also did.

8:20 The gift of God

• The "gift of God" mentioned here is the baptism in the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus in 1:4-8.

• Since it is a gift, the experience, like the experience of salvation, is not earned or merited. It is freely given by the Heavenly Father to any child of God who will humbly and sincerely ask for it (Luke 11:9-13).

Samaria: A New Center of Missions

• A few paragraphs after the Samaritan episode, one discovers that "the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (9:31).

• This verse is a summary statement concerning the progress of the church from

the persecution and dispersal of the Jerusalem Christians in 8:1 through the conversion and early ministry of Saul (Paul).

• It gives us insight into the missionary result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Samaria.

• In 9:31 Luke notes how, along with the churches in Judea and Galilee, the church in Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and growth as it was strengthened and encouraged by the work of the Holy Spirit.

• It further demonstrates that a Spirit-empowered missional church was indeed planted in Samaria as a result of the ministry of Philip and the apostles.

The Story: Philip's Spirit-Directed Ministry in Gaza (Acts 8:26-40)

In the midst of the great revival in Samaria, an angel of the Lord appeared to Philip and directed him to go south to a certain road in Gaza in southwestern Judea. There he encountered an Ethiopian eunuch riding in a chariot. The man was a high government official in the court of Candace, queen of Ethiopia. He was returning home after a pilgrimage to worship at the temple in Jerusalem.

As he rode along, the man was reading from the book of Isaiah. The Spirit of God then directed Philip to draw near to the chariot. As he did, he heard the man reading aloud from Isaiah 53:7-8. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. The Ethiopian replied, "How can I unless someone explains it to me." Philip then joined him in his chariot and explained to him how this passage was talking about Jesus.

Soon they passed a body of water where Philip baptized the Ethiopian man. Immediately the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, and the eunuch continued on his journey rejoicing. Philip was next seen in Azotus, about twenty miles (32 kilometers) to the north. He continued his journey northward along the coastline, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he arrived in Caesarea.

Commentary on Acts 8:26-40

• The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch is a good example of what has been called a "divine appointment".

• A divine appointment is an occasion when God providentially arranges circumstances and divinely leads His servants into situations where the gospel can be presented with maximum effect.

8:26 An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go..."

• This is the fifth appearance of an angel of the Lord in Luke-Acts (compare Luke 1:11, 28; 2:9; Acts 5:19) and the second appearance in Acts. Three appearances will follow (10:4; 12:7-11, 23).

• Luke presents angels as active participants in the advancement of God's kingdom. They are, however, never seen preaching the gospel. This task is left to Spirit-filled believers.

• Here, as elsewhere, the angel is the Lord's agent urging a believer to "go" and bear witness to Christ (compare 5:19-20).

8:27 An Ethiopian

• This man is the first Gentile to receive the gospel in Acts.

• As the Holy Spirit did with the Samaritans, He again used Philip to open a new door for the gospel.

• A black African man became the first representative in Acts of those at "the ends of the earth" (1:8), as well as those "who are far off" (2:39), who were to receive the gospel and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

8:29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go..."

• As before, the Holy Spirit acted as the Superintendent of the Harvest. As such, He inspires and directs the work of missions.

• He will act again in this story, where He will suddenly take Philip away (v. 39).

• Six times in Acts the Lord, through the Spirit, directs the disciples to "go" (9:11, 15; 10:20; 22:10; 22:21; 28:26).

8:32 The eunuch was reading

• For Luke, Scripture plays an essential role in the advancement of God's kingdom.

• The Spirit does not work independently of what is written; rather He works in the fulfillment of Scripture (compare 1:20; 7:42; 13:29, 33; 15:15; 23:5; 24:14).

8:35 Philip... told him the good news about Jesus

• As a Spirit-anointed evangelist, Philip remained true to his calling of preaching Christ (8:40; 21:8).

8:39 The eunuch... went on his way rejoicing

• The eunuch's rejoicing is an indication that he not only received Christ as Savior but that he was possibly also filled with the Spirit in conjunction with his water baptism.

• Luke often connects joy with being filled with the Spirit (Luke 1:44, 47; 10:21; Acts 8:8; 13:52), as does Paul (Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

Conclusion

• Two powerful outpourings of the Spirit in Jerusalem prepared the church for its Spirit-empowered ministry in Jerusalem (2:4; 4:31). These same outpourings helped to prepare the church for the coming persecution (8:1).

• So, when the time of trial did come and the church was scattered, it was ready. It was not diverted from its primary calling but continued to preach the gospel in the power of the Spirit.

• Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ (v. 4). In Samaria many were saved, healed, and delivered.

• Then, when the apostles arrived in Samaria, they prayed with the new believers to be empowered by the Spirit, just as the church in Jerusalem had been empowered.

• With the evangelization and empowering of the Samaritans, the church took its first step in moving from its Jewish to its Gentile mission (see Table 2.1).

• In the next chapter we will look at the church's second step. As the church continued to expand throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, another outpouring of the Spirit occurred. This outpouring, which we call the Damascene outpouring, further helped prepare the church for its coming Gentile mission.

The Early Spread of Christianity

Figure 5.1. The Early Spread of Christianity

Important Terms

Transitional period. The stretch of Acts where the church stops being a Jewish-only movement and becomes a missionary force to all peoples.

Samaritan outpouring. The time Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritan believers and they received the Holy Spirit.

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

Missional witness. Witnessing to Christ as a commissioned worker in God's mission.

Truth encounter and power encounter. Preaching the message, and demonstrating the power of the kingdom. Real gospel preaching has both.

Reciprocal blessing. The blessing that comes back on those who pray for others to receive the Spirit.

The word of the Lord. Luke's phrase for the gospel.

The gift of God. The baptism in the Holy Spirit. It cannot be bought or earned, only asked for.

Divine appointment. A meeting God sets up, where the gospel can be shared with maximum effect.

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

Key People

• Saul of Tarsus: Led the great persecution that broke out against the church in Jerusalem on the same day Stephen was stoned, moving from house to house, assaulting and arresting Christian men and women and putting them into prison.

• Philip: One of the scattered believers. A man "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3) and a Spirit-anointed evangelist. He preached Christ in a city in Samaria with miraculous signs, then was directed to the Ethiopian on the Gaza

road.

• The apostles: Remained in Jerusalem, enduring the full force of the persecution. When they heard Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John.

• Peter and John: The apostles' two most prominent members, sent to Samaria to pray with the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit. They laid hands on the believers, then preached the gospel in the city and in many Samaritan villages.

• Simon the Sorcerer: A sorcerer who, because of his occultic displays of power, was followed by many and was even known as the "Great Power". He believed Philip and was baptized, but offered to buy the ability to give the Spirit and was rebuked by Peter.

• The Ethiopian eunuch: A high government official in the court of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, returning from a pilgrimage to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. He is the first Gentile to receive the gospel in Acts.

• An angel of the Lord: Appeared to Philip and directed him to go south to a certain road in Gaza. This is the fifth appearance of an angel of the Lord in Luke-Acts and the second in Acts.

Key Places

• Jerusalem: Where the persecution broke out against the church, and where the apostles remained.

• Judea and Samaria: Where the believers scattered, preaching the gospel everywhere they went. This is the next step in the fulfillment of Jesus' agenda as stated in Acts 1:8.

• A city in Samaria: Where Philip proclaimed the Christ, many were saved, healed and delivered, and where Peter and John later placed their hands on the believers to receive the Holy Spirit.

• Samaritan villages: Where Peter and John preached the gospel on their return trip to Jerusalem. This is the first time the apostles preached to anyone other than pure-blooded Jews.

• Gaza, in southwestern Judea: The angel of the Lord directed Philip south to a certain road there, where he met the Ethiopian eunuch.

• Azotus: About twenty miles (32 kilometers) to the north, where Philip was next

seen after the Spirit caught him away.

• Caesarea: Where Philip arrived after preaching the gospel in all the towns along the coastline.

Key Event

The Samaritan outpouring: Peter and John place their hands on the Samaritan believers, and one after another they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

This is the third key outpouring of the Spirit in Acts and the first during the transitional period. It was not the moment of their conversion, which had already happened when they believed Philip's message. It was the moment they were empowered by the Spirit for witness and commissioned to missional witness.

Key Verse

"[They] preached the word wherever they went."

Acts 8:4

Remember This

• Those who were scattered faithfully preached the gospel wherever they went.

• A vital ingredient was missing: no one was being filled with the Holy Spirit.

• Everywhere the gospel goes to, it must proceed from.

• Those who pray with others to receive the Spirit are themselves blessed.

Life Application: When Persecution Comes

• Although we do not seek persecution, persecution will sometimes come, especially if we are faithful to boldly proclaim the message of Christ.

• When persecution does come, we must be ready.

• We can do this, if we, like those first Christians in Jerusalem, will stay focused on Christ's mission and remain full of the Holy Spirit.

Life Application: Preach Christ in the Spirit's Power

• We must never forget that our primary message is the gospel, the message of

Christ, and we must always strive to preach that message in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• If we will faithfully do this, we can expect God to confirm His word through signs and wonders.

• We should anticipate that women as well as men will be saved, baptized in water, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

• As a result they, too, will become full participants in the ministry of the Spirit (see 2:17-18; 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:13; 14:31).

Life Application: Plant Spirit-Empowered Missional Churches

• In our evangelism and church planting efforts, it is important that we address the issue of Spirit baptism.

• It is essential that those involved in gospel work, whether pastoral, evangelistic, or missionary, understand the importance of immediately leading those who have been born again into the experience of Spirit baptism.

• This work must not be delayed for at least two reasons. The first is personal: the new convert will need the power of the Spirit to resist the temptations and attacks he or she will encounter from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

• The second reason is missional: every believer must be empowered by the Spirit because every believer must be Christ's witness to the lost (1:8).

• The gospel worker must further understand that everywhere the gospel goes to, it must proceed from. This can only happen if believers in that new church are empowered by the Holy Spirit and taught about their responsibility to win others to Christ.

• We must therefore ensure that the churches we plant are Spirit-empowered missional churches, that is, churches that are willing to plant and capable of planting other Spirit-empowered missional churches. Only then will the gospel spread spontaneously throughout a community or region.

Life Application: Follow the Spirit's Leading

• From Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch we learn the importance of following the leading of the Holy Spirit in performing our work as ministers of the

gospel.

• Had Philip not been full of the Spirit and open to the Spirit's voice, he would have missed this opportunity.

• Further, had he not understood the great importance of presenting Christ, he would have wasted the opportunity.

• We can also take great encouragement from this story, knowing that when the Lord leads us into a ministry opportunity, He has also been at work providentially arranging circumstances and preparing the people to receive the gospel.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. Why would Luke include the story of the persecution and scattering of the Jerusalem church in his narrative?

• 2. How does the church's scattering into Judea and Samaria relate to Jesus' statement in Acts 1:8?

• 3. What indications are there in the text that the Samaritans were truly saved as a result of Philip's ministry?

• 4. How is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch an example of a "divine appointment"?

• 5. What cross-cultural "divine appointments" have you had in your life?

Quick Review

1. Who led the persecution that broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and when did it begin?

Answer: Saul of Tarsus led it, and it broke out on the same day Stephen was stoned.

2. What did the scattered believers do wherever they went?

Answer: They faithfully preached the gospel. Instead of stamping out the movement, the persecution only scattered the embers of evangelism.

3. Which of the seven key outpourings is the Samaritan outpouring?

Answer: The third, and the first outpouring during the transitional period.

4. Why did the apostles send Peter and John to Samaria?

Answer: Because none of the Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit. Peter and John went to

pray with them so they would be empowered by the Spirit to carry the gospel to others.

5. Who is the first Gentile to receive the gospel in Acts?

Answer: The Ethiopian eunuch, a high government official in the court of Candace, queen of Ethiopia.

Chapter Summary

The church transitioned from a Jewish sect to an international missionary force.

• Persecution scattered the Jerusalem church throughout Judea and Samaria, and the scattered believers preached the word wherever they went.

• Philip proclaimed Christ in a city in Samaria, and his Spirit-inspired preaching was accompanied by miraculous signs, so many were saved, healed, delivered, and baptized in water.

• Peter and John placed their hands on the Samaritans and they received the Holy Spirit. This is the third key outpouring in Acts and the first of the transitional period.

Lead new believers straight into the baptism in the Holy Spirit, because everywhere the gospel goes to, it must proceed from.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Persecution scattered the church, but the scattered believers preached the word wherever they went, and in Samaria the Spirit was poured out so the new church could carry the gospel on.

CHAPTER 6 · UNIT 3 · DAY 2

Continued Expansion of the Church

Saul's conversion, Saul's healing, commissioning and empowering, Saul's witness in Damascus and Jerusalem, and Peter's Spirit-empowered ministry in Judea

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 6)

Chapter purpose. This chapter studies Acts 9: the conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, his healing, commissioning and empowering through Ananias, his bold witness in Damascus and Jerusalem, the strengthening of the churches, and Peter's Spirit-empowered ministry in northwestern Judea.

Chapter 5 closed by saying that with the evangelization and empowering of the Samaritans, the church took its first step in moving from its Jewish to its Gentile mission. This chapter looks at the church's second step: another outpouring of the Spirit, which we call the Damascene outpouring, that further helped prepare the church for its coming Gentile mission.

Bible reading: Acts 9:1-43

Read Acts 9:1-43 before beginning the study of this chapter. Each part of the lesson then has its own portion: Acts 9:1-9, Acts 9:10-19, Acts 9:20-30, Acts 9:31, and Acts 9:32-43.

Learning Objectives

• Explain why Saul of Tarsus went to Damascus and what happened to him on the way.

• Explain how Saul was persecuting Jesus when Jesus asked him, "Why do you persecute me?"

• Say why Luke includes the story of Saul's Spirit baptism in his narrative.

• Identify the Damascene outpouring and its place among the seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts.

• Describe Peter's charismatic ministry in northwestern Judea and the results of the

miracles he performed at that time.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 9:1-43

Read the whole of Acts 9 before the lesson. Review Acts 9:1-9 for Saul's conversion, Acts 9:10-19 for his healing, commissioning and empowering, Acts 9:20-30 for his witness in Damascus and Jerusalem, Acts 9:31 for the growth of the church, and Acts 9:32-43 for Peter's ministry in Judea.

The Big Idea

Non-Jews could also become full participants in the mission of God.

The Damascene Outpouring: Where This Chapter Stands

• The church's expansion from Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria was a significant step in the development of its mission.

• Philip's evangelistic ministry in Samaria was the first time since Pentecost that the gospel was preached to non-Jewish people.

• Peter and John's ministry to the newborn church in Samaria demonstrated that not only could non-Jews be saved and fully included in the family of God, but by being filled with the Spirit, they could also become full participants in the mission of God.

• In Samaria the church began its transition from a localized Jewish sect into the worldwide omni-cultural missionary institution that Jesus intended it to be.

• In this chapter, the church will take yet another giant step forward in fulfilling its missionary mandate to take the gospel to "the ends of the earth".

• The conversion and empowering of Saul of Tarsus will prepare the way for him to become God's instrument in opening wide the door to Gentile inclusion in the family and mission of God.

• Since Saul's infilling with the Spirit occurred in the city of Damascus, we call it the Damascene outpouring. It is the fourth of seven key outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Acts, and the second of three outpourings occurring during the

transitional period (see Table 2.1).

• Like the Samaritan outpouring, the Damascene outpouring helped to prepare the church for its upcoming Gentile mission.

• Each of these outpourings also contributed to the fulfilling of Luke's primary intent in writing Acts, that is, to call the church back to its pentecostal and missionary roots.

• To emphasize this concept, Luke repeatedly shows that when people are filled with the Spirit, they become powerful witnesses for Christ.

The Story: Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-9)

Saul of Tarsus continued to persecute the church in Jerusalem. Then, upon hearing of a group of Christians in the Syrian city of Damascus, he obtained official permission from the high priest to go there to arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners.

As he and his party neared the city of Damascus, Jesus appeared to them in brilliant light, blinding Saul and causing him to fall to the ground. The Lord called out to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul replied. The voice responded, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men with Saul heard the sound, although they did not understand what was happening. They led him by the hand into the city, where he remained blind for three days. During that time he neither ate nor drank.

Commentary on Acts 9:1-9

• Luke again focuses the reader's attention on Saul of Tarsus. Previously, in Acts chapter 7, Saul was seen giving his assent to the murder of Stephen, and in chapter 8, he began to violently persecute and destroy the church.

• Now, on the Damascus road, the direction of Saul's life was dramatically altered. There, he had a powerful, life-changing encounter with the resurrected Christ.

• The arch-persecutor of the church suddenly became its ardent proclaimer.

9:1 Saul was still breathing out murderous threats

• In Jerusalem Saul had been systematically moving from house to house, capturing believers and putting them into prison (8:3).

• He later described his work in this way: "I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison" (22:4).

• On another occasion he said, "I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them" (26:10-11).

9:3 Suddenly a light from heaven

• This phrase echoes the phrase in 2:2: "Suddenly a sound... from heaven."

• The phrase "from heaven" indicates the light's divine or supernatural origin (compare Luke 20:4-5; Acts 11:9).

• The light emanated from the resurrected Jesus, the One who had been exalted to the right hand of God, and who had poured out the Holy Spirit from there (2:33). He now appeared to Saul in person.

• This appearance is yet another theophany in Acts (compare 2:1-3; 4:31).

9:4 Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

• By persecuting the church, Saul was persecuting Christ. This fact demonstrates Jesus' close identification with His church.

• Paul said that Jesus loved the church so much that He died for it (Ephesians 5:25).

• He often referred to the church as the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Ephesians 4:12; 5:23).

9:5 Who are you, Lord?

• In response to this question from Saul, Jesus answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

• Years later, in Paul's testimony before King Agrippa, he revealed that he actually called Jesus "Lord" twice (22:8-10). In the second instance Paul used the title after

Jesus had clearly identified himself. Then, Saul asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" (v. 10).

• Saul's double use of the title "Lord" indicates that he was truly converted at this moment on the Damascus Road.

• He later wrote that "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The Story: Saul's Healing, Commissioning, and Empowering (Acts 9:10-19)

The Lord appeared in a vision to a disciple named Ananias. He told Ananias to go to the house of Justus, who lived on Straight Street. There he should inquire for Saul, whom he would find in prayer. The Lord also informed Ananias that Saul had seen a vision. In the vision he had seen a man by the name of Ananias coming to him and healing him of his blindness.

At first Ananias objected, since he had heard stories of how Saul had been persecuting the saints in Jerusalem and how Saul had come to Damascus to arrest Christians there. The Lord, however, assured him by telling him that Saul was His chosen instrument to proclaim His name among the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.

Obeying the Lord, Ananias went to the house of Justus. There, he laid his hands on Saul, calling him "Brother." He told Saul how Jesus had sent him to pray with him that he might be healed and be filled with the Spirit. When Ananias laid his hands on Saul, he was immediately healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. Saul was then baptized in water. After he had eaten and regained his strength, Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

Commentary on Acts 9:10-19

• The story of Saul's conversion and Spirit-baptism is an important episode in Acts. It sets the stage for the final sixteen chapters of the book, where Paul's ministry takes center stage.

• Later in Acts, Paul will on two occasions refer back to this incident (22:4-21; 26:12-23).

• Saul's being filled with the Spirit is unique among the seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts in that in this instance, only one person is filled with the Spirit.

• We should not, however, underestimate its importance. Saul's being filled with the Spirit is a key event in his preparation as the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles and in fulfilling the Gentile mission (see Table 2.1).

9:10 A disciple named Ananias

• Ananias was not an apostle (the Greek text literally calls him "a certain disciple"), and there is no indication that he was even a local church officer in Damascus.

• He was simply a Spirit-filled believer in Christ. He was, nevertheless, a man of high character and good reputation (22:12).

• We also know that he was full of the Spirit since he heard the voice of the Lord and since he prayed with Saul to be healed and filled with the Spirit.

9:11 Saul... is praying

• Luke again emphasizes the role of prayer in receiving the Spirit.

• According to Luke, prayer is the context in which Spirit baptism is received (compare Luke 11:9-13; Acts 1:14; 4:24; 8:15; 10:2-4, 9, 30-31; 13:1-3; 19:6).

9:15 This man is my chosen instrument

• Saul is God's chosen instrument to carry the gospel to the Gentiles and the children of Israel.

• Beyond prayer, commitment to the mission of God is the proper context for receiving the Spirit in Acts.

• In Luke's view Spirit baptism is received, not for salvation or personal blessing, but for empowerment for mission (1:8; compare 5:29-32).

9:17 Placing his hands on Saul

• In context it is reasonable to assume that one purpose for which Ananias laid hands on Saul was to commission him for missionary service (compare vv. 15-16; 22:14-15; 26:16-18; see the note on 8:17 in Chapter 5).

Brother Saul

• Ananias' calling Saul "Brother" is another indication that Saul was a Christian

before Ananias prayed for him to receive the Spirit.

• Ananias, who knew why Saul had come to Damascus, would never have called him "Brother" had he not believed that he had truly become a brother in Christ.

So that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit

• Ananias' twofold commission from Christ was to pray with Saul to be healed and to be filled with the Spirit. We can assume that both occurred when he laid hands on him.

• As was the case with Peter (2:4; 4:8, 31), John (2:4), Stephen (6:3, 8), and Philip (6:3), Luke wanted his readers to know that Saul had been filled with the Spirit before he described his involvement in ministry.

• He wanted the reader to understand that Spirit-baptism is an essential prerequisite for the most effective gospel ministry (compare Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

The Story: Saul's Witness in Damascus and Jerusalem (Acts 9:20-30)

When Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit, he immediately began to preach the gospel in the synagogues of Damascus. Because of the great change in his life, the people wondered if he was the same man they had heard about in Jerusalem. As the days went by, Saul became ever more powerful in his witness for Christ. After some time the Jews in Damascus plotted to assassinate Saul; however, he was able to escape.

Saul then went to Jerusalem where he sought fellowship with the believers there. They too were afraid of him, unsure that he had really become a Christian. Barnabas interceded for him and brought him to the apostles in Jerusalem. He told them the story of Saul's conversion and powerful witness for Christ in Damascus.

In Jerusalem, Saul continued his ministry for Christ, moving about freely and speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. He also spent time debating with the Greek Jews, who plotted to kill him. When the brothers learned about this plot, they took him to Caesarea. From there, he sailed to Tarsus, his hometown.

Commentary on Acts 9:20-30

9:20 At once he began to preach

• As a result of his being filled with the Spirit, Saul "at once" began to preach the gospel.

• Here is another example of how Luke purposefully combines the two ideas of empowerment and witness throughout Acts. The pattern is consistent: every time the Spirit is poured out, witness results.

• As previously stated, we call this pattern Luke's empowerment-witness motif. It helps us to understand Luke's primary intent in writing Acts.

• Note that the content of Saul's preaching is the message of Christ, for he went about "proving that Jesus is the Christ" (v. 22).

9:22 Saul grew more and more powerful

• This phrase is an indication that Saul remained full of the Holy Spirit.

• As he daily yielded to the Spirit's influence in his life, he grew ever more powerful in ministry.

9:28 In Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord

• Being full of the Holy Spirit, Saul's bold witness continued even after he left Damascus and went to Jerusalem.

The Story: The Church Is Strengthened and Grows (Acts 9:31)

After Saul was converted, the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. As the Spirit continued to work in the lives of the disciples in these regions, the church was strengthened and grew in numbers, and believers lived in the fear of the Lord.

Commentary on Acts 9:31

9:31 Encouraged by the Holy Spirit

• Believers throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria continued to move under the Spirit's guidance and direction. As they did, they received help and strength from the Spirit.

• This is the only passage in Acts where the Greek word parakl sis is used in

relationship to the Holy Spirit.

• It reminds us of Jesus' words in John 14 to 16 concerning the Counselor (Parakl tos, also translated "Comforter" or "Helper").

• There, Jesus promised His disciples that when the Parakl tos came, He would dwell in them (14:17), empower them to do "greater works" (v. 12), teach them all things (v. 26), testify concerning Christ (15:26), aid them in evangelism (16:6-11), guide them into all truth (v. 13), and bring glory to Christ (v. 14).

Grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord

• As at the beginning, the church continued to experience both quantitative growth ("grew in numbers") and qualitative growth ("living in the fear of the Lord"); compare 2:41-47; 4:31-35.

The Story: Peter's Spirit-Empowered Ministry in Judea (Acts 9:32-43)

The storyline of Acts turns again to Peter, recounting his itinerant ministry in northwestern Judea. He traveled to the town of Lydda where he healed Aeneas, a Christian brother who had been paralyzed for a long time. Because of this miracle, everyone living in Lydda and in the nearby village of Sharon turned to the Lord.

In the coastal town of Joppa, there lived a disciple by the name of Tabitha (or Dorcas). She was known and loved for her good works. She became ill and died, so the believers sent to Lydda for Peter. When he arrived in Joppa, Peter entered the upper room where they had laid her, and he said to her, "Tabitha, get up." The dead woman opened her eyes and sat up.

Upon hearing about this miracle, many people in Joppa believed in the Lord. Peter remained in Joppa for some time, staying at the house of Simon the tanner.

Commentary on Acts 9:32-43

• Months after the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter continued to minister in the power of the Spirit.

• His charismatic ministry in northwestern Judea gives us insight into how the apostles engaged in pastoral care.

9:34 Jesus Christ heals you

• As Jesus often did, Peter speaks a healing word to the sick man.

• His words show that Jesus continued His healing ministry even after His ascension (compare Hebrews 13:8).

• As at the Beautiful Gate, Peter was again ministering under the Spirit's direction. The Spirit must have revealed to him the fact that Christ was at that moment healing Aeneas. Peter simply stated the fact that it was happening.

9:35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord

• Peter's Spirit-empowered healing ministry in word and deed opened the hearts of the residents of Lydda and Sharon to receive the gospel and turn to the Lord.

9:40 Tabitha, get up

• Peter healed Tabitha through the spoken word. This method of healing the sick has been called a "command of faith".

• Jesus often used this method in healing the sick (compare Luke 6:8, 10; 7:11-15; 8:53-54; 18:40-43; John 5:8-9).

9:42 Many people believed in the Lord

• Again, as with Aeneas, the result of the miracle was witness, for many believed in the Lord.

• The purpose of signs and wonders is not to attract attention to themselves or to the one being used by God to work the miracles.

• The purpose of signs and wonders is to demonstrate the power of the kingdom of God and to point people to the Lord.

Conclusion

• As the days went by, the early disciples continued to move in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• They also remained committed to fulfilling Christ's mission of preaching the gospel to the lost.

• Jesus had told them that they would be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all

Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

• They had preached the gospel and established churches throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.

• The Holy Spirit was now preparing them to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Important Terms

Damascene outpouring. Saul being filled with the Holy Spirit in Damascus when Ananias laid hands on him.

Transitional period. The stretch of Acts in which the church moves from a localized Jewish sect to a worldwide missionary body.

Empowerment-witness motif. Luke's consistent pattern: every time the Spirit is poured out, witness results.

Chosen instrument. God's own word for Saul: the man He picked to carry the gospel to the Gentiles.

Theophany. The word the author uses for the resurrected Jesus appearing in person in the light from heaven on the Damascus road.

Parakl sis. The Greek word behind the help and strength the Spirit gave the growing church in Acts 9:31.

Parakl tos. Jesus' name for the Holy Spirit in John 14 to 16: Counselor, Comforter, or Helper.

Quantitative and qualitative growth. Growth in number, and growth in the church's walk with the Lord. Acts 9:31 shows both.

Command of faith. Healing the sick by speaking a word of command, as Peter did to Tabitha.

Charismatic ministry. The author's description of Peter's Spirit-empowered ministry of healing and raising the dead in northwestern Judea.

Key People

• Saul of Tarsus: The arch-persecutor of the church who suddenly became its

ardent proclaimer. Converted on the Damascus road, healed and filled with the Spirit through Ananias, and God's chosen instrument to carry the gospel to the Gentiles and the children of Israel.

• Jesus: Appeared to Saul in person in a light from heaven and said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." By persecuting the church, Saul was persecuting Christ.

• Ananias: A disciple in Damascus. Not an apostle, and there is no indication that he was even a local church officer. He was simply a Spirit-filled believer, a man of high character and good reputation (22:12), who laid hands on Saul, calling him "Brother".

• Justus: The man who lived on Straight Street, at whose house Ananias found Saul praying.

• Barnabas: Interceded for Saul in Jerusalem when the believers were afraid of him, and brought him to the apostles, telling them of Saul's conversion and powerful witness in Damascus.

• Peter: Continued to minister in the power of the Spirit months after the Day of Pentecost. His itinerant ministry in northwestern Judea shows how the apostles engaged in pastoral care.

• Aeneas: A Christian brother in Lydda who had been paralyzed for a long time, and whom Peter healed.

• Tabitha (or Dorcas): A disciple in the coastal town of Joppa, known and loved for her good works. She became ill and died, and Peter raised her with the words, "Tabitha, get up."

• Simon the tanner: The man in Joppa at whose house Peter stayed for some time.

Key Places

• Damascus: The Syrian city where a group of Christians lived, where Saul was going to arrest them, and where he was filled with the Spirit. This is why we call his infilling the Damascene outpouring.

• Straight Street: Where the house of Justus stood, and where Ananias found Saul praying.

• Jerusalem: Where Saul had been persecuting believers, and where he later spoke

boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and debated with the Greek Jews.

• Caesarea: Where the brothers took Saul when they learned of the plot to kill him in Jerusalem.

• Tarsus: Saul's hometown, where he sailed from Caesarea.

• Judea, Galilee, and Samaria: The regions whose churches enjoyed a time of peace, were strengthened, grew in numbers, and lived in the fear of the Lord (9:31).

• Lydda and Sharon: The town where Peter healed Aeneas, and the nearby village. Everyone living there turned to the Lord.

• Joppa: The coastal town where Tabitha lived, died, and was raised, and where many people believed in the Lord.

Key Event

The Damascene outpouring: Ananias places his hands on Saul, who is immediately healed and filled with the Holy Spirit, then baptized in water (Acts 9:17-18).

This is the fourth of the seven key outpourings in Acts, and it is unique among them in that only one person is filled with the Spirit. It is a key event in Saul's preparation as the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles and in fulfilling the Gentile mission. Ananias also laid hands on Saul to commission him for missionary service.

Key Verse

"So that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 9:17

Remember This

• By persecuting the church, Saul was persecuting Christ.

• Saul's being filled with the Spirit is a key event in his preparation as the apostle to the Gentiles.

• God can use anyone who will be filled with the Spirit and will remain obedient

to His instructions.

• The purpose of miracles is not to attract attention to ourselves, but to point people to the Savior.

Life Application: Meeting Christ Personally

• Saul was saved when he met the resurrected Christ. It is the same today.

• To be saved, one must also have a personal encounter with the living Christ.

• Not everyone's experience will be as dramatic as Saul's; nevertheless, it is essential that each person meets Christ personally.

• As ministers of the gospel, our primary job is to call people to faith in Him. They can meet Christ personally by repenting of their sins and putting their trust in Him alone for salvation.

Life Application: The Example of Ananias

• First, the example of Ananias teaches us that God can use anyone who will be filled with the Spirit and will remain open and obedient to His instructions.

• Although Ananias was a layman, God used him to pray for a future apostle to receive the Spirit and be healed.

• Second, this story also helps us to understand the great significance of even one person being filled with the Holy Spirit.

• We should not be discouraged on those occasions when we pray with people, and only one, or just a few, are filled. One or more of those few may, like Saul of Tarsus, become a powerful witness for Christ.

Life Application: Spirit Baptism Is for Witness

• The primary purpose of Spirit baptism is empowerment for witness.

• Christ does not pour His Spirit out on us primarily for our own personal blessing (though many blessings may come from our being filled with the Spirit), but to impart into us the desire, boldness, and ability to effectively proclaim Christ to the lost.

• This is why it is essential that every believer be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• As we daily yield ourselves to the Spirit, our usefulness for Christ becomes greater and greater.

Life Application: Moving in the Spirit

• As we move in the Spirit, we can expect Him to come to us to encourage and enable us in our Christian lives and ministries.

• As we follow His leading, the church will grow in number and in its relationship with the Lord.

Life Application: Imitate the Ministry of Jesus

• As ministers of the gospel, we, like Peter, should seek to imitate the ministry of Jesus in word and in deed.

• We must always direct people toward Christ. The purpose of miracles is not to attract attention to ourselves, but to point people to the Savior. Only He can meet their deepest spiritual needs.

• Like Peter, we must at all times remain full of the Spirit and open to His directions.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. Why did Saul of Tarsus go to Damascus?

• 2. Jesus asked Saul, "Why do you persecute me?" How was Saul persecuting Jesus?

• 3. Why do you think Luke includes the story of Saul's Spirit baptism in his narrative?

• 4. Describe Peter's charismatic ministry in northwestern Judea. What were the results of the miracles he performed at this time?

Quick Review

1. Why did Saul go to Damascus?

Answer: He had heard of a group of Christians in the Syrian city of Damascus, so he obtained official permission from the high priest to go there, arrest them, and bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners.

2. Which of the seven key outpourings is the Damascene outpouring?

Answer: The fourth, and the second of the three outpourings that occur during the transitional period.

3. What makes the Damascene outpouring unique among the seven key outpourings?

Answer: In this instance only one person is filled with the Spirit.

4. Who prayed for Saul to be healed and filled with the Spirit?

Answer: Ananias, a disciple in Damascus who was not an apostle and not even a local church officer, but simply a Spirit-filled believer in Christ.

5. Whom did Peter heal in Lydda, and whom did he raise in Joppa?

Answer: He healed Aeneas, who had been paralyzed for a long time, and he raised Tabitha, also called Dorcas.

Chapter Summary

The conversion and empowering of Saul of Tarsus prepared the way for him to become God's instrument in opening wide the door to Gentile inclusion in the family and mission of God.

• On the Damascus road Saul had a powerful, life-changing encounter with the resurrected Christ, and the arch-persecutor of the church suddenly became its ardent proclaimer.

• Ananias, a Spirit-filled layman, laid hands on Saul, who was immediately healed, filled with the Holy Spirit, and commissioned for missionary service. This is the Damascene outpouring, the fourth key outpouring in Acts.

• Filled with the Spirit, Saul at once began to preach, and Peter's Spirit-empowered ministry in Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa turned many to the Lord.

The primary purpose of Spirit baptism is empowerment for witness, so seek to be filled, yield to the Spirit daily, and remain open to His directions.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Jesus met Saul on the Damascus road, a Spirit-filled layman prayed for him to be healed and filled, and at once he began to preach.

CHAPTER 7 · UNIT 3 · DAY 2

The Inclusion of the Gentiles

A divine appointment, Peter goes to the Gentiles, Peter's Spirit-inspired message, the Caesarean outpouring, the opening of the door, and the strengthening and expansion of the church

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 7)

Chapter purpose. This chapter studies the Caesarean outpouring, the third and final key outpouring of the transitional period, which opened the door wide to Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ and to full Gentile participation in the mission of God.

Chapter 6 covered Saul's conversion, commissioning and empowering, and Peter's Spirit-empowered ministry in Judea. Chapter 7 stays inside the transitional period and takes up the third key outpouring of that period, the Caesarean outpouring, after the Samaritan and Damascene outpourings already examined.

Bible reading: Acts 10:1-12:25

Read the whole assignment before the lesson. The chapter then asks you to review a shorter passage before each of its six parts: Acts 10:1-26, Acts 10:27-33, Acts 10:34-43, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 11:1-18, and Acts 11:19-12:25.

Learning Objectives

• Explain the meaning of the vision that the Spirit gave to Peter on the rooftop.

• Explain why it is important to understand that Jesus ministered in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38), and what this implies for ministry today.

• State how the Jewish brothers who accompanied Peter to Caesarea knew that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit.

• Show from Acts 1:8 and 11:15-17 that the Gentiles in Caesarea were given the Holy Spirit to empower them as witnesses.

• Explain when evangelism becomes missions, and how a church can become a

missional church.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 10:1-12:25

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 10:1-12:25. Keep your Bible open through the lesson, since the chapter reviews a shorter passage before each of its six parts.

The Big Idea

The Caesarean outpouring opened the door wide to Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ.

Where We Are in Acts

A Commission, a Command, and a Promise

• Before Jesus returned to heaven, He left His church with a commission, a command, and a promise.

• He commissioned His followers to be His witnesses in all the earth. Today we call this commission the Great Commission. It is found in all four Gospels and Acts (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

• He commanded His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they had been clothed with power from heaven (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5).

• He promised them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, thus enabling them to be effective witnesses for Him in all the earth (Acts 1:8).

• The disciples obeyed His command, received His promise, and immediately began to fulfill His commission.

From the Jewish Mission to the Transitional Period

• Jesus' promise of power was first fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when Christ poured out the Spirit on His disciples, empowering them to be His witnesses (2:1-4).

• A few weeks later God poured out His Spirit a second time in Jerusalem, again empowering the church for its missionary task (4:31).

• These two outpourings enabled the church to fulfill the first part of Jesus' mandate, to be His witnesses in Jerusalem (1:8). We call this witness in Jerusalem the Jewish mission.

• Christ's desire for His church was that it be an omni-ethnic international community of believers. Before this could happen, however, it needed to be prepared for its mission to the nations.

• This preparation came through a series of providential events and key outpourings of the Holy Spirit. We call this period in Acts the transitional period.

• The providential events already examined include the persecution and scattering of the Jerusalem believers.

• Two key outpourings already examined took place during this same period: the Samaritan outpouring and the Damascene outpouring. These helped to prepare the church for its coming Gentile mission.

This Chapter: A Third Key Outpouring

• In this chapter we examine a third key outpouring of the Spirit that took place during the transitional period, the Caesarean outpouring (see Table 2.1).

• This outpouring of the Holy Spirit opened the door wide to Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ.

• It further opened the door to full Gentile participation in the mission of God.

• It all began with God supernaturally arranging an appointment between a Gentile soldier and a Jewish apostle.

The Three Outpourings of the Transitional Period

The transitional period prepared the church for its mission to the nations through providential events and three key outpourings of the Spirit. The chapter points the reader back to Table 2.1 for the full list of seven key outpourings.

Order in the transitional period · Outpouring · What the chapter says about it

• Order in the transitional period: First. Outpouring: The Samaritan outpouring. What the chapter says about it: Already examined. It helped to prepare the church for its coming Gentile mission.

• Order in the transitional period: Second. Outpouring: The Damascene outpouring. What the chapter says about it: Already examined. It helped to prepare the church for its coming Gentile mission.

• Order in the transitional period: Third and final. Outpouring: The Caesarean outpouring. What the chapter says about it: The fifth of seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts. It opened the door wide to Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ, and opened the door to full Gentile participation in the mission of God.

The Story: A Divine Appointment (Acts 10:1-26)

A God-fearing Gentile man by the name of Cornelius lived with his family in the city of Caesarea. He was a Roman centurion of the Italian Regiment. He prayed often and gave generously to the poor. One day an angel of God appeared to him in a vision. The angel informed him that God had taken note of his prayers and gifts to the poor. He told Cornelius to send men to Joppa and bring back a man named Simon Peter. In obedience Cornelius sent three men to Joppa to get Peter, who was staying in the home of Simon the tanner.

The next day, as the men were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the roof to pray. There he fell into a trance and saw a vision. In the vision heaven opened, and a large sheet was let down by four corners. It was filled with all sorts of unclean animals, reptiles, and birds. A voice commanded Peter to "kill and eat." Peter refused, saying, "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice challenged him, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This scene was repeated three times, and the sheet was taken back to heaven.

As Peter pondered these things, the three men from Caesarea arrived at the door to Simon's house. The Spirit then spoke to Peter, telling him that three men were looking for him and that he should not hesitate to go with them, for God had sent them.

The men told Peter the story of Cornelius and of his sending them to bring Peter to Caesarea. The next day Peter took six Jewish brothers with him and went with the three men to Caesarea. When they arrived at the house of Cornelius the following day, they found that Cornelius had called together a large number of his relatives and close friends, who were ready to hear what Peter had to say.

Commentary on Acts 10:1-26

God Set Up the Meeting

• The meeting of Peter and Cornelius is another example of what has been called a "divine appointment." God set up the meeting between Peter and Cornelius.

• God had a great purpose and plan for this meeting. His purpose was to show that His kingdom was open to all who would seek Him, whether Jew or Gentile.

• It was also to demonstrate that any people of any nation can become full participants in His mission if they will be filled with His Spirit.

• His plan was to bring a group of Palestinian Jewish believers together with a group of Roman Gentiles and then move powerfully by His Spirit upon them all.

• In this story we again see the Holy Spirit acting as Superintendent of the Harvest. It is He who is directing the work of missions.

10:1 Caesarea

• Caesarea was an important seaport city built by Herod the Great between 25 and 13 B.C.

• It was located about fifty miles (eighty kilometers) northwest of Jerusalem and served as the residence of the Roman procurator of Palestine.

• Caesarea had a mixed Jewish and Gentile population.

10:1 A man named Cornelius

• Along with Peter, Cornelius is the chief player in this story.

• Luke describes him as a God-fearer, that is, a Gentile who sincerely sought to serve and follow the God of Israel.

• He was a prayerful man, godly, generous, and deeply reverent.

• Still, to the Jewish mind he remained an unclean Gentile.

• Even more, he was a Roman soldier, and thus a living symbol of Gentile oppression over the Jews.

10:3 A vision

• An angel of God appeared to Cornelius in a vision. The Spirit moved on this yet-to-be-converted man, directing him to the truth.

• One work of the Holy Spirit is to point men to the truth (John 6:44; 16:8-11).

• Many ex-Muslims can testify today of how Christ appeared to them in a vision, beginning their quest for Him.

10:9 Peter went up on the roof to pray

• Cornelius and Peter are both noted for their prayer in this story (vv. 2, 4, 9, 30-31; 11:5).

• Prayer is a central prerequisite for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Concerning the relationship of prayer to receiving the Holy Spirit, see comments on 1:14.)

10:10 He fell into a trance

• Peter's falling into a trance was an act of the Holy Spirit. It was while he was in this state that the Lord gave him a vision.

• Believers should not seek after visions; however, when they come, they should welcome and cherish them.

10:15 Do not call anything impure that God has made clean

• God was teaching Peter that Jewish Christians should no longer consider Gentiles as impure or unclean. Christ died for them just as He died for the Jews.

• Neither should Gentiles be required to become Jewish proselytes before becoming Christians.

• Because of what Christ has done, they have the same right as the Jews to approach God for salvation and blessing.

• This represents a major shift in thinking for the Jewish Christians. It opened the door for Gentile inclusion in the blessing of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; compare Galatians 3:16).

10:19 The Spirit said to him

• Because Peter had been filled with the Spirit (2:4) and he remained full of the Spirit through prayer (2:42; 3:1; 6:4) and repeated fillings of the Spirit (4:8, 31), he was able to hear and clearly discern the voice of the Spirit.

The Story: Peter Goes to the Gentiles (Acts 10:27-33)

When Peter and his companions entered Cornelius' house, they found a large

gathering of people ready to hear what Peter had to say. After expressing his misgivings about entering into a Gentile home, Peter assured the residents that "God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean." He then asked them why they had sent for him.

Cornelius told Peter of his vision and how an angel had told him to send for him. He concluded, "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Commentary on Acts 10:27-33

10:28 God has shown me

• Peter's newfound understanding of God's ways did not come to him by intellectual endeavor, but by a direct action of the Holy Spirit.

• What the Holy Spirit showed him, however, was nothing new. It was what the Scriptures had taught from the beginning: that God is the God of all creation and that He loves all nations and wants them all to know and serve Him (Genesis 12:3; Psalms 2:8).

10:33 We are all here in the presence of God

• Cornelius understood that when people prayerfully gather in the Lord's name, He joins them (Matthew 18:20).

• God's presence is manifested when His people pray and call upon His name. In such an atmosphere the Holy Spirit is easily received.

The Story: Peter's Spirit-Inspired Message (Acts 10:34-43)

Peter began his message to Cornelius' household with an admission: "I now realize," he said, "how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right." He then launched into a recital of the gospel message, declaring that Jesus is Lord of all. He told how God had anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He had gone about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.

Peter then addressed the theme of Spirit-empowered witness, stating that God had raised up the apostles to be witnesses of all that Jesus did. They testified about

Him and how He was crucified, and how God had raised Him from the dead. After His resurrection, Jesus was not seen by everyone, but by witnesses whom God chose.

He sent those same witnesses to testify that Jesus is the One whom God has appointed as the Judge of all people. Not only that, but the prophets also bore witness to Christ, saying that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.

Commentary on Acts 10:34-43

Three Major Themes in Peter's Sermon

While presenting the actual words and essence of Peter's sermon to the household of Cornelius, Luke carefully constructed the sermon to help his readers understand exactly what was taking place on that day and what God was trying to accomplish.

• First, Peter's newfound realization that he should call no man common or unclean. This represented a radical shift in Peter's thinking concerning the Gentiles. It was also a direct challenge to the Judaizers within the Jerusalem church. It was absolutely essential that this shift in thinking take place if the church was to become all that Jesus intended it to be.

• Second, the gospel, the message of Christ. This message was the core of all apostolic witness. Peter declared that Jesus was the Messiah and Lord of all. He spoke of His death, His resurrection, and His post-resurrection appearances (compare 1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

• Third and most developed, Spirit-anointed vocational witness. Peter told of how Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to perform His ministry. The same was true of the apostles, who were eyewitnesses of everything Jesus did, including His death and resurrection, and who saw Him alive after His resurrection.

• He commanded them to preach and testify to the people that He was the Judge of the living and the dead. Finally, the prophets testified about God's universal salvation for all who would believe.

• This witness theme is important, for it sets the stage for the outpouring of the Spirit about to take place.

10:34 I now realize... that God does not show favoritism

• Peter repeated the lesson he learned on the rooftop in Joppa.

• Before the gospel could advance beyond parochial Judaism, the church had to come to the understanding that God accepts people from every nation who will fear Him and do what is right.

10:36 Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all

• Jesus is not only the promised Jewish Messiah, He is Lord (Greek Kurios) over all peoples and nations.

• Jesus is referred to as "Lord" nearly one hundred times in Acts.

• The title identifies Him both as deity and supreme ruler in God's kingdom.

10:38 God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power... God was with him

• Although Jesus was truly God, in His incarnation He emptied himself of the use of His divine attributes and ministered as a man full of the Holy Spirit (compare Philippians 2:6-7).

• Jesus' ministry was thus performed not in His own power as the second person of the Trinity, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• This is a key theme in the Gospel of Luke, beginning with Jesus' announcement that "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (4:18; compare 3:21-23), and continuing throughout His ministry (4:1, 14; 5:15; 9:1; 11:20; 24:45, 49; Acts 1:2).

• It is for this reason that Jesus could say to His disciples that they would be able to do the same, and even greater, works than He (John 14:12). It is because they would be anointed by the same Spirit who anointed Him.

10:39 We are witnesses

• Spirit-anointed vocational witness is the major theme in Peter's sermon to Cornelius' household and is a major theme in Acts.

• The word "witness" is used twice in this passage (vv. 39, 41) and implied two other times, using the cognate word "testify" (vv. 42-43).

• Witness first appears in 1:8 where Jesus tells His disciples that they will be His

"witnesses... to the ends of the earth." (See comments on 2:32.)

10:39-40 They killed him..., but God raised him from the dead

• The central core of the gospel message is the vicarious death and glorious resurrection of Christ. (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. See the comments on 1:3.)

The Story: The Holy Spirit Is Poured Out on Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48)

Before Peter had finished his message, the Holy Spirit came powerfully upon all who were listening. The Jews who accompanied Peter to Caesarea were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. They knew it was so because they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God.

Peter then called for these new believers to be baptized in water, saying, "They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." After this he stayed with Cornelius and his companions for a few days.

Commentary on Acts 10:44-48

Again the Holy Spirit Is Poured Out

• The Caesarean outpouring is the fifth of seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts.

• It is also the third and final outpouring during the transitional period.

• This outpouring opened wide the door for the upcoming Gentile mission (see Table 2.1).

• The purpose of the Caesarean outpouring was the same as for every other outpouring of the Spirit in Acts: to empower the church for missional witness (compare 1:8; 10:46; 11:15).

10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words

• The "words" Luke is referring to are Peter's words concerning Spirit-empowered vocational witness (vv. 38-43).

• It was at that precise moment in Peter's sermon that the Holy Spirit fell on all those who were present.

• This "divine coincidence" helps us to understand the reason the Holy Spirit was given on this occasion.

• The Spirit was given so that the Gentile household of Cornelius could be empowered for vocational witness, just as Christ himself had been (v. 38).

10:44 The Holy Spirit came on all

• Empowerment for mission is an experience for all Christians.

• The word "all" often occurs in Scripture in relation to people's experiencing the Spirit.

• Moses wished "that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29).

• Joel prophesied of a time when God would pour out His Spirit on "all people" (Joel 2:28).

• On the Day of Pentecost "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).

• On that same occasion Peter announced that the gift of the Holy Spirit was "for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).

• Now, here at the household of Cornelius, "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message."

10:45 The gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles

• Joel had prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit on all peoples.

• God continued to fulfill that promise by giving the Spirit to uncircumcised Gentiles.

10:46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God

• The Greek word translated "for" (gar) in this verse is often translated "because."

• The Jewish brethren knew that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit because they heard them speak in tongues and magnify God.

• Speaking in tongues and prophetic witness thus serve as evidence that one has received the Holy Spirit.

• This is the second instance in Acts where tongues are specifically mentioned as occurring immediately upon one's receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).

• Tongues are again specifically mentioned in Acts 19, when the Ephesian disciples receive the Spirit (v. 6).

• In the two other instances in Acts of individuals initially receiving the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues is consistent with the data (8:17-18; compare 9:17-18 with 1 Corinthians 14:18).

• The NIV translates megaluno as "praising," but better translations are "magnify" (NKJV) or "exalting" (NASB).

• These newly Spirit-baptized Gentiles were likely exalting God by declaring His mighty works to others, as did the 120 disciples and Peter at Pentecost (2:11, 14ff.), rather than by praising Him as the NIV indicates.

• The Caesarean outpouring is another example of Luke's empowerment-witness motif first introduced in 1:8.

10:47 They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have

• The Gentiles in Caesarea received the Spirit just as the 120 Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost, and for the same purpose: Spirit-empowered witness.

The Story: The Door Is Opened (Acts 11:1-18)

Soon the news of what had happened at Caesarea spread throughout all Judea. Everyone was saying that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. Some Jewish believers, however, were not happy about what Peter had done. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, they began to criticize him, charging him with the offense of going into the house of uncircumcised Gentiles and eating with them.

Peter defended his actions by explaining exactly what had happened to him, including his vision and the Spirit's injunction to him: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." He further told these Jewish believers how the Spirit had spoken to him and told him to have no hesitation about going to Caesarea. Peter then told them about Cornelius' vision and how he had sent for him to bring them a message from God. The message would show them how they could be saved.

Peter finally told them of how the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, noting that He "came on them as He had come on us at the beginning." Peter was then reminded of the final speech of Jesus, how He had said to His disciples, "John baptized with

water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." He concluded, "If God gave them the same gift as He gave us... who was I to think that I could oppose God?"

When the assembly heard this, they held their peace and confessed that "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

Commentary on Acts 11:1-18

A Pivotal Moment in the History of the Church

• The outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles in Caesarea was a pivotal moment in the history of the church.

• On that occasion God gave to those Gentile seekers two dynamic, almost simultaneous experiences. First, He granted to them "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

• He then almost immediately empowered them for witness by pouring out the Holy Spirit on them, just as He had done with the 120 "at the beginning" (v. 15).

• God was indeed pouring the new wine of the Spirit into the old wineskins of Jewish religious tradition, and the old wineskins could not contain it.

• God thus used the Caesarean outpouring to help prepare the church for its mission to "the ends of the earth" as Jesus had outlined in 1:8.

Witness in Two Directions

• This outpouring is yet another key example of Luke's empowerment-witness motif in Acts. The Caesarean outpouring resulted in powerful witness in two directions.

• First, it resulted in witness to the inhabitants of Caesarea. It did this through immediate prophetic proclamation of the gospel (see notes on 10:46) and by creating a new center of Spirit-empowered witness in an important Roman seaport (Acts 18:22; 21:8, 16).

• Second, the Caesarean outpouring witnessed back to the church in Jerusalem. It said to the Jewish Christians there that they should not place unnecessary requirements on Gentiles, other than faith and repentance, before they could become Christians.

• Uncircumcised Gentiles should be allowed into the church not only as

full-fledged members but also as full participants in God's mission.

11:12 The Spirit told me

• When explaining his actions to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, Peter answered that the Spirit had spoken to him, directing him to do what he did.

• Again, the Spirit was actively involved in directing and fulfilling the mission of Christ.

• Because Peter was open and obedient to the voice of the Spirit, God was able to use him.

11:15 The Holy Spirit came on them

• This phrase reminds us of Jesus' promise in 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you."

• Luke's use of the same terminology in both instances helps us to understand how we are to interpret the Caesarean outpouring.

• Here at Caesarea God was fulfilling His promise of Acts 1:8 that He would empower believers for missional witness when the Holy Spirit "came upon" them.

• Peter further testified that the Holy Spirit came upon the Caesareans "as... on us at the beginning." They received the Spirit in the same way and for the same purpose as the disciples at Pentecost, empowerment for witness.

11:16 You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit

• When the Spirit fell on the Caesareans, Peter remembered these words of Jesus spoken just before His ascension into heaven (1:4-8).

• They were spoken in the context of Jesus' preparing His disciples for the Day of Pentecost, when they would be empowered by the Spirit to take the gospel to all nations (v. 8).

• The implication is again clear: the Caesareans' baptism in the Holy Spirit was for the same purpose as the believers at Pentecost, empowerment for mission.

11:17 God gave them the same gift as he gave us

• God gave the new Caesarean believers the same gift (the baptism in the Holy Spirit) for the same purpose (empowerment for witness) as He gave to the apostles and other believers on the Day of Pentecost.

• Today the Lord still baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit for the same purpose.

11:18 So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life

• Peter's reasoning is seamless.

• If God has empowered Gentiles to be His witnesses to the nations and He has given them the same divine evidence as He gave to the 120 at Pentecost (speaking in tongues), then it cannot be denied that He must have first granted them repentance leading to eternal life.

The Story: The Church Strengthens and Expands (Acts 11:19-12:25)

The Gospel Reaches Antioch

Luke now takes his readers back to the scattering of the Jewish believers in Acts 8. He tells how some of those who were scattered by the persecution traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, Cyrene, and Syrian Antioch. Those who first arrived in Antioch preached the gospel to fellow Jews only. Some, however, who came to Antioch by way of Cyprus and Cyrene, preached the gospel to the Greeks (non-Jews) also. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people turned to the Lord.

When news of what was happening in Antioch reached the church leaders in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to check on the work. Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and when he arrived in Antioch, he was glad when he saw "evidence of the grace of God." He encouraged the disciples there to remain true to the Lord. As a result of his ministry, many people came to Christ.

Barnabas then went to Tarsus, where he found Saul. He brought him back to Antioch, where he and Saul worked together teaching many people. It was after a year of such teaching that the disciples in Antioch first came to be known as Christians.

About that time a group of prophets came down from Jerusalem. One of their number, Agabus by name, prophesied through the Spirit that a great famine was coming. In response to this prophecy, the disciples in Antioch decided to help their brothers living in Judea by sending a gift to them by Barnabas and Saul.

Herod, Prison, and Deliverance

Soon after this, Herod, the political ruler of the area, began persecuting the church in Jerusalem by arresting Christians. He killed James and then seized Peter and put him into prison to be held for trial. When the church heard what happened, it began to intercede for his release.

The night before Peter's trial, an angel of the Lord appeared in his cell, awoke him, and told him to get up. As he did, the chains fell from his wrists. The angel then led him out of the prison. Dazed, Peter thought he had seen a vision. When he finally came to himself, he understood that the Lord had sent His angel to deliver him. He then went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where a large group of believers had gathered to pray for him. At first the believers did not believe that it was actually Peter, but when they finally recognized him, they were astonished.

The next morning confusion filled the prison. No one knew what had happened to Peter. In anger, Herod had the guards executed. He later went to Caesarea. Because he refused to acknowledge God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

Even in the midst of such persecution, "the word of God continued to increase and spread." When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission of delivering the relief money from the saints in Antioch to those in Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch, taking with them John Mark.

Commentary: Missionary Witness in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

The Church Continues to Strengthen and Expand

• Seven years after Pentecost the church had spread throughout all Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; southward into Gaza and North Africa; westward into Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea; and northward into Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia.

• It had also likely spread to many places not mentioned in Acts.

• In the remainder of chapter 11 and in chapter 12, Luke told about the planting of the church in Antioch and of further developments affecting the church in Jerusalem.

When Does Evangelism Become Missions?

• Evangelism becomes missions when believers begin to minister across cultures. We see this happening in the church in Antioch.

• The first wave of Jewish Christians to arrive in Antioch told the message only to Jews. The second wave, however, preached the gospel to Greeks also.

• Although the first wave had traveled many miles from their home in Jerusalem and had crossed national borders, they were still doing evangelism because they were only reaching their own people.

• However, when the second wave began to reach out to those of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, they were doing missions!

• The church founded in Antioch was to become the second great center of Christian missions, after Jerusalem. It was from this church that Paul would launch his three missionary journeys. Luke therefore told us about the founding of this great church.

11:20 The good news about the Lord Jesus

• As in every other instance in Acts, wherever the believers went, their central message remained the good news about the Lord Jesus.

• This message must also remain the centerpiece of our preaching today, for only the message of Jesus is able to save people from their sins and give them eternal life (Acts 4:12; 16:31).

11:21 The Lord's hand was with them

• This is another way of saying that the manifest presence and power of the Holy Spirit accompanied them.

• In Scripture the Spirit is often pictured as the hand (or arm or finger) of the Lord (Ezekiel 3:14; 37:1; Luke 11:20; see also the comments on 4:30).

11:23 Evidence of the grace of God

• The evidence of the grace of God that Barnabas saw was the changed lives of the people who had become disciples of Jesus.

• We should expect this same evidence in our ministries today.

11:24 A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith

• Barnabas is mentioned thirty times in Acts and five times in the Pauline epistles.

• Because of his generous nature, he earned the title "Son of Encouragement" (4:36). In the church in Antioch he lived up to his name, for there "he encouraged them all" (v. 23).

• Barnabas was also an apostle and traveling companion of Paul on Paul's first missionary journey (13:3-14:26).

• He was also a preacher (15:35), a teacher (11:26; 13:1; 15:35), a prophet (13:1), and a worker of miracles (14:3; 15:12).

• As a result of Barnabas' Spirit-filled ministry, many people came to know the Lord. Here Luke draws a direct relationship between the preacher's character, his being full of the Holy Spirit, his faith, and church growth.

11:26 The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch

• Note that it was disciples (that is, committed learners) who were called Christians (Greek Christianous) at Antioch.

• It was only after an entire year of intensive discipleship training that these disciples began to display the character of Christ to such an extent that they were called Christians.

11:28 Agabus... through the Spirit predicted... a severe famine

• Agabus was one of a group of prophets who came from Jerusalem to strengthen the work in Antioch (v. 27).

• This is the first of two times that this prophet is mentioned in Acts (21:10). He seemed to have had a special gift of predictive prophecy.

• Not all prophecy in Scripture, however, is predictive. Even with the Old Testament prophets, most of their ministry was not predicting the future but declaring the word of the Lord to their contemporary audiences.

• In the church the threefold purpose of prophecy is strengthening, encouraging, and comforting believers (1 Corinthians 14:3; see also the comments on 21:10).

Commentary: Persecution, Prayer, Deliverance, and Witness (Acts 12:1-25)

A Second Source of Persecution

• Persecution now came to the Jerusalem church from a second source.

• The first wave of persecution had come from the Jewish authorities. This wave came from Herod, the political ruler of the area.

• Persecution is a repeated theme in Acts. (For an explanation of the role of persecution in Acts, see comments on 8:1.)

12:5 The church was earnestly praying to God

• Again Luke emphasized the power of prayer and the central role that it played in the life of the early church.

• Throughout Acts, we see the believers constantly in prayer, both individually and corporately.

• Prayer is a powerful weapon at the disposal of the church.

12:24 The word of God continued to increase and spread

• In spite of constant harassment and even martyrdom, the church stayed focused on its mission and continued to proclaim the gospel.

Conclusion

• With the story of Peter's deliverance from prison, we come to the end of the second section of Acts, the transitional period.

• The church was now ready to launch its Gentile mission.

• It did this with a powerful move of the Holy Spirit in the church in Antioch. That move of the Spirit is discussed in the next chapter.

Important Terms

Divine appointment. A meeting that God himself arranges.

God-fearer. A Gentile who worshipped and followed the God of Israel.

Proselytes. Gentiles who converted to Judaism. Peter learned that Gentiles did not have to do this first.

Caesarean outpouring. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius' Gentile household in Caesarea.

Transitional period. The middle section of Acts, where God prepared the church

for its mission to the nations.

Missional witness. Witness that carries the gospel out to the nations.

Empowerment-witness motif. Luke's repeated pattern in Acts: the Spirit comes, power is given, witness follows.

Superintendent of the Harvest. The Holy Spirit as the one who directs the work of missions.

Key People

• Cornelius: A God-fearing Gentile who lived with his family in Caesarea. A Roman centurion of the Italian Regiment. Prayerful, godly, generous, and deeply reverent. Along with Peter, the chief player in this story.

• Peter: The Jewish apostle who received the rooftop vision in Joppa, preached to Cornelius' household, and later defended his actions before the believers in Jerusalem. He was also delivered from Herod's prison by an angel.

• Simon the tanner: The man in whose home Peter was staying in Joppa.

• The angel of God: Appeared to Cornelius in a vision and told him to send to Joppa for Simon Peter. Later an angel of the Lord freed Peter from prison and struck down Herod.

• The six Jewish brothers: The believers Peter took with him from Joppa to Caesarea. They were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.

• Barnabas: Sent by the Jerusalem leaders to check on the work in Antioch. "A good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith." Called "Son of Encouragement" (4:36), and also a preacher, teacher, prophet, and worker of miracles.

• Saul: Found by Barnabas at Tarsus and brought to Antioch, where the two taught many people for a year. He and Barnabas carried the famine relief gift to Judea.

• Agabus: One of a group of prophets who came from Jerusalem to Antioch. He prophesied through the Spirit that a great famine was coming.

• Herod: The political ruler of the area. He persecuted the church in Jerusalem, killed James, and imprisoned Peter. Because he refused to acknowledge God, an angel of the Lord struck him down.

• Mary the mother of John Mark: A large group of believers gathered at her house to pray for Peter while he was in prison.

Key Places

• Caesarea: An important seaport city built by Herod the Great between 25 and 13 B.C., about fifty miles (eighty kilometers) northwest of Jerusalem. It served as the residence of the Roman procurator of Palestine and had a mixed Jewish and Gentile population.

• Joppa: Where Peter was staying in the home of Simon the tanner, and where he went up on the roof to pray and received the vision.

• Jerusalem: Where Peter returned and was criticized for going into the house of uncircumcised Gentiles, and where the assembly confessed that God had granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.

• Antioch (Syrian Antioch): Where the gospel was preached to Greeks as well as Jews, where the disciples were first called Christians, and which became the second great center of Christian missions after Jerusalem.

• Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Cyrene: Places reached by believers scattered by the persecution of Acts 8. Some who came from Cyprus and Cyrene preached to the Greeks in Antioch.

• Tarsus: Where Barnabas went to find Saul before bringing him to Antioch.

Key Event

The Caesarean outpouring (Acts 10:44-48). While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came powerfully upon all who were listening in the house of Cornelius, and they spoke in tongues and magnified God.

This is the fifth of seven key outpourings of the Spirit in Acts and the third and final outpouring during the transitional period. Its purpose was the same as every other outpouring in Acts: to empower the church for missional witness. It opened the door wide to Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ and to full Gentile participation in the mission of God.

Key Verse

"They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

Acts 10:47

Remember This

• The Caesarean outpouring opened the door wide to Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ.

• Any people can become full participants in God's mission if they will be filled with the Spirit.

• This witness theme is important. It sets the stage for the outpouring of the Spirit about to take place.

• "They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

• We must ensure that those who receive the gospel are immediately empowered by the Spirit.

• Evangelism becomes missions when believers begin to minister across cultures.

• Missional churches minister to different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Life Application: A Divine Appointment

• We should not consider anyone unworthy of hearing and responding to the message of Christ.

• We should gladly carry the gospel to all people. When we do, we can expect the Holy Spirit to guide us.

• When such guidance comes, we can be sure that the Spirit is working on both ends of the situation. Not only does He guide us into witnessing, He also prepares the hearts of the ones He is directing us to.

• If we, like Peter, will be filled with the Spirit and remain prayerful, we too can expect the Lord to speak to us and to guide us.

Life Application: Peter Goes to the Gentiles

• We should not hesitate to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit, even when He leads us into unfamiliar and uncomfortable situations.

• When we do follow His leading, we can be assured that His presence will go

with us.

Life Application: Peter's Spirit-Inspired Message

• If Jesus ministered in the power of the Spirit, then we too must seek to minister in that same power.

• Just as He was anointed by the Spirit (Luke 3:21-22 with 4:18-19), we too must be anointed by the Spirit.

• This anointing comes as a result of one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit as were the 120 on the Day of Pentecost and as were the Gentile seekers in Caesarea.

• The anointing remains as we daily live and walk in the Spirit.

• We must keep the message of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection at the center of all our preaching and teaching.

Life Application: The Holy Spirit Is Poured Out on Gentiles

• We, too, can expect to receive the Holy Spirit today just as He was received by these Gentile believers in Caesarea and just as the disciples did on the Day of Pentecost.

• When we receive the Holy Spirit, we can expect the same results: we will speak in tongues and receive power to be effective witnesses for Him.

Life Application: The Door Is Opened

• As we minister for Christ, we should expect the same divine guidance that the Spirit gave to Peter and other New Testament believers. We can trust Him to guide us in the way.

• When He does give us direction, we should be willing to go without hesitation to any place or to any people wherever He directs.

• As we go, we should bear in mind that not only will God use us to spread His Word, but He will also use those to whom we take the gospel.

• It is therefore essential that we ensure that those who receive the gospel are immediately empowered by the Spirit to take the gospel to others.

Life Application: The Church Strengthens and Expands

• If we are to have truly missional churches, we must gladly minister to people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

• We cannot allow people of different tribes and religions who live in our neighborhoods to go unevangelized. We must find ways to reach them with the gospel.

• In this way we can be true missionaries, without even leaving our own home towns.

• It is important that we ensure that the Lord's hand is with us as we minister. We must have the Spirit's presence and power in us.

• Just as Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, we should also seek to live holy lives, be filled with the Spirit, and act in faith in all that we do for Christ.

• When we face difficulties in fulfilling the Great Commission, we should turn to God in earnest prayer. Through prayer we can tap into the miracle-working power of God.

• It is also through prayer that we receive strength and guidance for the work ahead.

• If we will seek God's face and remain focused on His mission, we too can expect to see the word of God continue to increase and spread wherever we are ministering.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. What was the meaning of the vision that the Spirit gave to Peter on the rooftop?

• 2. Why is it important to understand that Jesus ministered in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit? (Acts 10:38). What are the implications for our ministries today?

• 3. How did the Jewish brothers who accompanied Peter to Caesarea know that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit?

• 4. According to Acts 1:8 and 11:15-17, how do we know that the Gentiles in Caesarea were given the Holy Spirit to empower them as witnesses?

• 5. How can your church become a missional church?

Quick Review

1. Who was Cornelius?

Answer: A God-fearing Gentile living in Caesarea, a Roman centurion of the Italian Regiment, who prayed often and gave generously to the poor.

2. Where was Peter staying when he received his vision, and in whose house?

Answer: In Joppa, in the home of Simon the tanner.

3. What did the voice tell Peter in the vision?

Answer: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." God was teaching him that Jewish Christians should no longer consider Gentiles impure or unclean.

4. Where does the Caesarean outpouring stand among the key outpourings in Acts?

Answer: It is the fifth of the seven key outpourings, and the third and final outpouring during the transitional period.

5. When does evangelism become missions?

Answer: Evangelism becomes missions when believers begin to minister across cultures.

Chapter Summary

The Caesarean outpouring opened the door wide to Gentile inclusion into the body of Christ, and to full Gentile participation in the mission of God.

• God arranged a divine appointment between Cornelius, a Gentile soldier, and Peter, a Jewish apostle, and taught Peter not to call anything impure that God has made clean.

• While Peter was still speaking about Spirit-empowered witness, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message, and the Jewish brothers knew it because they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God.

• Peter's report in Jerusalem settled the matter: God gave the Gentiles the same gift for the same purpose, so the church confessed that God had granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.

Carry the gospel to people of every ethnic and cultural background, and make sure those who receive it are immediately empowered by the Spirit to take it to others.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

God arranged an appointment between a Gentile soldier and a Jewish apostle, poured out His Spirit on the Gentiles in Caesarea, and so opened the door to full Gentile participation in the mission of God.

CHAPTER 8 · UNIT 4 · DAY 3

Paul's First Missionary Journey

The Antiochian outpouring launches the Gentile mission; ministry on Cyprus and in Asia Minor; planting indigenous churches

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 8)

Chapter purpose. This chapter studies the launch of the Gentile mission: the Antiochian "outpouring" sends Barnabas and Saul, they minister on Cyprus and in Asia Minor, they plant indigenous churches, and they report to the sending church in Antioch.

The transitional period ended with the door opened to Gentiles. Now the Gentile mission begins with a powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch, the sixth of the seven key outpourings. The author writes it as an "outpouring" in quotation marks. Keep those quotation marks.

Bible reading: Acts 13:1-14:28

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 13:1-14:28. Each part of the lesson then has its own shorter reading: Acts 13:1-3, Acts 13:4-12, Acts 13:13-52, Acts 14:1-7, Acts 14:8-20, Acts 14:20-23, and Acts 14:24-28.

Learning Objectives

• State the result of the powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, and show how this "outpouring" confirms Luke's empowerment-witness motif.

• Identify, from Acts 13:1-4, who cooperated in sending the missionaries to the field.

• Explain what part the demonstration of spiritual gifts played in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to Christ.

• State three important indigenous church-planting principles learned from Paul's first missionary journey.

• Explain what it means that "the gospel ministry is more than just talking."

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 13:1-14:28

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 13:1-14:28. Keep your Bible open. The chapter reviews a shorter passage before each part of the lesson.

The Big Idea

The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

The Gentile Mission Begins

• We now progress in our study to the period of the Gentile mission. This is the third part of Jesus' missionary agenda as outlined in Acts 1:8.

• The church has already extended into Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. The time has now come for it to expand to the "ends of the earth."

• The "ends of the earth" in Acts 1:8 corresponds to the Gentile mission.

• The Gentile mission begins with a powerful move of the Holy Spirit in the church in Antioch. We call this move of the Spirit the Antiochian "outpouring."

• It is the sixth of seven key outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Acts and the first outpouring during the Gentile mission (see Table 2.1).

The Story: The Antiochian "Outpouring" (Acts 13:1-3)

There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. These included Barnabas, Simeon (also called Niger, or the Black Man), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the foster-brother of King Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. Once, during a time of worship and fasting, a prophetic word was given. In this word the Holy Spirit instructed the church to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the missionary ministry to which He had called them. After more fasting and prayer, the leaders laid their hands on the two missionaries and sent them on their way.

Commentary on the Antiochian "Outpouring"

• The church's Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church of Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

• We have put the word "outpouring" in quotation marks because what happened in Antioch cannot technically be termed an outpouring of the Spirit, as are the other six key outpourings in Acts.

• It could more accurately be termed an action or move of the Spirit. We are calling it an outpouring, however, to maintain continuity in our terminology.

• It must be noted that this powerful move of the Spirit points to one or more prior outpourings of the Spirit in the church in Antioch.

• Luke has already described the beginning of the church in Antioch in 11:19-26. The church was started by Christian refugees who fled Jerusalem during the persecution that broke out after Stephen's martyrdom.

• It quickly grew into a powerful multiethnic church. Under the guidance and care of Saul and Barnabas and other talented leaders, it became a truly Spirit-anointed missional church.

• It was from this congregation that the church's first ever intentional missionary effort was launched and the Gentile mission officially began.

• Luke locates a pneuma event (that is, an event marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit) near the beginning of each of Paul's three missionary journeys. These interventions of the Holy Spirit are more specifically located at the launching of new missionary initiatives, as indicated in Table 8.1.

• These pneuma events are significant because they let us know that all of Paul's missionary ministry was empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.

• The Antiochian outpouring is yet another key example of Luke's empowerment-witness motif first presented in 1:8: "You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses."

• By showing this pattern over and over, Luke is trying to show his readers that any believer or any church can be used mightily by God if they will be filled with the Holy Spirit and remain committed to fulfilling Christ's mission.

13:1 Antioch

• Antioch, Syria, was called the "Queen of the East" and was the third greatest city

in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria.

• It was a cosmopolitan city and a commercial trading center. Its population was made up mainly of Syrians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans.

• Antioch was an ideal location for the emergence of a thriving missionary church and as a base for Paul's three missionary journeys.

Prophets and teachers

• Every healthy church should have prophets and teachers in its membership.

• Paul describes both ministries as grace gifts given by Christ to the church (Ephesians 4:7-11).

• Both are also charismatic giftings, and according to Luke, both operate by inspiration of the Spirit (Luke 5:17; Acts 2:17-18; 4:2; 5:21, 25, 28; 11:28; 13:9-12; 21:10-11).

• Jesus himself was a prophet and a teacher (Luke 24:19; John 3:2; 13:13), as were Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:26; 13:1). Both ministries are needed in the church today.

13:2 Worshiping the Lord and fasting

• Luke sees the church as a worshiping body.

• Before Pentecost the disciples "stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:53). After Pentecost the newly Spirit-baptized believers spent much time together "praising God" (Acts 2:47).

• The Jerusalem believers praised God after Peter's report that the Gentiles had received the Spirit at Caesarea (11:18). Also in Jerusalem, the brothers praised God for what He had done among the Gentiles through Paul's ministry (21:20).

• Now, in Antioch, Luke pictures the church "worshiping the Lord." Prayer with fasting was also a common practice of the New Testament church (Luke 5:35; Acts 13:3; 14:23).

The Holy Spirit said

• Luke included this move of the Spirit in Antioch because he wanted his readers to know that Paul's missionary journeys were an initiative of the Holy Spirit.

• On this occasion the Spirit spoke to the church through a prophetic gift. The

message could have come through tongues and interpretation or, more likely, through the gift of prophecy (compare 1 Corinthians 14:1-5).

The work to which I have called them

• True apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed; they are called by God.

• Paul and Barnabas already knew their calling, and they knew God had sent them previously to Antioch. The issue here seems to be timing. The Spirit was saying that it was now time to begin the mission.

13:3 After they had fasted and prayed

• The church fasted and prayed after hearing the prophetic word concerning Barnabas and Saul. It seems that the church was testing the prophecy.

• Paul later wrote that prophecies must be tested. He said that "two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said" (1 Corinthians 14:29).

• We are to weigh prophecies by the Word of God and through prayer and fasting. No prophecy given in an assembly should be received until it is first tested and approved.

• The believers in Antioch could have also been seeking God's further insight and direction, or they may have been interceding for the safety and success of the two missionaries.

They placed their hands on them

• Just as apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed, neither are they self-sent.

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit (compare 13:4).

• Paul himself later asked this question concerning missionaries: "How can they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:15).

The Story: Cyprus: Spirit-Empowered Ministry (Acts 13:4-12)

Barnabas and Saul were sent on their way by the church in Antioch and by the Holy Spirit. With them was John Mark, Barnabas' nephew. The men traveled southwest from Antioch to the nearby coastal town of Seleucia. From there they

sailed to the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, disembarking at Salamis. There they preached the gospel in the local synagogue. They then traveled west across the island, preaching from town to town. Eventually, they reached Paphos on the western coast of Cyprus.

In Paphos, Barnabas and Saul met two men: the proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus, and a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus. The proconsul sent for Barnabas and Saul to visit him so he could hear the word of God. However, Bar-Jesus (also known as Elymas) opposed them and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith.

As this was happening, Paul was again filled with the Holy Spirit and given divine insight into what God was about to do. He looked straight at the sorcerer and announced that the hand of the Lord was against him and that he would go blind for a season. Immediately it happened: Elymas began to grope about in darkness, begging for someone to take him by the hand. When the proconsul saw this, he was astonished and believed the apostles' teaching about the Lord.

Commentary on Acts 13:4-12

• Being sent on their way by the church and by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas arrived at Cyprus and began the primary work of missions, proclaiming the message of Christ.

• They moved systematically across the island preaching the gospel, and likely establishing congregations, wherever they went.

• It is also likely that there were already congregations of believers on the island that had been started by Christian refugees who fled because of the persecution begun after Stephen's martyrdom (8:1-4; 11:19-20).

• The meeting of Paul and Elymas is a classic power encounter. A power encounter is a situation in gospel ministry when the power of God is challenged by the power of Satan.

• Here the sorcerer Elymas opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith. He probably did not do this by using rational arguments against the Christian faith. He more likely tried to turn the proconsul from the faith by using his occultic arts.

• Paul, however, was filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly challenged him.

• Through a word of knowledge, the Spirit revealed to Paul what God was about to do. Acting in faith, Paul announced to Elymas that the hand of the Lord was against him, and that he would be blinded for a season.

• When Paul's prediction immediately came true, Sergius Paulus' heart was opened to the gospel, and he believed in Christ. The power of the God of Paul was superior to the dark powers of the sorcerer.

13:4 Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit

• Again the Holy Spirit is presented as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• He is the primary missionary strategist, the equipper, the sender, the director, the encourager, and the sustainer of missions.

Cyprus

• The residents of Cyprus were notorious for their immoral worship of the Roman goddess of love, Venus, and the Assyrian goddess of fertility and war, Astarte.

• The island was the birthplace and home of Barnabas. There was already a Christian presence on the island when Barnabas and Saul arrived (11:19).

13:5 Proclaimed the word of God

• The apostles' message was the word of God, or the gospel. This phrase is often used in Acts to mean the preaching of the gospel.

• In missions, our message is the full counsel of God (20:27), and the heart of that message is the message of Jesus (4:2; 5:42; 8:5; 9:20; 17:3).

13:9 Filled with the Holy Spirit

• This phrase is not describing Paul's initial filling with the Holy Spirit, for that happened several years earlier when Ananias laid hands on him in Damascus (9:17-18).

• This experience of Paul's can more properly be termed a refilling or an anointing with the Holy Spirit.

• Like Peter in 4:8, Paul is being anointed by the Spirit to release a spiritual gift.

13:12 The proconsul... believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord

• Power ministry is not an end in itself. The ultimate goal of power ministry is to bring people to faith in Christ.

• Power encounter (a demonstration of God's power) must always be accompanied by truth encounter (the proclamation of the gospel).

• In this verse "the teaching of the Lord" includes both proclamation and demonstration.

The Story: Pisidian Antioch: The Gospel Is Proclaimed (Acts 13:13-52)

From Paphos, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark sailed northward until they arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. There John left the group and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas, however, continued northward through Pamphylia as far as Pisidian Antioch. The next Sabbath Paul was invited to speak in the Jewish synagogue there.

Paul began his message by reminding those present of how God had blessed Israel in many ways. He especially blessed Israel by sending to them the message of salvation through Jesus, the Savior and descendant of David. Though the people of Jerusalem and their rulers rejected Jesus and asked Pilate to execute Him, God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. This was all foretold by the prophets. Now, through this same Jesus, they could have forgiveness of sins, and through faith in Him, they could be justified before God. This was a thing that the Law of Moses could never do. They therefore must not reject Jesus. If they were to do so, God would judge them, as the prophets had solemnly warned.

After the meeting, some asked Paul and Barnabas to come and speak again on these topics. Many Jews and God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, and the apostles urged them to continue in God's grace.

The next Sabbath almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. This caused some Jews to become jealous, so they began to contradict what Paul was saying. Paul and Barnabas then turned to the Gentiles. As they did, they applied the words of Isaiah the prophet to themselves: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles." When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the Lord.

The word of the Lord then spread through the whole region. In response, the Jews

stirred up some high-ranking officials of the city, who in turn instigated persecution against Paul and Barnabas, expelling them from their region. Paul and Barnabas therefore shook the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. The disciples in Antioch, nevertheless, were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Commentary on Acts 13:13-52

• Paul's sermon in Antioch is another example of apostolic preaching, sometimes called the apostolic kerygma. (For a discussion on the apostolic kerygma, see comments on 2:22-36.)

• As in every other case in Acts, Jesus is the central theme, especially His death and resurrection. Paul appeals to Scripture to prove his case. Finally, he calls his hearers to repentance and faith in Christ. These elements should be a part of all gospel preaching.

• Some commentators have pointed out that verses 38 and 39 are a summary of Paul's letter to the Galatians that he would later write to these same people: through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed, and through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything they could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

13:30 God raised him from the dead

• In this short sermon Paul mentions Christ's resurrection five times (vv. 30, 33, 34, 35, 37), demonstrating its importance to the message of the gospel.

13:38 Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you

• We do not preach the gospel simply to transfer information.

• The purpose of gospel preaching is to call people to make a decision to follow Jesus and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Him.

13:47 A light for the Gentiles... to the ends of the earth

• Jesus is Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). He is a light not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles.

• The phrase "ends of the earth" (Greek eschatos tes ges) reminds us of Jesus' promise in 1:8: "You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth."

• Our mission is to preach the gospel in pentecostal power to all nations before Jesus returns (Matthew 24:14).

13:50 They stirred up persecution

• Although persecution came again and again, the apostles persisted in proclaiming the gospel.

13:52 The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit

• This verse reveals that Paul led the new converts in Antioch into Spirit baptism, for they were "filled... with the Holy Spirit." This fact is borne out in Paul's own words (Galatians 3:2-5, 14).

• As a result of these people being filled with the Spirit, "the word of the Lord spread through the whole region" (Acts 13:49).

• Joy is one natural by-product of being filled with the Spirit (Luke 10:21; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).

The Story: Iconium: Signs and Wonders (Acts 14:1-7)

Upon arriving in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue, as was their usual practice. There they preached with such power and clarity that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. However, as in Antioch, several Jews rejected the message of Christ and began to poison the minds of the Gentiles against the apostles by saying evil things about them. Paul and Barnabas were undaunted and stayed a long time in Iconium, preaching boldly. The Lord confirmed their message by performing mighty signs and wonders among the people.

The people of the city were, nevertheless, divided in their opinion concerning the apostles. Some supported them; some opposed them. When Paul and Barnabas learned of a plot to incite a mixed mob of Gentiles and Jews to capture and stone them, they fled for their lives from the city. They then went to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. Everywhere they went, they faithfully preached the gospel.

Commentary on Acts 14:1-7

• In Iconium, as in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas encountered the hostility of the Jews.

• Their preaching of the gospel resulted in division in the city. The cause of this division, however, was not their preaching; it was the reaction of those Jews who violently opposed the message.

14:1 They spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed

• It is important that we learn to proclaim the word of the Lord effectively.

• Effectiveness in preaching comes from the preacher's personal character, thorough knowledge of Scripture, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

14:3 Confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders

• Again God confirmed the word they preached with "miraculous signs and wonders." This is a favorite expression of Luke.

• In its various forms he uses it eleven times in Acts (2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12).

• Jesus promised that He would confirm the preaching of the gospel with "signs following" (Mark 16:15-18). That promise has never been taken away from us.

• As we faithfully go and preach the gospel to those who have never heard, we can expect God to confirm the message in the same way today. Signs and wonders are manifestations of the Spirit's power (Romans 15:19).

14:4 The apostles

• Here both Paul and Barnabas are called apostles. Apostolic ministry is broader than the original twelve. Apostles exist today.

• However, nowhere in Scripture is the word apostle used as a title (for example, the apostle Paul); it is always used to describe a function or ministry.

• We have no scriptural warrant for calling any person by the title "apostle." Those who use this title today may risk becoming guilty of pride or manipulation.

• We do, however, have abundant scriptural warrant for those who function in an apostolic ministry.

• Apostolic ministry involves pioneer church planting done in the power of the Spirit in formerly unpenetrated areas and among unreached peoples (Romans 15:17-21; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

14:6-7 They continued to preach the good news

• Even after being chased out of the city, Paul and Barnabas continued to preach the gospel.

• We cannot let opposition keep us from preaching Christ to the lost.

The Story: Lystra: Gifts in Operation (Acts 14:8-20)

One day, as Paul was preaching in Lystra, a crippled man was present who had been crippled from birth. During his message Paul looked directly at the man and saw that he had faith to be healed. Paul commanded the man, "Stand up on your feet!" The man immediately jumped up and began to walk.

The crowd went wild with excitement and began to shout that Paul and Barnabas were the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes come down to earth in human form. When the two apostles saw a pagan priest bringing two bulls to sacrifice to them, they ripped their clothes in dismay and cried out, telling the people to stop. "We are bringing you good news," they shouted to the people, "telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them." They told them that He was the same God who had revealed himself to them with rain and crops and had given them joy to fill their hearts. Even so, Paul and Barnabas had difficulty keeping the people from sacrificing to them.

About that time a delegation of Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, and as they had done before, they began to poison the people's minds against Paul and Barnabas. An angry crowd then seized Paul, stoned him, and dragged him outside the city, leaving him for dead. But when the disciples gathered around him, he was revived and emboldened and went back into the city.

Commentary on Acts 14:8-20

• As a result of a wonderful miracle, Paul and Barnabas gained great credibility among the people of Lystra. They then seized the opportunity to present the gospel

to a more receptive audience.

14:9 Paul... saw that he had faith to be healed

• Only God can see into a person's heart and determine if there is faith. Paul could have known this only by divine revelation.

14:10 Stand up on your feet

• Like Peter, Paul uses a command of faith to heal the sick man (compare comment on 9:40).

• Speaking (or commanding) was the method Jesus used most often in healing the sick (Mark 7:34; Luke 4:39; 6:10; 7:14; 8:48; 13:12; 17:14; 18:42; John 5:8; 9:7; 11:43).

• Paul could have been exercising the gift of faith on this occasion (1 Corinthians 12:9).

• If the man had not stood up, Paul would have been shamed, and his ministry in Lystra would have been greatly hindered. However, since the man did stand, a wonderful opportunity to preach the gospel resulted. Paul had to act with great faith to perform this miracle.

14:15 We are bringing you good news

• The primary purpose of all missionary ministry is to present the good news and call people to faith in Christ.

14:20 The disciples... gathered around him

• These disciples gathered around Paul to pray. They probably prayed for him to receive healing, which he did.

• They may have also prayed for him to receive a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

• He must have received strength and boldness from the Lord, for after they prayed, he went back into the city.

Further Insight: Spiritual Gifts in Missionary Work

• We learn from the book of Acts that the operation of spiritual gifts is an important part of missionary work.

• In Paul's ministry in Lystra, spiritual gifts opened the way for effective

evangelism. This was true in many other instances in Acts.

• According to this author's count, there are sixty-six instances of spiritual gifts in operation in Acts. This includes gifts from all three categories: prophetic gifts, revelation gifts, and power gifts (compare 1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

• Unlike Paul's epistles, which focus on the operation of spiritual gifts in the church (1 Corinthians 12-14), Acts focuses on the operation of spiritual gifts in evangelism and missions.

• These gifts often worked together in groups to bring about the desired result of people coming to Christ.

• This happened in Lystra. As Paul was preaching a Spirit-anointed message (a prophetic gift), he was enabled by the Spirit to look into a man's heart and see that he had faith to be healed (a revelation gift). Then, acting in extraordinary faith, Paul commanded the crippled man to stand on his feet. The man obeyed, and a miracle occurred (a power gift).

• A similar thing took place when Peter and John healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (3:1-4:4). Gifts were manifested from all three categories. Through a word of knowledge (revelation), Peter knew that it was God's time to heal the lame man. Through a gift of healing (power), the man was miraculously healed. And through a manifestation of the gift of prophecy (prophetic), Peter stood and powerfully addressed the crowd. Because of the release of these three categories of spiritual gifts, many were added to the kingdom (4:4).

• Every missionary and minister of the gospel must ensure that spiritual gifts are in operation in his or her life and ministry. The missionary or minister should also ensure that the church he or she plants understands how to operate in the gifts of the Spirit.

The Story: Derbe: Soul Harvest (Acts 14:20-23)

The following day Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe. While there, they preached the gospel and won many new disciples to the Lord. They then returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where they strengthened the new believers, encouraging them to remain true to the Lord in spite of persecution. They also appointed elders in each church and committed them to the Lord with a time of prayer and fasting.

Commentary on Acts 14:20-23

• Few details are given concerning Paul and Barnabas' missionary ministry in Derbe. What we are told, however, is exciting. As a result of their preaching the gospel there, the apostles experienced a great soul harvest!

14:21 They preached the good news... and won a large number of disciples

• True to their commission from Christ, the apostles preached the gospel in Derbe, as they had done in every other place (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). As a result, they won many people to the Lord.

14:22 Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them

• The missionary's role goes beyond simply preaching the gospel and bringing people to salvation. Jesus told us that we are to make disciples of them (Matthew 28:19).

• A disciple is more than a convert; a disciple is a follower and learner of Christ.

• The missionary's role thus includes encouraging Christ's followers to remain true to Him. This can be done through fellowship (Romans 1:12; Ephesians 6:21-22; Philemon 7; Hebrews 10:25), teaching (Acts 20:2; Romans 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 2 Timothy 4:2), and prophetic words (Acts 9:31; 15:32; 27:33-36; 1 Corinthians 14:3).

The kingdom of God

• The kingdom of God is mentioned eight times in Acts (1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

• It can be defined as God's sovereign reign over His creation. Christ has been declared king over the kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15).

• Therefore, to preach the gospel of the kingdom is to preach Christ (Acts 8:12; 28:23, 31).

• We are to preach the gospel in all the world before Jesus comes again (Matthew 24:14).

The Story: Antioch: The First Missions Convention (Acts 14:24-28)

Leaving Lycaonia, Paul and Barnabas returned through Pisidia into Pamphylia. After they had preached in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where the church had first committed them to the work they had now completed. When the church gathered, the apostles gave a report of all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. They then remained in Antioch with the disciples for a long while.

Commentary on Acts 14:24-28

• This passage tells us of the world's first ever missions convention in Scripture.

• After Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their missionary journey into southern Galatia, the church gathered to hear their report. It was a report of how God's grace had reached out to the Gentiles.

• The apostles shared how God had sustained them in the work and how the Spirit had moved in power among the Gentiles.

• The sending church in Antioch must have rejoiced when its members heard about the healing, deliverance, hope, and salvation that had come to those who had never before heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

14:26 The work they had now completed

• The two apostles did not just begin their mission; they completed it.

• They were able to endure the hardships and complete their mission because they were truly called of God (13:2), because they remained focused on their mission (14:21, 25), and because they stayed full of the Holy Spirit (13:9).

• We too can complete the work that God has given us, even under trying circumstances, if we will do the same.

14:27 They gathered the church together

• The church was excited and anxious to hear what God had accomplished through their missionaries. They therefore called a special missionary meeting to hear the apostles' report.

Reported all that God had done through them

• The believers in Antioch must have rejoiced when they heard how God had worked through Paul and Barnabas to bring Christ to the Galatians, both Jews and Gentiles.

• The essence of missions is God working through Spirit-filled missionaries to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the lost and to demonstrate the power and superiority of His kingdom through mighty signs and wonders.

God... opened the door of faith to the Gentiles

• When Paul was saved and filled with the Spirit, God had informed him that he would be His "chosen instrument to carry [His] name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18).

• Now Paul's apostleship and missionary calling to the Gentiles had been firmly established. God used Barnabas and him to open to them "the door of faith."

Further Insight: Planting Indigenous Churches

• Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey gives us our first insight into Paul's missionary methods.

• Paul planted churches. Paul did not just "get people saved;" he planted indigenous churches.

• Indigenous churches are churches that are able to support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

The methods he used to plant such churches

• Proclaiming the gospel (Acts 13:5, 23-43; 14:3, 7, 14-18; 14:21).

• Demonstrating God's power through signs and wonders (13:9-12; 14:3, 8-10).

• Ensuring that those who were saved were also filled with the Holy Spirit (13:52).

• Teaching and encouraging new disciples to remain true to the faith (13:43).

• Mobilizing believers to reach out to others (13:49).

Paul appointed leaders over the churches

• According to Acts 14:23, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church." These men would lead the church in Paul's absence.

• Church leaders should be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). They should also be people of mature character and respected in the community (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Paul trusted the Holy Spirit

• The last part of Acts 14:23 says, "With prayer and fasting, [Paul and Barnabas] committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

• Paul and Barnabas could commit these new disciples to the Lord because they knew that they had been truly converted and filled with the Spirit (13:52; 14:1).

• If we make sure that people have been truly born of the Spirit and that they have been filled with the Spirit, then we can trust the Holy Spirit to teach and guide them, just as He has taught and guided us (compare John 14:25-26; 16:13; 1 John 2:27).

Conclusion

• God had opened the door to the Gentiles; however, not all of the church was convinced.

• Certain Jewish Christians in Jerusalem felt strongly that one must first become a good Jew before becoming a Christian.

• This meant that before the Gentiles could follow Christ, they must first accept and adopt a Jewish lifestyle, which involved keeping the Jewish laws, including circumcision.

• This was a nearly impossible requirement for most Gentiles. It would keep most of them out of the church.

• The question needed to be settled once and for all. In the next chapter we will see how the church addressed this critical question.

Figure 8.1: Paul's First Missionary Journey

Figure 8.1. Paul's first missionary journey, reconstructed from the chapter narrative. The original is a map in the printed book.

• Antioch: The sending church. During worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul. After more fasting and prayer, the leaders laid hands on

them and sent them on their way (Acts 13:1-4).

• Cyprus: Via Seleucia they sailed to Salamis, preached across the island, and at Paphos the proconsul Sergius Paulus believed after a power encounter with Elymas (Acts 13:4-12).

• Pisidian Antioch: Via Perga in Pamphylia. Paul preached in the synagogue, then turned to the Gentiles. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:13-52).

• Iconium: They preached boldly a long time. The Lord confirmed the message with signs and wonders. A plot to stone them drove them on (Acts 14:1-7).

• Lystra: Paul healed a man crippled from birth. The crowd tried to sacrifice to them as Zeus and Hermes. Jews from Antioch and Iconium had Paul stoned; the disciples gathered around him, and he went back into the city (Acts 14:8-20).

• Derbe: They preached the gospel and won a large number of disciples (Acts 14:20-21).

• Return: They returned through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, strengthening the disciples, appointing elders in each church, and committing them to the Lord with prayer and fasting. Then through Pisidia and Pamphylia they preached in Perga and went down to Attalia (Acts 14:21-25).

• Report: They sailed back to Antioch of Syria, gathered the church, and reported all that God had done and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles: the first missions convention in Scripture (Acts 14:26-28).

Table 8.1: Holy Spirit Interventions

Table 8.1: Holy Spirit Interventions. Luke locates a pneuma event, an event marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, near the beginning of each of Paul's three missionary journeys, at the launching of new missionary initiatives. These pneuma events let us know that all of Paul's missionary ministry was empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Journey · Pneuma event · Scripture

• Journey: First missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Antiochian "outpouring". Scripture: Acts 13:1-4

• Journey: Second missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Spirit redirects the team to Macedonia. Scripture: Acts 16:6-10

• Journey: Third missionary journey. Pneuma event: The Ephesian outpouring. Scripture: Acts 19:1-7

Important Terms

Antiochian "outpouring". The powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch that set apart Barnabas and Saul and launched the Gentile mission.

Pneuma event. A moment marked by a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit.

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

Power encounter and truth encounter. Power encounter: God's power meeting Satan's power. Truth encounter: preaching the gospel. Both belong together.

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

Apostolic kerygma. The apostles' gospel preaching: Jesus at the center, especially His death and resurrection, proved from Scripture, calling people to repent and believe.

Indigenous churches. Churches that can support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

Apostolic ministry. Pioneer church planting in the Spirit's power among peoples who have not yet been reached. It is a function, not a title.

Key People

• Barnabas: Prophet and teacher in Antioch; sent with Saul by the church and the Holy Spirit. Cyprus was his birthplace and home. In Iconium both he and Paul are called apostles.

• Saul (Paul): Prophet and teacher in Antioch; set apart with Barnabas for missionary ministry. On Cyprus he was again filled with the Spirit and released a spiritual gift. This was a refilling, not his initial filling, which happened when Ananias laid hands on him in Damascus (9:17-18).

• Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen: Prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, along with Barnabas and Saul. Simeon was also called Niger, or the Black Man.

Lucius was from Cyrene. Manaen was the foster-brother of King Herod the tetrarch.

• John Mark: Barnabas' nephew. He traveled with them from Antioch to Cyprus and as far as Perga in Pamphylia, where he left the group and returned to Jerusalem.

• Sergius Paulus: Proconsul of Cyprus. He sent for Barnabas and Saul to hear the word of God. After the power encounter with Elymas, he was astonished and believed the apostles' teaching about the Lord.

• Elymas (Bar-Jesus): A Jewish sorcerer and false prophet at Paphos who opposed the missionaries and tried to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith, likely by occultic arts. Paul announced that he would go blind for a season, and it happened immediately.

Key Places

• Antioch of Syria: Called the "Queen of the East," the third greatest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. A cosmopolitan trading center of Syrians, Greeks, Jews, and Romans. Base of Paul's three missionary journeys, and the sending church of this journey.

• Seleucia: The nearby coastal town southwest of Antioch, from which the missionaries sailed to Cyprus.

• Cyprus: Island in the eastern Mediterranean, birthplace and home of Barnabas. They preached from Salamis in the east to Paphos in the west. There was already a Christian presence there (11:19).

• Perga in Pamphylia: Where John Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem. They later preached there again on the return journey.

• Pisidian Antioch: Where Paul preached in the synagogue, then turned to the Gentiles. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

• Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe: Cities of the first journey in Asia Minor. In Iconium, signs and wonders confirmed the message. In Lystra, a crippled man was healed and Paul was stoned. In Derbe, they won a large number of disciples.

• Attalia: The port from which they sailed back to Antioch after preaching in Perga.

Key Event

The Antiochian "outpouring": while the church was worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them, and the church and the Spirit sent them on their way (Acts 13:1-4).

This is the sixth of seven key outpourings in Acts and the first of the Gentile mission. The author places "outpouring" in quotation marks because it is technically an action or move of the Spirit rather than an outpouring like the other six. It launched the church's first ever intentional missionary effort.

Key Verse

"Sent on their way by the Holy Spirit."

Acts 13:4

Remember This

• The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit.

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit.

• Paul did not just "get people saved;" he planted indigenous churches.

Life Application: Become a Spirit-Empowered Missional Church

• If we are to have powerful missionary churches, we must be ever open to the moving of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

• We must ensure that our members have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and that they thoroughly understand their responsibility of remaining full of the Spirit and focused on the mission of God.

• A truly missional church like the church in Antioch will reach out aggressively in evangelism and church planting. At the same time, it will remain focused on the nations that need to hear the gospel.

• Such a church will be strong in pastoral care and discipleship training. The gifts of the Spirit will be in operation, and the people will be taught to give generously and sacrificially to the work of missions.

• The truly missional church will gather often for Spirit-anointed worship and times of intensive prayer and fasting.

• It is God's will for every local congregation to be a Spirit-empowered missional church.

Life Application: Trust the Spirit in Opposition

• When involved in gospel ministry, we must trust the Lord to anoint us to proclaim the gospel with power.

• We must also trust Him to manifest His power through us in the release of spiritual gifts.

• When we face opposition from Satan, we can be confident that the Spirit of God is more powerful than the power of the enemy (1 John 4:4).

• If we are full of the Spirit, we can boldly challenge demonic forces in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• In all that we do, our goal must be to point people to Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Life Application: Preach Christ to All Peoples

• We must be faithful to preach the gospel wherever we go. As we preach, the cross of Christ must remain our central message.

• We must clearly teach people of His saving work on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the dead.

• We must tell them that through faith in Him, they can have forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

• Further, we must let them know that Christ has ascended to the right hand of God where He has poured out the Holy Spirit to fill us with His joy and to empower us to reach others with the message of the cross.

• And, in all that we do, we must never forget that the gospel is not for our people only; it is for all people everywhere on earth.

Life Application: Keep Preaching When Some Oppose

• When we go out to preach the gospel, we must not expect everyone to receive

our message gladly. Some, however, will.

• Apostolic ministry in formerly unreached areas will be difficult work. There may be powerful spiritual forces present that will blind people to the gospel.

• Whatever the case, we must continue to preach the good news as long as God wants us to remain in an area.

• If we will live holy lives, remain full of the Holy Spirit, and faithfully proclaim the gospel, we can expect God to confirm His Word by performing signs and wonders.

Life Application: Gospel Ministry Is More Than Talking

• To be truly effective missionaries and ministers of the gospel, we must know how to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and to be used by Him to minister spiritual gifts.

• Gospel ministry is more than simply talking (1 Corinthians 4:20).

• It also involves hearing and obeying the voice of the Spirit and preaching and teaching the gospel under His anointing (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

• It further involves acting in faith and allowing the Spirit to minister through us by prophetic words and miracles of healing and deliverance.

• If this is to happen in our lives and ministries, we must learn to walk in the Spirit daily. In addition, we must live lives of prayer and holiness before the Lord.

Life Application: Have Confidence in the Gospel

• In Derbe the preaching of the gospel resulted in a great harvest of souls.

• Because Paul had great confidence in the gospel he preached, he did not hesitate to preach it wherever he went. He knew that it contained the power of God to bring people to salvation (Romans 1:16).

• We, too, should have great confidence in the gospel, and we should be faithful to preach it often, calling people to faith and repentance.

• We must never forget that the message of Jesus is the only message that will get people to heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Life Application: Hold Missions Meetings

• Like the church in Antioch, churches today should also have missionary meetings.

• In these meetings, missionaries can share with the church their calling and burden for the lost. They can also share news about what God is doing among the people to whom they have been sent.

• Such meetings will encourage the people to participate in missions through prayer, giving, and maybe even going themselves.

• They will also encourage the missionaries, knowing that the church stands behind them in their work.

• Every church must be involved in missions in this way.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. What was the result of the powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch? How does this "outpouring" of the Spirit help to confirm Luke's empowerment-witness motif?

• 2. According to Acts 13:1-4, who cooperated in sending the missionaries to the field?

• 3. What part did the demonstration of spiritual gifts play in the conversion of Sergius Paulus to Christ?

• 4. Discuss the role of spiritual gifts in missionary work in the contemporary world. Are they primary or secondary in demonstrating the superiority of the gospel?

• 5. What three important indigenous church-planting principles can we learn from Paul's first missionary journey?

• 6. What does it mean that "the gospel ministry is more than just talking?"

• 7. Has your church held any missions services or conventions? Discuss this question.

Quick Review

1. Why does the author put "outpouring" in quotation marks when he writes of the

Antiochian "outpouring"?

Answer: Because what happened in Antioch cannot technically be termed an outpouring of the Spirit, as are the other six key outpourings. It could more accurately be termed an action or move of the Spirit.

2. According to Acts 13:1-4, who sent Barnabas and Saul?

Answer: They were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit. True apostles and missionaries are not self-appointed and not self-sent.

3. How did spiritual gifts play a part in Sergius Paulus' conversion?

Answer: Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Through a word of knowledge he announced that Elymas would go blind for a season. When it happened immediately, the proconsul was astonished and believed. Power encounter was accompanied by truth encounter.

4. What three indigenous church-planting principles come from this journey?

Answer: Paul planted indigenous churches (churches able to support, govern, and extend themselves). He appointed Spirit-filled, wise leaders (elders) in each church. He trusted the Holy Spirit, committing the new disciples to the Lord with prayer and fasting.

5. What does it mean that gospel ministry is more than just talking?

Answer: It involves hearing and obeying the Spirit, preaching under His anointing, and acting in faith so the Spirit can minister through prophetic words and miracles of healing and deliverance (1 Corinthians 4:20; 2:1-5).

Chapter Summary

The Gentile mission was launched by a powerful move of the Spirit in the church in Antioch, the Antiochian "outpouring."

• Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church and by the Holy Spirit. This is the sixth of seven key outpourings and the first of the Gentile mission.

• On Cyprus a power encounter opened Sergius Paulus to the gospel. In Asia Minor they preached, God confirmed the word with signs and wonders, and they planted churches.

• Paul planted indigenous churches: he proclaimed the gospel, demonstrated God's power, saw new believers filled with the Spirit, appointed elders, and committed them to the Lord.

Remain full of the Spirit and focused on Christ's mission, preach more than words,

and plant churches that can support themselves, govern themselves, and extend themselves.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

A powerful move of the Spirit in Antioch launched the Gentile mission; Barnabas and Saul preached on Cyprus and in Asia Minor, planted indigenous churches, and reported back to the sending church.

CHAPTER 9 · UNIT 4 · DAY 3

Missionary Council in Jerusalem

The Jerusalem council decides that Gentiles need not become Jewish proselytes to be saved

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 9)

Chapter purpose. This chapter discusses the missionary council in Jerusalem, where the church officially determined that Gentiles did not have to submit to the Law of Moses, which required circumcision for one to be saved.

After the first missionary journey, a dispute in Antioch about circumcision of Gentiles is settled in Jerusalem by the Spirit-guided council.

Bible reading: Acts 15:1-21

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 15:1-21. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage, and the last part of the lesson covers Acts 15:22-35.

Learning Objectives

• Explain the nature of the dispute that arose in the church in Antioch (Acts 15:1-5).

• State the evidences Peter, Paul, and Barnabas give that God had accepted the Gentiles without their first becoming Jewish proselytes.

• Show from this chapter whether certain Jewish believers were mistaking Jewish cultural requirements for gospel requirements.

• State the result of the Spirit-guided decision that followed the council.

• Explain how important it is to God that His children preserve the bonds of peace and unity among culturally diverse groups of believers, and how a leader can help keep this kind of unity between the churches.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 15:1-21

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 15:1-5; read Acts 15:6-12; Acts 15:13-21; Acts 15:22-35.

The Big Idea

The Jerusalem council decides that Gentiles need not become Jewish proselytes to be saved. Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone. This decision freed the church to be the global missionary force that Christ intended it to be, rather than a mere sub-sect of Judaism.

The Gentile Question

• After the Caesarean and Antiochian outpourings, the church continued to grow and extend itself. By now, it had ranged as far north as Galatia in eastern Asia Minor.

• There, Paul and Barnabas had been sent as the church's first intentional missionaries to the Gentiles. They had experienced great success, and several indigenous churches had been planted, resulting in many new believers being added to the Lord.

• These new believers came from four classes of people: Jews, Jewish proselytes, God-fearers, and Gentiles. It was the last two classes that created controversy in the church.

• Certain Jewish believers contended that before these two groups could be saved, they must first submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision. This debate has been called the "Gentile Question." Acts 15 records the story of how the controversy was resolved.

• In this chapter we will discuss the church council in Jerusalem where the issue was addressed directly. It occurred soon after Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, and we refer to it as the missionary council in Jerusalem.

• It was a highly significant event in the church's missionary development. It was for this reason that Luke included it in his narrative.

• At this council the church officially determined that Gentiles did not have to submit to the Law of Moses, which required circumcision for one to be saved.

• As Scripture makes clear, salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone.

• This decision freed the church to be the global missionary force that Christ intended it to be, rather than a mere sub-sect of Judaism.

The Story: Dissension in Antioch (Acts 15:1-5)

Some Jewish brothers arrived in Antioch from Judea and began to teach the Christians there that believers must be circumcised before they could be saved. Paul and Barnabas strongly opposed this teaching and entered into a sharp dispute with them. The leaders in the church in Antioch, therefore, appointed Paul and Barnabas, along with some other believers from the church, to go to Jerusalem and discuss the matter with the apostles and elders there.

On their journey to Jerusalem, the delegation traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, where they gave reports about how the Gentiles had come to Christ. This news made the believers in those places glad. When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, they were received warmly by the leadership of the church. They then gave a report of all that God had done through them among the Gentiles. However, some of the Pharisees who had become believers objected, saying that the Gentile Christians must be circumcised and obey the law of Moses to be saved.

Commentary on Acts 15:1-5

• Must a Gentile first become a good Jew before he or she can become a Christian?

• As simple as that question may seem to us today, it was not so simple for the early church. Christianity had been born into the cradle of Judaism.

• However, in order for it to grow into a worldwide movement, it had to break free from the binding legalism of the Jewish religion.

• Some Jewish Christians resisted the call for liberation. Others, like Paul and Barnabas, knew that it must take place if Christianity was to prosper among the nations.

• That is why they decided to travel all the way to Jerusalem to settle the matter once and for all.

15:2 Sharp dispute

• That some would teach that a person must keep the Law of Moses before becoming a Christian was no small issue. It struck at the very heart of the gospel of grace.

• Paul and Barnabas had no choice but to oppose this teaching, even if it meant sharp dispute.

• Some issues are so important that they cannot be ignored; they must be addressed and resolved.

This question

• The "question" referred to is the Gentile question.

• After God had poured out His Spirit on the Gentile believers in Caesarea, the apostles and brothers in Jerusalem praised God and said that "God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11:18). It was a historic occasion. It did not, however, finally settle the Gentile question.

• The question was this: How could those who were ritually unclean according to the Law of Moses be accepted by God?

• On one hand, how could uncircumcised Gentiles, who ate nonkosher foods and defiled themselves by participating in pagan practices, be true followers of Jehovah God without first becoming good Jews?

• On the other hand, had not Jesus himself commanded the church to take the gospel to these very people? Had He not commissioned His church to be His witnesses to the "remotest parts of the earth?"

• How, then, were they to reconcile these two seemingly contradictory issues? This was the question that needed to be resolved.

15:5 The party of the Pharisees

• These legalistic Jewish Christians are sometimes called Judaizers.

• They were true believers in Christ. In fact, they were probably the most biblically conservative members of the church.

• They were, however, wrong in their belief that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses before they could be saved.

The Story: Peter, Barnabas, and Paul Testify (Acts 15:6-12)

Soon after Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, the apostles and elders met to consider the Gentile question. After much discussion, Peter stood up and reminded the delegates of how God had used him to bring the message of the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea. He told them how God had seen into the Gentiles' hearts and had accepted their faith in Him. God proved this by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He had given to the Jewish believers at Pentecost. He made no distinction between them and the Jews, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Peter concluded his address with a challenge: "Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." After Peter had concluded, the whole assembly sat in silence and listened to Paul and Barnabas tell how, through them, God had worked many signs and wonders among the Gentiles.

Commentary on Acts 15:6-12

• At the Jerusalem Council Peter, Paul, and Barnabas stood as witnesses to the fact that God had chosen to include the Gentiles in His plan of salvation.

• They testified how God, by pouring out His Spirit, had extended His hand toward uncircumcised Gentiles. God himself had chosen to include them in His plan of salvation.

• This salvation does not come through keeping the law but through faith in Christ.

15:7 God made a choice

• It is not our choice who should and who should not hear the gospel and be saved.

• The choice to include all people in His plan of salvation was God's alone.

• It was also in God's sovereign plan that Peter would first preach the gospel to the Gentile believers in Caesarea.

15:8 By giving the Holy Spirit to them

• God proved that He had accepted the Gentiles into His family by giving them the Holy Spirit.

• The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience for believers only.

• Jesus taught that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to God's children (Luke 11:13). He further taught that the world (unbelievers) cannot receive the Spirit (John 14:17).

Just as he did to us

• God gave the Spirit to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house just as He did to the Jews at Pentecost.

• He gave them the same Spirit, in the same way, with the same evidence (2:4; 10:46), and for the same purpose: empowerment for witness (Acts 1:8).

15:9 He purified their hearts by faith

• It is through faith that all people are saved, whether Jews or Gentiles.

• Salvation does not come by the works of the Law but "through the grace of our Lord Jesus" (v. 11).

• Paul would later write, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

15:12 Miraculous signs and wonders

• The fact that God had done miraculous signs and wonders among (and on behalf of) the Gentiles is another strong indication that He wants to bless them and include them in His family.

The Story: A Word From the Lord (Acts 15:13-21)

After Peter, Paul, and Barnabas had finished their speeches, James spoke up and reinforced what Peter had said. He noted that in Caesarea, God had visited the Gentiles and received them to be part of his people. This was in agreement with the words of the Hebrew prophets: "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages" (Amos 9:11-12; Isaiah 45:21-22).

James then delivered his judgment on the matter, stating that the leaders of the

church should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who were turning to God. Only four out of thousands of Jewish religious prohibitions were to be followed by Gentile converts. He said the council should write a letter and tell the Gentile believers that they should not eat food sacrificed to idols and that they must abstain from all sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood.

He noted that these were some of the very things that Moses taught and had been preached against in Jewish synagogues for many generations. Sexual immorality is clearly forbidden in Scripture, and the other items were important to ensure that Jewish and Gentile Christians would be comfortable eating and fellowshipping together. In this way, James was making a way for the bond of unity and peace to be preserved between culturally diverse Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Commentary on Acts 15:13-21

• Paul and Barnabas, who had opposed the Judaizers in Antioch, were now joined by Peter.

• All three spoke in favor of including the Gentiles into the church without requiring them to first submit to the Law of Moses.

• James also joined them in saying that the church should not make it difficult for the Gentiles to turn to God.

15:13 James spoke up

• This James was the half-brother of Jesus. He was pastor of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the New Testament epistle of James.

• James the apostle and brother of John was martyred by Herod in 12:2.

15:15 The words of the prophets are in agreement

• God's intention to include the Gentiles in His redemptive plan was nothing new.

• It had always been His intention to take out "from the Gentiles a people for himself" (v. 14).

• God told Abraham that through his seed (Jesus), all the nations of earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18; compare Galatians 3:16).

• The Hebrew prophets consistently testified to the same thing (Isaiah 45:6, 22;

49:6; 51:4-5; 52:10; 56:7; Amos 9:11-12; Zephaniah 2:11; Zechariah 2:10-13).

• As a result, the Gentiles could also bear the Lord's name (v. 17).

15:16 I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent

• This prophecy of Amos said that God would rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David so that Gentiles might seek the Lord.

• Jesus is now the Head of the church as the new place of worship that replaced the temple.

• It is thus God's appointed time for full Gentile inclusion into the kingdom of God.

• Note how James appealed to Scripture to settle the Gentile question.

The Story: An Encouraging Letter (Acts 15:22-35)

After James' speech, the apostles and elders, with the consent of the whole assembly, chose two men from among them, Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas, to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. With them they sent a letter addressed to "the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia." The letter assured the Gentile believers that the men from Judea who had been troubling them did not have the authorization of the leadership of the church in Jerusalem. They were, therefore, sending Judas and Silas to accompany Paul and Barnabas to confirm that the letter had come from them.

The letter called Paul and Barnabas "dear friends" and "men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostles further informed its recipients that the decision they had reached "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," indicating that the Holy Spirit had inspired the decision. They assured the Gentile believers that they did not want to place any unnecessary burden upon them; however, they would be required to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality.

As soon as the four men arrived in Antioch, they called a meeting of the church and read the letter aloud. When the Gentile believers heard it, they rejoiced. Afterward, Judas and Silas, who were prophets, encouraged and strengthened the believers there. After a while, Judas returned to Jerusalem with the blessing of the church. Paul, Barnabas, and Silas, however, remained in Antioch, where they and

others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

Commentary on Acts 15:22-35

• The decision reached by the Jerusalem Council was momentous.

• Because the delegates were open to the Spirit and the teachings of Scripture, the correct decision was reached.

• It resulted in great joy among the new Gentile believers in the church.

• More importantly, the door was opened for the church to continue to expand among the Gentiles unabated.

15:22 Apostles and elders, with the whole church

• Not only were the top leaders of the church brought into the decision-making process, but the whole church was involved.

• This seems to indicate that some primitive form of democracy may have been used in the early church.

15:23 Believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia

• The church, as it was led by the Spirit, continued to expand into new regions.

• What accounted for these believers in Syria and Antioch? The believers in Syria possibly resulted from church-planting efforts of the church in Antioch. The believers in Cilicia possibly resulted from Paul's ministry there. He had spent time in Tarsus, Cilicia, and was probably involved in planting churches in that city and in the surrounding region, as was his custom (11:25).

• Luke did not record all of the church planting efforts of the early church, only those that helped to further his intent in writing.

• Hundreds of other churches were no doubt being planted by the apostles and other Spirit-filled disciples in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia Minor.

• Because these early disciples were empowered by the Spirit and totally committed to fulfilling the mandate of Christ, there was a spontaneous multiplication of churches.

15:28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us

• The Holy Spirit was active in the Council's deliberations. The issue was too

important to trust to human reason.

• Again, we observe the Holy Spirit acting as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• Exactly how the Holy Spirit helped these leaders and delegates to reach their decision we are not told.

• Possibly a word of prophecy was given, as in Antioch on two earlier occasions (11:28; 13:2); possibly a word of knowledge was given to James or another delegate; or possibly there was a strong inner witness of the Spirit in their hearts.

• However the leading came, the Holy Spirit played an active and significant role in their decision-making process.

15:31 The people read it and were glad

• The Spirit-directed decision of the Jerusalem Council brought great joy to the Gentile believers.

• They could now focus their energy on truly serving Christ and advancing His kingdom rather than on keeping nonessential legalistic rules.

Conclusion

• Having settled the Gentile question, the church was now prepared to continue its Gentile mission unhindered by doctrinal disputes.

• After an extended time of teaching and preaching in the church in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas prepared for their second missionary journey.

• This journey, however, was to begin with a dispute of another sort. In the next chapter we will look at that dispute and Paul's missionary journey that followed it.

Important Terms

Gentile Question. The debate over whether Gentiles and God-fearers had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses before they could be saved.

Judaizers. Legalistic Jewish Christians who taught that Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved.

Missionary council in Jerusalem. The meeting of apostles and elders in Jerusalem, soon after the first missionary journey, that settled the Gentile Question.

Gospel of grace. The good news that people are saved by faith in Christ, not by keeping the Law.

Jewish proselyte. A Gentile who had fully converted to Judaism, including circumcision.

God-fearer. A Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel but had not been circumcised.

Yoke. Peter's word for the heavy load of the Law, which neither the Jews nor their fathers had been able to bear.

Superintendent of the Harvest. Luke's picture of the Holy Spirit as the one who directs the work of missions, including the Council's decision.

Key People

• Paul and Barnabas: Opposed the teaching that Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved. The church in Antioch sent them to Jerusalem. At the council they told how God had worked many signs and wonders among the Gentiles.

• Peter: Reminded the council that God had used him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea, had given them the Holy Spirit just as at Pentecost, and had made no distinction between them and the Jews.

• James: The half-brother of Jesus, pastor of the church in Jerusalem, and writer of the New Testament epistle of James. He appealed to Scripture and judged that the church should not make it difficult for Gentiles turning to God. (James the apostle and brother of John was martyred by Herod in 12:2.)

• The party of the Pharisees (Judaizers): True believers in Christ, probably the most biblically conservative members of the church, who objected that Gentile Christians must be circumcised and obey the law of Moses to be saved.

• Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas: Chosen by the apostles, elders, and the whole assembly to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas and confirm the letter. They were prophets. Judas later returned to Jerusalem. Silas remained in Antioch.

• The apostles and elders: Met in Jerusalem to consider the Gentile question. With the whole church they reached a Spirit-guided decision and sent the letter.

Key Places

• Antioch: Where the dispute began when Jewish brothers from Judea taught that believers must be circumcised to be saved, and where the church later received the letter with joy.

• Jerusalem: Where the missionary council met with the apostles and elders to settle the Gentile Question.

• Phoenicia and Samaria: On the way to Jerusalem the delegation reported how the Gentiles had come to Christ, and the believers there were glad.

• Caesarea: Where God had used Peter to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and had poured out the Spirit on them, the evidence Peter cited at the council.

• Syria and Cilicia: Named with Antioch in the letter to Gentile believers. The believers in Syria possibly came from the church in Antioch; those in Cilicia possibly from Paul's ministry in Tarsus and the surrounding region.

• Galatia in eastern Asia Minor: As far north as the church had ranged by this time, where Paul and Barnabas had planted indigenous churches among Jews, Jewish proselytes, God-fearers, and Gentiles.

Key Event

The missionary council in Jerusalem decides that Gentiles do not have to be circumcised or keep the Law of Moses to be saved. The decision "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

This decision was momentous. Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone. The door was opened for the church to continue to expand among the Gentiles unabated, and the Gentile believers in Antioch rejoiced.

Key Verse

"We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

Acts 15:11

Remember This

• Must a Gentile first become a good Jew before he or she can become a Christian?

• God proved that He had accepted the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit.

• God's intention to include the Gentiles was nothing new.

• Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone.

• The decision "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

Life Application: Stand Firm on the Gospel of Grace

• We must stand firm in our conviction that people can be saved by faith in Christ alone.

• While we must never be arrogant or contentious in our dealings with others, neither can we allow anyone to change the gospel.

• Paul was so firm on this position that he wrote, "Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:8).

Life Application: Do Not Add Extra Requirements

• We should not put unnecessary requirements on people that the gospel does not specifically command.

• Our job is to lead people to Christ, and then to help them grow into Christian maturity.

• This cannot be done by just giving them a set of rules to live by. They must be brought into a living relationship with Christ and then taught to follow Him fully.

• In the words of Paul to the believers in Galatia, "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

Life Application: Base Decisions on Scripture

• At the Jerusalem Council the delegates listened to the testimonies of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas; however, their final decision was based on Scripture.

• We must ensure that all of our decisions concerning the work of God are based solidly on the word of God.

Life Application: Seek the Spirit's Guidance in Decisions

• Throughout life we are required to make many decisions concerning our ministries and our personal lives.

• We should never forget that God has a plan for each of our lives. That plan includes our participation in advancing the gospel to the ends of the earth.

• Therefore, every important decision that we make should be made in consultation with other committed believers and with God.

• We should seek the guidance of the Spirit so that when we make our decisions, we can also say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

• When we make such decisions, great blessing comes to our lives and to the work of God.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. What was the nature of the dispute that arose in the church in Antioch (Acts 15:1-5)?

• 2. What evidences do Peter, Paul, and Barnabas give that God had accepted the Gentiles without their first becoming Jewish proselytes?

• 3. Based on the evidence in this chapter, is it fair to say that certain Jewish believers were mistaking Jewish cultural requirements for gospel requirements? Can you think of circumstances in history and your own experience when church leaders and/or Christians made the same mistakes?

• 4. What was the result of the Spirit-guided decision of the church in Antioch?

• 5. How important is it to God that His children preserve the bonds of peace and unity among culturally diverse groups of believers? How can a leader help to keep this kind of unity between the churches?

Quick Review

1. What was the Gentile Question?

Answer: Whether God-fearers and Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses

before they could be saved.

2. How did God prove that He had accepted the Gentiles without their first becoming Jewish proselytes?

Answer: By giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He had given to the Jewish believers at Pentecost, with the same evidence and for the same purpose: empowerment for witness. Paul and Barnabas also told how God had worked many signs and wonders among the Gentiles.

3. What four things did James say Gentile converts should abstain from?

Answer: Food sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, the meat of strangled animals, and blood.

4. What phrase in the letter showed that the Holy Spirit had inspired the decision?

Answer: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

5. What was the result when the letter was read in Antioch?

Answer: The Gentile believers rejoiced. They could now focus on serving Christ and advancing His kingdom rather than on keeping nonessential legalistic rules.

Chapter Summary

The Jerusalem council decides that Gentiles need not become Jewish proselytes to be saved. Salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is by faith in Christ alone.

• A dispute in Antioch over circumcision of Gentiles was taken to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

• Peter, Paul, and Barnabas testified that God had accepted uncircumcised Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit and by working signs and wonders among them.

• James appealed to Scripture and judged that the church should not make it difficult for Gentiles turning to God. The Spirit-guided letter brought joy in Antioch and opened the door for unhindered Gentile mission.

Stand firm that people are saved by faith in Christ alone, do not add extra requirements the gospel does not command, and seek the Spirit's guidance so that decisions can be said to seem good to the Holy Spirit and to us.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

The Spirit-guided council in Jerusalem settled the Gentile Question: people are saved by faith in Christ alone, so Gentiles need not first become Jewish proselytes.

CHAPTER 10 · UNIT 4 · DAY 3

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Part 1)

Background of Paul's second missionary journey, pastoral visits, Paul's missionary strategy, to the regions beyond, opposition and deliverance

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 10)

Chapter purpose. This chapter examines the first half of Paul's second missionary journey, the most extensive of his three journeys: the dispute over John Mark, the pastoral visits in Galatia, the Spirit's guidance into Europe, and the planting of the church in Philippi.

Chapter 9 ended with the Gentile question settled. Gentiles did not have to first become converts to Judaism before they could become Christians, so the door was now opened for uncontested outreach to the nations. This chapter examines how that outreach continued with Paul's second missionary journey.

Bible reading: Acts 15:36-16:40

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 15:36-16:40. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage.

Learning Objectives

• Explain the disagreement over John Mark, why Paul and Barnabas parted company, and the two ministries God kept going as a result.

• Describe how the Holy Spirit, as the Superintendent of the Harvest, kept the missionaries from Asia and Bithynia and guided them to Macedonia.

• Identify the first Christian convert in Europe and explain why Luke tells her story.

• Explain how Paul and Silas' praying and singing in the Philippian prison served as a witness, and what followed it.

• State the instructions Paul gave the Philippian jailer on how to be saved, and the evidence of the Spirit's work in him.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 15:36-16:40

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 15:36-39; read Acts 15:39-16:5; Acts 16:6-10; Acts 16:11-15; Acts 16:16-18; Acts 16:19-28; Acts 16:29-34; Acts 16:35-40.

The Big Idea

Like his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction to the Second Journey

• The Gentile question had at last been settled. Gentiles did not have to first become converts to Judaism before they could become Christians.

• The door was now opened for uncontested outreach to the nations.

• Paul's second missionary journey is the most extensive of his three journeys.

• During this journey, after revisiting the churches in Galatia, Paul and his missionary team were directed by the Spirit to venture westward into Europe.

• There they planted churches in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia (Greece).

• After a brief stopover in Ephesus, they returned to Antioch where their journey began.

The Story: Paul's Second Journey Begins (Acts 15:36-39)

After a long stay in Antioch, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they visit all of the places where they had preached the gospel during their first missionary journey to see how the believers were faring. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them again.

Paul, however, was strongly opposed to the idea, noting that during their first journey Mark had deserted the work and returned home. Their disagreement became so heated that Paul and Barnabas parted company and went their separate ways.

Commentary on Acts 15:36-39

• Paul's second journey began with controversy. This time the controversy was not between Paul and the Judaizers but between Paul and his close missionary associate and friend, Barnabas.

• Paul felt that because of John Mark's unreliability, he should not accompany them on their upcoming journey. Barnabas, however, thought that the younger man deserved a second chance.

• The controversy became so intense that the missionaries separated, with Barnabas revisiting the work on Cyprus and Paul journeying northward through Syria and Cilicia into Galatia and eventually into western Europe.

• This controversy candidly reveals the humanity of these early Christian missionaries.

• It also shows how God provided for two different and important ministries to continue: (1) the ministry of strengthening newly established churches and (2) the apostolic ministry of planting new churches where none yet existed.

15:36 Let us go back and visit the brothers

• This statement shows Paul and Barnabas' pastoral concern for the churches they had planted in Cyprus and southern Galatia.

• Their purpose in returning was to find out how the churches were getting along, encourage the believers, and strengthen the churches.

• It was Paul's desire to see every church he planted emerge as a Spirit-empowered missional church, one that could extend itself into the surrounding region.

15:39 They parted company

• After a heated debate over John Mark, Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways.

• It is significant that neither man left the work, but both continued as active missionaries.

• It seems that even after their disagreement, Paul and Barnabas came to a strategic agreement about who would go where.

The Story: Galatia, Pastoral Visits (Acts 15:39-16:5)

Barnabas sailed with Mark to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas as his missionary partner and, commended by the brothers, traveled northward by land into Syria and Cilicia. As Paul and Silas traveled, they took time to strengthen the churches in these regions.

Passing through Cilicia, they went to Derbe in southern Galatia and then on to Lystra. There they met a well-respected young man named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was Greek.

Since Paul wanted Timothy to join their missionary team, he circumcised him, so that Timothy's presence would not bring offense to the Jews living in the area. This was an example of an action taken not because the Bible required it but simply to help create unity between the culturally different Jewish and Gentile Christians.

As the missionaries moved from place to place, they read the letter from the Jerusalem Council containing the apostles' decisions and orders concerning the Gentile believers (15:23-29). Because of their visits, the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew in numbers daily.

Commentary on Acts 15:40-16:5

• Paul's first order of business during his second missionary journey was to return to the churches he and Barnabas had planted in southern Galatia during their first journey.

• His purpose was pastoral, to encourage the believers and strengthen the emerging churches. He took Silas with him.

15:40 Paul chose Silas

• Silas, along with Judas Barsabbas, had come to Antioch from Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the decree from the Jerusalem Council concerning Gentile believers.

• Judging from his name, Silas was probably a Hellenized Jew, a Jew who lived in the Greek culture.

• He was also a prophet and former leader of the church in Jerusalem (15:22, 32).

• After delivering the decree, he remained in Antioch and ministered in the church through his prophetic and teaching ministry (15:30-32).

• Paul referred to him in his epistles (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Peter called him a "faithful brother" (1 Peter 5:12).

15:40 Commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord

• As at the beginning of the first journey, the Antiochian church is again actively involved in sending the missionaries to the field (compare 13:3).

• Even though Paul had a divine call to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17-18; Galatians 2:2), and the clear direction of the Spirit (Acts 13:2-4), he did not proceed to the field on his own initiative.

• He went with the blessing and commendation of the church.

16:1 A disciple named Timothy

• Timothy had probably been converted during Paul's first missionary journey or at some later time through the evangelistic efforts of the church in Lystra.

• He became a faithful coworker with Paul. Paul called him his "true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).

16:3 He circumcised him because of the Jews

• Paul's requiring Timothy to be circumcised was not a compromise of his principles nor a violation of the Jerusalem Decree (Acts 15:23-29).

• It was rather an application of Paul's missionary strategy of becoming "all things to all men" in order to win as many as possible to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

• The reality of cultural diversity required Paul to adapt to the many cultures he faced so that people of each cultural group could understand his message.

• Jesus did this when He came in the flesh (incarnate) so that we could understand God. Paul's actions, then, serve as an example of incarnational missionary ministry.

• Since Titus was a Gentile, Paul did not require him to be circumcised (compare Acts 15:1-2).

16:5 The churches were strengthened in the faith

• One important role of missionary ministry is to strengthen churches and believers in the faith.

• Jesus' command was not to make converts but disciples (Matthew 28:19).

• Paul would later write that the ministry of apostles (namely, himself) and prophets (for example, Silas), as well as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, was "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12).

16:5 Grew daily in numbers

• Because Paul and Barnabas had intentionally planted Spirit-empowered missional churches, the churches continued to grow in strength and number.

• In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that a healthy, well-trained church "grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (4:16).

The Story: The Spirit Guides the Missionaries (Acts 16:6-10)

Leaving Lystra, Paul and his missionary colleagues traveled to the northwest through Galatia into Phrygia. They intended to go west into Asia Minor (and possibly Ephesus) but were kept from going there by the Holy Spirit.

Arriving at the border of Mysia, they decided to venture further north into Bithynia on the Black Sea, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to go that way either. As a result, they decided to travel westward through Mysia until they arrived in Troas on the Aegean coast. There they were joined by Luke.

In Troas Paul had a vision in the night in which he saw a Macedonian man standing and entreating him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." The missionaries concluded that God wanted them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. At once, they prepared to leave for that region.

Commentary on Acts 16:6-10

• As with his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

• Luke strategically places such a move of the Spirit near the beginning of each of Paul's missionary journeys. He does this so that the reader will know that

everything done during these journeys was done in the power of the Spirit (Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-10; 19:1-7; see Table 8.1).

• Although this is the only mention of the Spirit's active role during Paul's second journey, we know by statements he made in his epistles that he ministered in the Spirit's power in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).

16:6-7 Kept by the Holy Spirit... The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them

• The Holy Spirit again acts as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• By keeping the missionaries from entering Asia and Bithynia, He was directing them to the specific fields He had prepared for them.

• The title "Spirit of Jesus" is another name for the Holy Spirit. He is the One whom Christ sent in His place (John 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33) and who reveals the things of Christ to us (John 16:15).

• Peter calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11-12), and Paul calls Him the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:19).

16:9 A vision of a man of Macedonia

• The Spirit directed Paul's missionary team into Europe through a vision.

• According to Luke's teaching in Acts, visions are one way that God actively guides Christ's messengers (Acts 9:10-12; 10:9-16; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 23:11; 26:19).

• Other ways include speaking directly to their hearts by His Spirit (10:19-20; 11:12; 15:28; 20:22), providential circumstances (8:1-4), angelic appearances (5:19-20; 8:26; 10:3-7; 12:7-15; 27:23-24), and prophetic speech (2:17-18; 11:28-30; 13:1-2; 15:32; 20:23; 21:10-11).

16:10 We got ready at once to leave

• When the Spirit directed, the missionaries responded quickly and decisively.

• By this and other "we" references, we know that Luke joined Paul's missionary team in Macedonia and accompanied Paul as far as Philippi, where he remained behind.

The Story: Philippi, The Gospel Goes to Europe (Acts 16:11-15)

Paul and his band of missionaries (Silas, Timothy, and Luke) sailed from Troas to Macedonia. They arrived at the Roman colony of Philippi, the leading city of the district.

One Sabbath day, the missionaries went down to the river and found a group of Jewish women who had gathered for prayer. They sat down and began to speak to the women.

While they spoke, the Lord opened the heart of a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple cloth who came from Thyatira and who was a God-fearer. She accepted the gospel, and she and the members of her household were baptized. After this, she persuaded the missionaries to lodge at her home, saying, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house."

Commentary on Acts 16:11-15

• Because there seems to have been no synagogue in Philippi, Paul and Silas went down to the river to seek out Jews.

• When there was no synagogue in a place, the Jews would often meet by the riverside, since it provided a convenient place to find water for their rituals.

16:13 Began to speak to the women

• Lydia, a woman, was the first Christian convert in Europe.

• By telling her story, Luke again demonstrates his concern for women.

• Because women can be empowered by the Holy Spirit, they can be full participants in the mission of God (compare Acts 1:8, 14; 2:17-18).

16:14 The Lord opened her heart

• The Holy Spirit works to open people's hearts to the gospel.

• A combination of the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16) and the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8) is needed to effectively lead people to Christ.

• God opens people's hearts; however, they must individually respond to the gospel in faith and repentance.

The Story: A Slave Girl Is Delivered (Acts 16:16-18)

One day in Philippi, as the missionaries were on their way to a prayer meeting, they met a slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination. Her owners used her fortune-telling abilities to earn a lot of money for themselves.

Day after day the girl followed the missionaries, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

Finally, Paul became so troubled that he turned to her and commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus. Immediately the spirit left her, and she was set free.

Commentary on Acts 16:16-18

• The story of the deliverance of the Philippian slave girl is yet another example of how Paul and the other ministers in Acts ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit.

• Through the manifestation of spiritual gifts, Paul brought deliverance to a demon-possessed slave girl.

16:18 Paul became so troubled

• Though the slave girl was speaking the truth, the source and motivation of her message was demonic.

• Her activity may have been a demonically-inspired tactic, aimed at undermining the ministry of Paul and Silas in Philippi.

• Through the gift of discerning of spirits, Paul identified the source of her inspiration, and through the gift of miraculous powers and with the name of Jesus, he drove out the demon (see 1 Corinthians 12:10).

16:18 In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!

• Jesus drove out demons by the finger (or Spirit) of God (Luke 11:20; compare Matthew 12:28).

• Today, believers are given this same power when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• Those who faithfully follow Jesus and obey His commands have also been given

the right to use His name in combating evil and advancing His kingdom in the earth (Mark 16:17; John 14:12-14; 16:23-24; Acts 3:6, 16; 4:10, 30; 1 Corinthians 5:4).

• To use the name of Jesus is to act under His authority.

The Story: Opposition and Deliverance (Acts 16:19-28)

The owners of the slave girl became angry at Paul because they could no longer use the girl to make money. They seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the city's marketplace. There, they accused the missionaries of causing confusion among the people by advocating practices contrary to Roman law.

The gathered crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas. The magistrates then ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped, flogged, and cast into prison, where they were placed in the inner cell with their feet fastened in stocks.

That night around the midnight hour as the other prisoners listened, Paul and Silas began singing hymns to God. Suddenly a great earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, the prison doors flew open, and the chains fell from all the prisoners.

Waking up, the jailer saw what had happened and started to kill himself, believing that all of the prisoners had escaped. Seeing this, Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

Commentary on Acts 16:19-28

• Even in the severest trials, the apostles stayed close to God and focused on their work.

• As a result, their hearts were filled with joy, and they became powerful witnesses to those around them.

16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God

• The church experienced constant opposition and persecution.

• In spite of this, as the gospel advanced, the missionaries remained full of the Holy Spirit and joy (Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 1:11;

1 Thessalonians 1:6; Hebrews 1:9).

• In their joy they prayed and sang hymns to God.

16:25 The other prisoners were listening

• The apostles' Spirit-inspired praying and singing resulted in witness.

• This is a major theme in Acts: the infilling of the Spirit empowers Christians to be effective witnesses to the lost (compare Acts 1:8).

• The other prisoners must have been very impressed when they heard Paul and Silas, who had been falsely accused, beaten, and thrown into prison, joyfully praising God.

16:26 Suddenly... a violent earthquake

• The violent earthquake is yet another powerful theophany in Acts.

• The word "suddenly" reminds us of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (2:1), and the earthquake reminds us of the shaking at the second Jerusalem outpouring (4:31). Both speak of the power and work of the Spirit.

• Characteristically, this move of the Spirit followed a time of prayer and praise (compare Luke 24:53; Acts 1:14; 4:31).

The Story: The Jailer's Household Is Saved (Acts 16:29-34)

The jailer fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He implored them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

The apostles then shared the gospel with him and his family. Afterward, the jailer took them and washed their wounds, and he and his family were baptized in water. He then took the apostles to his house and prepared a meal for them. He and his family were filled with joy.

Commentary on Acts 16:29-34

• At the heart of Paul's ministry was the message of salvation.

• When the Philippian jailer inquired about how to be saved, Paul and Silas were ready with an answer. They told him that salvation comes through faith in Christ.

16:30 What must I do to be saved?

• This is the most important question in the Bible.

• All are lost; therefore, all must be saved (Romans 3:23-24). This salvation was provided through Christ's atoning work on the cross.

• The primary mission of the church is to proclaim the message of salvation to all nations (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47).

16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved

• People are saved through faith in Christ.

• Two essential elements of true saving faith are repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus (Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:15; Acts 19:4; 20:21; Hebrews 6:1).

• Repentance toward God involves acknowledging one's sins, asking forgiveness, and turning from sin to walk in newness of life.

• Faith toward the Lord Jesus involves believing in His death and resurrection, inviting Him into one's life as Lord and Savior, and trusting Him alone for salvation (compare Romans 10:9-10).

16:32 They spoke the word of the Lord

• The phrase "word of the Lord" occurs nine times in Acts. In each instance it indicates the preaching of the gospel (8:25; 13:48-49; 15:35-36; 16:32; 19:10, 20).

• The only other place in the New Testament where the phrase is used is in 1 Peter 1:25, where the context indicates the same.

16:33 Immediately he and all his family were baptized

• Although water baptism is not a requirement for salvation, Luke presents it as the new believer's first step of obedience.

• According to Peter, it is "the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21).

• In Acts water baptism occurs immediately after one has been born again (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36-39; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8).

16:34 Filled with joy

• The joy the apostles demonstrated by singing to God at midnight now filled the heart of the jailer.

• This newfound joy was an evidence that he had been born of the Spirit, and possibly even filled with the Spirit, on this occasion.

The Story: Apologies and Departure (Acts 16:35-40)

The next morning the city officials sent orders to the jailer to release Paul and Silas, telling them that they could go in peace. Paul, however, refused, saying, "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

The magistrates were distressed, realizing that they had mistreated Roman citizens. They therefore came in person to apologize to Paul and Silas and ask them to leave the city. After this, the missionaries went to the house of Lydia and encouraged the brothers there. They then left for Thessalonica.

Commentary on Acts 16:35-40

• In demanding an apology from the magistrates, Paul's concern was not to preserve his own dignity or status.

• His concern was for the safety and blessing of the new church in Philippi. So he used his Roman citizenship as a means of ensuring fair treatment of Christians in the city.

16:37 Let them come themselves and escort us out

• Paul wanted to leave Philippi with a good name.

• He did this so that the work of the church would not be hindered, and so that it could carry out its work without unnecessary interference.

• For this reason, he demanded that the city officials come and apologize before he left Philippi.

16:40 They met with the brothers and encouraged them

• Paul and Silas were not only concerned with getting people saved, as important as that work is.

• Their concern went further: to the establishment of a strong indigenous church.

• So they gathered the brothers together to encourage them in the work of the Lord before departing for Thessalonica.

Figure 10.1: Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Figure 10.1. The route of Paul's second missionary journey, as named in this chapter. It is the most extensive of his three journeys.

• Antioch: Paul chose Silas and, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord, set out by land.

• Syria and Cilicia: Paul and Silas traveled northward by land and took time to strengthen the churches in these regions.

• Derbe: In southern Galatia, one of the churches planted on the first journey.

• Lystra: Here they met Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was Greek.

• Phrygia: They traveled northwest through Galatia into Phrygia, intending to go west into Asia Minor.

• Mysia: Kept by the Holy Spirit from Asia, and the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to go north into Bithynia.

• Troas: On the Aegean coast. Luke joined them, and Paul saw the vision of the man of Macedonia.

• Philippi: The Roman colony and leading city of the district of Macedonia, where the gospel came to Europe.

• Thessalonica: After the apologies of the magistrates, the missionaries left Philippi for Thessalonica.

• Achaia (Greece): The second European province in which the team planted churches on this journey.

• Ephesus: A brief stopover on the way home.

• Antioch: They returned to Antioch where their journey began.

Conclusion

• During Paul's second missionary journey, he and his companions were led by the

Spirit to enter Europe and preach the gospel for the first time there.

• His ministry in Europe began in Philippi in eastern Macedonia.

• There, Paul and Silas established a strong indigenous missional church.

• He would later write a letter to this church and tell its members how he thanked God for them and how he carried them in his heart.

• They became partners with him in the gospel by helping to support his missionary work (Philippians 1:3-7).

Important Terms

Spirit-empowered missional church. A church that is filled with the Spirit and reaches out beyond itself into the region around it.

Hellenized Jew. A Jew who lived in the Greek culture.

Jerusalem Decree. The letter from the Jerusalem Council containing the apostles' decisions and orders concerning the Gentile believers.

Incarnational missionary ministry. Ministry that identifies very closely with the people being reached, as Jesus did when He came in the flesh.

Superintendent of the Harvest. The Holy Spirit as the one who directs the missionaries to the fields He has prepared for them.

Spirit of Jesus. Another name for the Holy Spirit.

God-fearer. A Gentile who has accepted God and the teachings of Judaism but who has not been circumcised.

Indigenous church. A church that is able to support itself, govern itself, and extend itself.

Key People

• Paul: Leads the second missionary journey, the most extensive of his three journeys.

• Barnabas: Paul's close missionary associate and friend. After the disagreement over John Mark he revisited the work on Cyprus.

• John Mark: Deserted the work on the first journey. Barnabas thought the younger

man deserved a second chance. In later years Paul requested that Mark join him in the work (2 Timothy 4:11).

• Silas: Paul's missionary partner, probably a Hellenized Jew, a prophet and former leader of the church in Jerusalem. Peter called him a "faithful brother" (1 Peter 5:12).

• Timothy: A well-respected young man of Lystra, his mother a Jewish believer and his father Greek. Paul called him his "true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2).

• Luke: Joined the team at Troas and accompanied Paul as far as Philippi, where he remained behind.

• Lydia: A seller of purple cloth from Thyatira and a God-fearer. The first Christian convert in Europe.

• The slave girl: Possessed by a spirit of divination and used by her owners for profit. Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus.

• The Philippian jailer: Asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He and his family believed, were baptized, and were filled with joy.

Key Places

• Antioch: The sending church, where the journey began and ended.

• Syria and Cilicia: Regions Paul and Silas passed through, strengthening the churches.

• Derbe and Lystra: Churches in southern Galatia revisited on this journey. Timothy joined the team at Lystra.

• Phrygia: Reached by traveling northwest through Galatia.

• Asia: The team intended to go west into Asia Minor (and possibly Ephesus) but were kept from going there by the Holy Spirit.

• Bithynia: On the Black Sea. The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to go that way.

• Troas: On the Aegean coast. Luke joined the team here and Paul received the Macedonian vision.

• Macedonia: The region the Spirit directed them to through the vision of the Macedonian man.

• Philippi: A Roman colony and the leading city of the district. Where the gospel first entered Europe.

Key Event

In Troas Paul has a vision in the night of a Macedonian man entreating him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us," and the missionaries at once prepare to leave for that region.

The Holy Spirit had kept them from Asia, and the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them into Bithynia. By closing those doors He was directing them to the specific fields He had prepared for them. The Spirit directed Paul's missionary team into Europe through a vision.

Key Verse

"Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Acts 16:9

Remember This

• Like his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

• Paul desired to plant Spirit-empowered missional churches.

• Paul went with the blessing and commendation of the church.

• The apostles' joy now filled the heart of the jailer.

Life Application: When Colleagues Disagree

• Missionaries and other gospel workers are human, and sometimes disagreements arise between colleagues. Unfortunately, on occasion, these disagreements can be sharp.

• At such times we should not be tempted to abandon the work that God has given us.

• We must be mature enough to come to strategic agreements about how each will continue in the work, even if we may at times have to work separately.

• God is able to use people who honestly disagree with one another if they keep their attitudes pure and kind.

• If we remain kindhearted and mature in our attitudes, then in time even greater unity and agreement can come. Such was the case with Paul and Barnabas.

• In later years Paul requested that Mark join him in the work (2 Timothy 4:11; compare Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). Mark even went on to write one of the four Gospels in the New Testament.

Life Application: Pastoral Oversight After Planting

• Our work is not completed when the church planting campaign ends. We have the ongoing responsibility of giving pastoral oversight to the new work.

• Our goals must be to ensure that the new church is filled with the Spirit, strong in the Word, and focused on the mission of God.

• Our methods should include fellowship, prayer, teaching, and godly counsel.

Life Application: Expect the Spirit to Guide

• We should seek and expect the Holy Spirit to guide us when we are actively engaged in the Lord's work.

• This guidance may come in various ways, including dreams, visions, angelic appearances, and providential circumstances.

• The most common way God leads us is by speaking directly to our hearts by His Spirit.

• To experience such guidance, it is essential that we be prayerful and remain full of the Holy Spirit.

• What the Lord speaks to us by His Spirit will always be in harmony with His written Word, the Bible.

Life Application: Release Women in Gospel Work

• Throughout the history of the church, women have played a prominent role.

• Women were the first to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:5-8; Luke 24:9-10; John 20:16-18).

• They were present at Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out (Acts 1:14), and the first convert in Europe was a woman (16:14).

• We should never treat women as second-class citizens in the kingdom of God.

• We should release them and encourage them to be full participants in gospel work.

Life Application: Learn to Operate in the Gifts

• We as Christ's ministers should be filled with the Spirit, and we should learn to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

• Had Paul not been able to do this, his and Silas' ministry in Philippi would have been much less effective, and the slave girl would have remained in bondage.

• The Bible commands us to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; Ephesians 5:18). It also commands us to earnestly seek after spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1).

• Those who ignore these commands can never be the effective ministers of the gospel that God intends for them to be.

Life Application: Joy in Trying Circumstances

• Joy during trying circumstances is an evidence of one's being full of the Spirit.

• Our being filled with the Spirit should be evidenced by more than speaking in tongues.

• As we abide in Christ, walk in the Spirit, and obey the Lord's commands, our lives will be filled with the joy of the Lord.

• Such joyful lives will be a witness to those who observe us, and, as a result, they will be encouraged to turn to Christ.

Life Application: Always Be Ready With the Answer

• Every Christian should at all times be prepared to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

• It is the responsibility of pastors and other church leaders to train everyone in the church how to lead others to Christ.

Life Application: Leave Well

• It is important how a missionary or Christian worker begins a work. It is also important how he or she departs the same work.

• Our departure must never result in weakening the church.

• Every pastor or church planter should ensure that the church is strong enough to carry on the work or that the church is left in able hands.

• He or she should also leave with a good name so that the work will not be hindered.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. How did the Holy Spirit again work as the Superintendent of the Harvest in guiding Paul's missionary band to Macedonia and then into Europe? How might this apply to ministry today?

• 2. Who was the first Christian convert in Europe? Is it significant that she was a woman?

• 3. How did Paul and Silas' singing in the prison at night serve as a witness to the other prisoners? What other kinds of witness are present in this story? What was the result?

• 4. What instructions did Paul give to the Philippian jailer on how to be saved? What indication do we have of the Spirit's working in the jailer's heart?

• 5. What is the significance of Paul's comments to the officials of Philippi regarding their treatment of Barnabas and Paul? What purpose was served by Paul's statement that he and Barnabas were Roman citizens? See Acts 22:24-26 also for more information on this issue.

Quick Review

1. Why did Paul and Barnabas part company?

Answer: Because of a heated disagreement over taking John Mark, who had deserted the work during the first journey.

2. Whom did Paul choose as his missionary partner, and who joined the team at Lystra?

Answer: Paul chose Silas. Timothy joined the team at Lystra.

3. Which two regions did the Spirit keep the missionaries from entering?

Answer: Asia and Bithynia.

4. How did the Spirit direct the team into Europe?

Answer: Through a vision at Troas of a man of Macedonia saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

5. Who was the first Christian convert in Europe?

Answer: Lydia, a seller of purple cloth from Thyatira and a God-fearer.

Chapter Summary

Like his first missionary journey, Paul's second journey began with a move of the Holy Spirit.

• Paul and Barnabas parted company over John Mark, and God used the separation to keep two ministries going: strengthening established churches and planting new ones.

• The Holy Spirit kept the team out of Asia and Bithynia, then directed them into Europe through the vision of the man of Macedonia.

• In Philippi Lydia became the first Christian convert in Europe, a slave girl was delivered, and the jailer and his household were saved and baptized.

Seek and expect the Holy Spirit to guide you in the Lord's work, and plant churches that are strong, indigenous, and missional before you leave them.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

The Holy Spirit kept Paul's team out of Asia and Bithynia so He could send them to Macedonia, and the gospel entered Europe at Philippi.

CHAPTER 11 · UNIT 4 · DAY 4

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Part 2)

Ministry in Macedonia and Greece, extended ministry in Corinth, Paul's return to Syria via Ephesus

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 11)

Chapter purpose. This chapter covers the remainder of Paul's second missionary journey: his continuing missionary work in Macedonia, his missionary ministry in Greece, and his brief stop in Ephesus.

The last chapter discussed Paul's missionary ministry in Philippi, where the gospel first entered Europe. This chapter looks at the remainder of the same journey, in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus.

Bible reading: Acts 17:1-18:22

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 17:1-18:22. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage.

Learning Objectives

• Describe Paul and Silas' reception in Thessalonica and the kind of church that was planted there.

• Explain why Luke describes the Bereans as being of more noble character than the Thessalonians.

• Show how Paul's ministry in Athens is a good example of cross-cultural adaptation that never compromised the gospel message.

• Explain how Paul supported himself when he first arrived in Corinth and what changed when Silas and Timothy came.

• Describe how the Holy Spirit encouraged Paul in Corinth, and why Paul made only a brief stopover in Ephesus.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 17:1-18:22

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 17:1-9; read Acts 17:10-15; Acts 17:16-34; Acts 18:1-17; Acts 18:18-21.

The Big Idea

Paul resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified, and preached not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Introduction to the Rest of the Journey

• During Paul's second missionary journey, he and his missionary companions were led by the Spirit to preach the gospel in Europe.

• They began their European ministry in Macedonia on the northern shores of the Aegean Sea.

• This chapter covers his continuing missionary work in Macedonia, his missionary ministry in Greece, and his brief stop in Ephesus.

• As was his ministry in Philippi, Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus is filled with exciting stories of commitment and courage.

The Story: Thessalonica, Planting amid Persecution (Acts 17:1-9)

Leaving Luke at Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled westward to Thessalonica. For the next three Sabbaths Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned with the local Jews and God-fearers. Using the Scriptures, he showed how Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He boldly declared, "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

Many believed and joined the two missionaries, including some Jews, many God-fearing Greeks, and a few prominent women.

Some Jews became jealous, so they rounded up several troublemakers from the marketplace and incited a riot. They then led the mob to Jason's house, looking for the two missionaries. When they did not find them there, they accused Jason and dragged him and some other brothers before the council.

They shouted, "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here." They accused the missionaries of ignoring Caesar's decrees by claiming that Jesus was king. After hearing this, the council members were greatly troubled, so they made the missionaries post bond and released them.

Commentary on Acts 17:1-9

• Paul and Silas' reception in the city of Thessalonica was less than hospitable. Nevertheless, they were able to plant a strong Spirit-empowered missional church there.

• We discover this from reading Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. There he reminds the believers how he had preached the gospel to them "with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction", and how they had "welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit".

• As a result, the church in Thessalonica became "a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia", and from there "the Lord's message rang out... not only in Macedonia and Achaia", but their "faith in God [became] known everywhere" (1:5-8).

17:3 Explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead

• As he did in every place, in Thessalonica Paul faithfully proclaimed the message of Jesus' death and resurrection.

• The gospel alone contains the power to transform people's lives and bring them into a saving knowledge of Christ (compare Romans 1:16).

• Paul further informed the Jews in Thessalonica that "this Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ", their long-awaited Messiah.

17:7 Saying that there is another king, one called Jesus

• Jesus is, in truth, a king.

• He is the seed of David (Luke 1:32; Revelation 22:16), the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16).

The Story: Berea, The Message Is Received (Acts 17:10-15)

That night the brethren spirited Paul and Silas away to Berea. When they arrived in Berea, they went to the Jewish synagogue and began teaching and preaching about Christ.

Being of more noble character than the Thessalonians, the Bereans gladly received the word and eagerly examined the Scriptures to determine if Paul was teaching the truth. Many came to Christ, including some Jews, prominent women, and Greek men.

When certain Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they came there and poisoned the people against Paul. Paul was again whisked away by the brothers and taken down to the coast. From there he was escorted to Athens, about one hundred sixty kilometers south in Achaia.

Silas and Timothy, however, remained in Berea. When Paul arrived in Athens, he sent word for Silas and Timothy to join him there as soon as possible.

Commentary on Acts 17:10-15

• In Berea Paul and Silas found Jews of more noble character than those in Thessalonica. They were more open to the things of the Lord and eager to know the truth.

• Many received the message and came to Christ.

• However, because of the agitation of Jewish troublemakers from Thessalonica, Paul had to leave for Athens.

17:12 Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men

• The gospel is inclusive.

• Anyone can be saved and follow Christ, as is demonstrated by the response in Berea where Jews, Gentiles, men, and women believed and followed Christ.

17:13 Preaching the word of God

• Again, we see Paul and his colleagues remaining true to the mission of Christ: they preached the gospel.

• The phrase "word of God" is used eleven times in Acts (Acts 4:31; 6:2, 7; 8:14;

11:1; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 46; 17:13; 18:11), and it is often used synonymously with the gospel, for example in 11:1.

The Story: Athens, A Few Believe (Acts 17:16-34)

In Athens Paul was deeply troubled by the city's obvious idolatry. Day by day he taught in the synagogue and in the marketplace, teaching the people about the gospel and the resurrection of Jesus. One day he entered into a debate with some Greek philosophers. These philosophers were always wanting to hear about some new idea, so they took him to the Areopagus (Mars Hill) and asked him to explain his new teaching more fully.

Taking this opportunity, Paul stood and declared the gospel to them. He began by noting how religious the Athenians were and how he had seen their many objects of worship throughout the city. "I even found an altar with this inscription: 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD,'" he said. "I am going to tell you who this God is." He then launched into his message.

He told them that the one true God, who created everything in heaven and on earth, does not live in manmade temples. Neither does He need people to take care of Him, since He is the One who gives life and breath, and everything else, to all people. This God has created from one blood all nations of people, and He has determined their times and the places where they should live. He did this so that they could seek Him, and perhaps find Him, although He is not far from anyone, for, Paul explained, "In Him we live and move and have our being." It is as some of their own poets had stated, "We are God's offspring."

And if we are His offspring, then how could God be an image made of gold or silver or stone, no matter how beautiful it is? In times past, God overlooked such conduct, but no more. He now commands everyone everywhere to repent. Those who do not repent will one day be judged by the Man He has appointed, that is, Christ. This is the very Man He raised from the dead.

When the people heard Paul talk about the resurrection of the dead, they began to mock. Some, however, said, "We want to hear about this again." A few people believed Paul and became his followers, including Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris. A few others also believed and

followed Paul.

Commentary on Acts 17:16-34

• Paul's ministry in Athens has been cited as a good example of cross-cultural adaptation in preaching the gospel.

• In his message on Mars Hill, Paul called attention to the worship of the Athenians, noting that they were very religious people. He also referred to their monument to an unknown god and quoted their pagan poets.

• He did these things to identify more closely with the culture of Athens.

• At the same time, however, he remained true to his mission and never compromised the gospel message.

17:16 Athens

• Athens was the capital of Greece (Achaia) and the center of Greek culture, art, philosophy, and architecture.

• About 250 thousand people lived in Athens in the first century A.D.

17:16 He was greatly distressed

• Rather than being impressed by the Athenian architectural wonders and the city's classical works of art, Paul was distressed in his spirit, realizing that they were symbols of the people's idolatry and lostness (compare 1 Corinthians 10:18-21).

• While we rejoice in the cultural achievements of mankind, we are not blinded to man's desperate need of Christ.

17:17 He reasoned in the synagogue... as well as in the marketplace

• Paul did not limit his preaching and teaching to the church. He rather took the gospel into the marketplace where the lost people were.

• We should never limit our preaching to the church building; we must take the message of Christ to the streets.

• We must proclaim Christ both "publicly and from house to house" (20:20).

17:18 Preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection

• As always, Paul centers his preaching on the gospel of Christ, including His death and resurrection.

17:26 From one man he made every nation of men

• Although there are cultural differences between nations and peoples, there is only one race of people on the earth, the human race.

• All are descendents of Adam and Eve and are equally precious before God who created them.

• All fell through Adam's transgression, all were redeemed by Christ on the cross, and all must hear and believe the message of the gospel.

17:27 God did this so that men would... find him

• God has providentially placed all peoples, tribes, and nations in their appointed locations on earth. He has also determined the times of their visitation.

• He has done all of this so that they might seek and find Him.

• It is our responsibility to follow the leading of His Spirit and take the gospel to them wherever they may be.

17:30 Now he commands all people everywhere to repent

• To be saved, all people must turn to God, repent of their sins, and put their faith in Christ.

• There is no other means of salvation (compare 4:12).

The Story: Corinth, An Extended Stay (Acts 18:1-17)

Paul traveled from Athens to Corinth, where he met Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They had recently fled from Italy to Corinth because the emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. Since they were tentmakers like Paul, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath, however, Paul went to the synagogue and tried to persuade the Jews and Greeks there to turn to Christ.

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was able to devote himself exclusively to preaching the gospel. In time, however, when the Jews became hardened in their opposition against the gospel, Paul turned from them saying, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Paul then left the synagogue and began to teach in the house of Titius Justus, a

Jewish proselyte. Soon after that, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, turned to the Lord, along with his entire family. Hearing about this, many Corinthians believed the gospel and were baptized.

One night the Lord came to Paul in a vision and told him not to be afraid but to "keep on speaking, [to] not be silent." The Lord told Paul that He was with him, and no one would harm him. The Lord further assured him, "I have many people in this city." As a result, Paul was greatly encouraged and remained in Corinth for a year and a half teaching the word of God.

In time, when Gallio became the governor of Achaia, the Jews united against Paul and brought charges against him, accusing him of persuading people to worship God in ways contrary to Roman law. Gallio, however, dismissed their charges since he was not interested in matters of Jewish law and customs. In retaliation the mob seized Sosthenes, the new leader of the synagogue, and beat him outside the courtroom. Here, too, Gallio showed no interest in the matter.

Commentary on Acts 18:1-17

• When Paul arrived in Corinth, he came with a new plan. In Athens he had tried to convince the people to turn to Christ by using superior wisdom and philosophy, yet with few results.

• In Corinth, however, he had a new strategy. He resolved to know nothing while he was with them "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

• When Paul later wrote to the Corinthian church, he recounted his ministry among them: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (vv. 4-5).

18:1 Corinth

• Corinth was the capital and commercial center of Greece and the seat of the Roman proconsul (Acts 18:12).

• The city was notorious for its immorality.

• It had about half a million residents when Paul visited the city.

18:4 Trying to persuade Jews and Greeks

• When Paul preached, he did not simply tell the story of Jesus. He tried to persuade people to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. He called for a decisive response from his hearers.

• Our job is not simply to tell people about Jesus; we must seek to persuade them to turn to Him in faith and repentance.

• This can be done best by being full of the Spirit and by faithfully and clearly proclaiming the gospel.

18:5 Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching

• When Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth, Paul could quit his tent-making and devote himself entirely to preaching the gospel.

• As missionaries and pastors, it should always be our goal to devote ourselves exclusively to the proclamation and teaching of the gospel.

18:8 Many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized

• As a result of Paul's missionary work in Corinth, many came to know the Lord.

• A large Spirit-empowered church was founded.

18:9 The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision

• Paul is again guided by a vision. In the vision the Lord spoke to him telling him not to be afraid.

• The Spirit not only directs us in our work for God, He also comes to us to comfort and encourage us in our times of discouragement.

• On this occasion the Spirit gave Paul a vision of Christ. What an encouragement that must have been to the burdened apostle.

The Story: Ephesus, A Brief Stopover (Acts 18:18-21)

After remaining in Corinth for some time, Paul left with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for Syria. He had his hair cut off to fulfill a vow he had made.

On his journey to Antioch, he and his companions passed through Ephesus. While there, Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. They asked him to spend more time with them; however, he declined, promising to return to them

if God willed.

Leaving Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, he set sail to Caesarea, where he greeted the church. He then went northward to Antioch in Syria.

Commentary on Acts 18:18-21

• While in Corinth, Paul decided to return to Antioch, where he had begun his journey.

• On the way there he made a brief stopover in Ephesus, where he evidently planted a small body of believers.

• He left Priscilla and Aquila there to care for them, while he journeyed on to Antioch.

18:19 Went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews

• Some of these Jews evidently believed in Christ, since verse 27 speaks of "the brethren" in Ephesus who wrote to the disciples in Corinth concerning Apollos.

18:21 I will come back if it is God's will

• Paul intended to return to Ephesus and make it his base of missionary operation to reach all of Asia Minor.

• This he will do during his third missionary journey.

Conclusion

• Paul returned to his home base in Antioch, thus completing his second missionary journey.

• During this journey, he and Silas had planted churches in the European provinces of Macedonia and Achaia.

• They had also begun a small work in Ephesus.

• In his third missionary journey Paul will return to Ephesus to conduct his most successful campaign of all, the Ephesian campaign.

Important Terms

Spirit-empowered missional church. A church filled with the Spirit whose witness

reaches out beyond itself into the region around it.

God-fearer. A Gentile who has accepted God and the teachings of Judaism but who has not been circumcised.

Cross-cultural adaptation. Adjusting the way you present the gospel so that it makes sense inside another people's culture, without changing the message.

Areopagus (Mars Hill). The place in Athens where the philosophers took Paul and asked him to explain his new teaching more fully.

Word of God. A phrase Luke often uses in Acts to mean the gospel itself.

Proselyte. A Gentile convert who had committed himself to the teachings of the Jewish faith, underwent circumcision, and worshiped in the Jewish temple or synagogue.

Tentmaker. Paul's trade, which he worked at with Aquila and Priscilla to support himself in Corinth.

Key People

• Paul: Preaches Christ in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, then returns to Antioch.

• Silas and Timothy: Traveled with Paul from Philippi, remained in Berea, and later joined him in Corinth from Macedonia.

• Jason: The Thessalonian whose house the mob attacked. He and some other brothers were dragged before the council.

• Dionysius: A member of the Areopagus who believed Paul and became his follower.

• Damaris: A woman in Athens who believed Paul and became his follower.

• Aquila and Priscilla: Tentmakers who had recently fled from Italy because Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. Paul stayed and worked with them, and later left them in Ephesus.

• Titius Justus: A Jewish proselyte in whose house Paul taught after leaving the Corinthian synagogue.

• Crispus: The ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, who turned to the Lord along

with his entire family.

• Gallio: The governor of Achaia, who dismissed the charges the Jews brought against Paul.

• Sosthenes: The new leader of the synagogue, seized and beaten by the mob outside the courtroom.

Key Places

• Thessalonica: Where Paul reasoned in the synagogue for three Sabbaths and planted a strong Spirit-empowered missional church amid persecution.

• Berea: Where the people were of more noble character and eagerly examined the Scriptures.

• Athens: The capital of Greece (Achaia) and the center of Greek culture, art, philosophy, and architecture, with about 250 thousand people in the first century A.D.

• Corinth: The capital and commercial center of Greece and the seat of the Roman proconsul, notorious for its immorality, with about half a million residents.

• Ephesus: A brief stopover on the way home, where Paul evidently planted a small body of believers and left Priscilla and Aquila.

• Caesarea and Antioch in Syria: Paul sailed to Caesarea, greeted the church, then went northward to Antioch, completing the journey.

Key Event

One night the Lord comes to Paul in a vision at Corinth, tells him not to be afraid but to keep on speaking, and assures him, "I have many people in this city."

Paul is again guided by a vision. The Spirit not only directs us in our work for God, He also comes to us to comfort and encourage us in our times of discouragement. Paul was greatly encouraged and remained in Corinth for a year and a half teaching the word of God.

Key Verse

"This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

Acts 17:3

Remember This

• Sometimes we are called upon to witness for Christ in the midst of opposition, and even hostility.

• Paul did not limit his preaching and teaching to the church. He took the gospel into the marketplace.

• Our job is not simply to tell people about Jesus; we must seek to persuade them to turn to Him.

• We must "make the most of every opportunity" to preach Christ.

Life Application: Witnessing Amid Opposition

• Sometimes we are called upon to witness for Christ in the midst of opposition, and even hostility.

• In such cases we should ensure that we remain full of the Spirit and faithful in proclaiming the message of the gospel. We can do this by staying in close communion with Christ through prayer.

• If we will remain faithful to God's mission, He will use us to advance His kingdom and establish a strong work for Him.

• We should strive to plant churches like the one Paul planted in Thessalonica, churches full of joy and the Holy Spirit. These churches can become models for other churches in the area, and from them the message of Christ can ring out to other places.

• Such churches can only come into being if the missionaries and church planters take intentional steps to ensure that they do. These steps include the establishing of clear goals and focused teaching on the mission of the church.

• The new disciples in these churches must be instructed about how they too can be filled with the Spirit and become active participants in Christ's mission.

Life Application: Preach to All Classes of People

• We should be faithful to preach the message of Christ wherever we go.

• And we should preach it to all classes of people, expecting a harvest of souls.

• Some will oppose the gospel; however, we must not be discouraged, for some will be "more noble" and will gladly accept Christ as Savior.

Life Application: Know Your Message, Know Their Culture

• We must know our message. It is the message of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). The center of this message is His death, burial, and resurrection (15:1-6).

• We must consistently call men to faith in Him. They must repent of their sins, believe in Christ, and follow Him.

• While doing this, we must be sensitive to the people's customs and culture, and, when possible, use our knowledge of their culture to more effectively present the gospel to them.

• All along, we must understand that God is at work through His providence and His Spirit to prepare people to receive Christ. He empowers His church to proclaim the message of Christ to them.

• We must, therefore, be faithful to take the message to all peoples, whether in the next village or in distant lands.

Life Application: Comfort and Encouragement in Hard Times

• When we go out to preach the gospel, we should go in the power of the Spirit, and we should focus our preaching and teaching on "Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

• When difficult times come, if we will follow the Spirit's leading, we can expect the Lord to come to us with words of comfort and encouragement.

• Sometimes He may appear in a vision. Most of the time, however, He will speak to us directly by His Spirit to our spirits.

• Such times of encouragement most often come when we are seeking the Lord's face in prayer.

Life Application: Use Every Opportunity

• We should use every opportunity to preach Christ, even when we are en route from one place of ministry to another.

• If we will remain focused on the mission of God and sensitive to the voice of the

Spirit, He will direct us as to what we must do.

• As Paul wrote, we must "make the most of every opportunity" to preach Christ (Ephesians 5:16).

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. Describe Paul and Silas' reception in the city of Thessalonica. What was the result of their work there?

• 2. How did Paul support himself when he first arrived in Corinth? With whom did he work? What changed when Silas and Timothy arrived?

• 3. How did the Holy Spirit encourage Paul in Corinth (18:9-10)?

• 4. Was Paul's goal of giving full time in ministry realistic in his pioneering efforts? Are gospel ministers ever justified in working full time while they pastor a church? Justify your answer.

Quick Review

1. How many Sabbaths did Paul reason in the synagogue at Thessalonica?

Answer: Three.

2. Why does Luke say the Bereans were of more noble character?

Answer: They gladly received the word and eagerly examined the Scriptures to determine if Paul was teaching the truth.

3. Who believed in Athens?

Answer: A few people, including Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris.

4. How long did Paul remain in Corinth after the Lord appeared to him in a vision?

Answer: A year and a half, teaching the word of God.

5. Whom did Paul leave behind in Ephesus?

Answer: Priscilla and Aquila.

Chapter Summary

Paul planted Spirit-empowered missional churches in Macedonia and Achaia by

preaching Christ crucified and risen with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

• In Thessalonica Paul met opposition but planted a church that became "a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia".

• In Athens Paul adapted to the culture on Mars Hill, quoting their poets, yet never compromised the gospel message.

• In Corinth Paul worked as a tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla, then preached full time, and after the Lord's vision stayed a year and a half.

Preach Christ and him crucified in the power of the Spirit, persuade people to turn to Him, and make the most of every opportunity, even while passing through.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

From Thessalonica to Ephesus, Paul kept preaching Christ and him crucified, adapting to each culture without compromising the gospel, and the Lord encouraged him with a vision when the work was hard.

CHAPTER 12 · UNIT 4 · DAY 4

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

The Ephesian outpouring, Paul's missionary strategy, and the Spirit-directed journey toward Jerusalem

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 12)

Chapter purpose. This chapter looks at Paul's third missionary journey, the Ephesian outpouring (the seventh of seven key outpourings), and the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy.

After the second journey Paul returns, then begins the third from Antioch, with the Ephesian outpouring (the seventh of seven key outpourings) as the pneuma event launching this journey.

Bible reading: Acts 18:23-20:6

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 18:23-20:6. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading from within that passage. The last part of the lesson asks you to read Acts 20:1-38.

Learning Objectives

• State from where Paul began his third missionary journey, who went with him, and whether this affected his outlook or ministerial effectiveness.

• Explain what Luke's terminology in verse 6, "the Holy Spirit came on them," reminds us of in Acts 1:8.

• State Paul's first question to the twelve men when he arrived in Ephesus, and his purpose in asking it.

• List and describe the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy.

• Identify the type of cross-cultural challenges that might face international missionary teams today, and why it is so important to meet these challenges successfully.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 18:23-20:6

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 18:23; read Acts 18:24-28; Acts 19:1-10; Acts 19:11-41; Acts 20:1-38.

The Big Idea

The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. In the Ephesian campaign, Luke sums up Paul's missionary strategy in three pillars: empowering, proclamation of the gospel with signs following, and mobilization.

Introduction to the Third Journey

• After an extended stay in Antioch, Paul launched his third missionary journey, which was his final journey in Acts.

• The journey began with a second pastoral visit to the regions of southern Galatia and Phrygia.

• Paul also returned to Ephesus, where he conducted the most successful evangelism and church planting campaign of his career.

• In this chapter we will look at these and other activities of Paul during his third missionary journey. In doing this, we will learn some valuable lessons about missions strategy.

The Story: Pastoral Visits to Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23)

After spending time in Antioch, Paul set out again, returning to the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. In each place he traveled, he strengthened the disciples.

Commentary on Acts 18:23

18:23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out

• Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if Paul took anyone with him.

Strengthening all the disciples

• Paul's concern for people did not end when he led them to the Lord, or even

when he started a new church. He returned to strengthen those who had chosen to follow Christ.

• Although evangelism and church planting are major issues in missions, the role of the missionary is more than evangelistic; it is also pastoral.

• Not only must churches be planted, believers must also be encouraged and strengthened in their faith.

• They must be taught the Word of God and led into the Spirit-filled life. In this way they can grow into mature believers and effective witnesses for Christ.

The Story: Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila (Acts 18:24-28)

While Paul was ministering in Phrygia and Galatia, a brother by the name of Apollos from Alexandria, Egypt, arrived in Ephesus. Apollos was an educated man with a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. He had been taught the way of the Lord and preached with great fervor. Even though he had only received the baptism of John, he spoke accurately about Jesus. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly about Jesus in the synagogue, they took him aside and taught him about the ways of God more thoroughly.

Later, Apollos decided to go to Achaia. The brothers in Ephesus encouraged him and wrote a letter of recommendation for him addressed to the disciples in Achaia. When he arrived there, he was greatly used by God to strengthen the church. He powerfully refuted the Jews in public debates, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

Commentary on Acts 18:24-28

• The story of Apollos illustrates the fact that men and women other than the twelve apostles were faithfully proclaiming the message of Christ in many parts of the ancient world.

• There seems to have been an active church in Apollos' hometown, Alexandria, of which the book of Acts tells us nothing.

• Churches were being planted in many other places not mentioned in Acts or Paul's epistles. Luke only writes about those places that help to further his purpose in writing Acts.

18:24-25 Apollos

• Apollos is described as a learned man with "a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures."

• This understanding obviously included what the Scriptures taught about the Christ, for Apollos had been "instructed in the way of the Lord" and he "taught about Jesus accurately."

• In 1 Corinthians Paul described Apollos as the one who watered the gospel seed that he had planted, causing the church to grow (3:5-6; compare 1:12; 3:22; 4:6; 16:12).

18:25 He spoke with great fervor

• These words of the NIV are an interpretation of the Greek text, rather than a translation.

• An accurate translation of the Greek is "fervent in spirit (or Spirit)" (compare NASB, NKJV, RSV).

• The same expression is used in Romans 12:11, where the RSV translates it "aglow with the Spirit."

• This phrase seems to indicate that Apollos has been filled with the Spirit.

• That Apollos had been filled with the Spirit is also indicated by both his ministry in Ephesus (where he "spoke with great fervor" [v. 25]) and in Corinth (where he "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate" [v. 28]) (compare 1:8).

18:27 The brothers wrote to the disciples there

• The fact that there were disciples in Ephesus indicates that there was a church there.

• It was possibly started when Paul first visited Ephesus near the end of his second journey (18:18-21).

• The church had been nurtured through the ministries of Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos (vv. 19, 24-26).

• The church, or part of it, possibly met in the household of Priscilla and Aquila (v. 26).

18:28 Proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ

• Like Peter (4:12), Philip (8:5), and Paul (9:22), Apollos' ministry centered on Jesus and the proclamation of the gospel.

The Story: The Ephesian Outpouring and Campaign (Acts 19:1-10)

While Apollos was ministering in Corinth, Paul set out from Phrygia and traveled westward through the interior of Asia, finally arriving at Ephesus. There he encountered twelve disciples. Without hesitation he asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered that they had not even heard about the Holy Spirit. Puzzled, Paul inquired further, "Then what baptism did you receive?" They answered, "John's baptism."

Paul then explained to them that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, which people received in anticipation of Jesus' coming. When the twelve disciples heard this, they were rebaptized, this time in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul then laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then they began to speak in tongues and prophesy.

Paul then took these men and went into the Jewish synagogue, where for three months he preached boldly and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. After a while, however, some members of the synagogue became obstinate and refused to believe what Paul was preaching. Some even slandered the Christian way.

Paul then left the synagogue and began teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. These lectures continued for two years. Amazingly, by the end of this time, everyone who lived in the entire province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, had heard the word of the Lord!

The Ephesian Outpouring (Acts 19:1-7)

• Paul's Ephesian campaign has been described as the chief achievement of his missionary career and the climax of his missionary work.

• Interestingly, Paul's ministry in Ephesus is the only recorded instance of his evangelistic and church planting efforts during his third missionary journey. It is as if Luke wanted to highlight this extraordinary work.

• In the Ephesian campaign, Luke sums up Paul's missionary strategy, a strategy he successfully employed throughout the Roman Empire (compare Romans 15:17-21). This strategy can serve as a model for missionary strategy today.

• Paul arrived in Ephesus with a well-thought-out goal and strategy. Paul's goal was to evangelize and establish churches throughout the Roman province of Asia (compare v. 10).

• His strategy involved three main elements, which we call pillars. The first pillar of Paul's strategy was to ensure that the Ephesian church was empowered by the Holy Spirit. This happened in the Ephesian outpouring (19:1-7).

• The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. As with the previous six, it resulted in powerful missional witness.

• Also, as with the previous six outpourings, it demonstrates Luke's empowerment-witness motif, first presented in Acts 1:8.

• Luke's primary intent in writing Acts was to call the church of his day (and ultimately the church of our day) back to its pentecostal and missionary roots.

• The Ephesian outpouring and campaign clearly demonstrate that any church, if it will be empowered by the Spirit and remain focused on the mission of God, can become a powerful witnessing community. And it can do this even in the midst of opposition and persecution.

19:1 Ephesus

• Ephesus, the provincial capital of Asia, was a great city of about 750 thousand inhabitants.

• It was the site of the famed Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

• For years Paul had wanted to go to Ephesus (compare 16:6; 18:19-21).

• He knew that establishing a strong, Spirit-empowered missional church in Ephesus was the key to evangelizing all of western Asia.

There he found some disciples

• These men were true Christians. Without exception, when Luke uses the word "disciple" without any qualifying adjective, he is talking about disciples of Christ.

• Although these twelve men had been born again, they had not yet been baptized

in the Holy Spirit, as the disciples had been on the Day of Pentecost.

• They were probably members of the emerging church in Ephesus.

19:2 Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

• In asking this question, Paul was not inquiring as to the twelve disciples' salvation.

• He was rather inquiring as to their readiness to participate in the mission of reaching Ephesus and Asia with the gospel.

• A Spirit-empowered church was the first pillar of Paul's missionary strategy.

• When Paul asked this question, he could have had in mind the words of Jesus: "Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; compare Acts 1:4-5).

19:6 Paul placed his hands on them

• Paul laid hands on the twelve disciples to help them be filled with the Spirit. He could also have been commissioning them for missional ministry.

• In Acts, the laying on of hands is often used in commissioning to ministry, as with the seven "deacons" (6:6) and Saul (9:17).

The Holy Spirit came on them

• Here, Luke intentionally uses the same wording he used in Acts 1:8 ("when the Holy Spirit comes upon you") so that his readers might understand that the Holy Spirit came upon these men just as he came on the disciples at Pentecost, not to bring about their new birth, but to empower them for witness.

• The Ephesian outpouring occurred twenty-five years after the Day of Pentecost.

• It is an appropriate example of those whom Peter described as being "far off" (2:38-39). They, too, could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so can we today!

They spoke in tongues and prophesied

• These twelve men spoke in tongues and prophesied, just as the Jews had done at Pentecost and the Gentiles at Caesarea (2:4; 10:46).

• According to Luke's teaching in Acts, there are two results that one can expect when he or she is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• The first is speaking in tongues as the Spirit enables. This is the "initial physical evidence" of one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• The second is prophetic, that is, Spirit-empowered witness.

• Empowering is the first pillar in Paul's missionary strategy. This is the functional result of one's baptism in the Holy Spirit. Both results should be considered normative.

• The disciples prophesying in this instance should be understood as Spirit-empowered witness. It is a direct fulfillment of Jesus' statement in 1:8: "You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses."

The Ephesian Campaign (Acts 19:8-10)

• The Ephesian campaign directly followed the Ephesian outpouring.

• It took place over a period of about two years and resulted in every person in the Roman province of Asia hearing the gospel and in probably hundreds of churches being planted.

• In executing the Ephesian campaign, Paul was following a predetermined missionary strategy.

• Now that the church had been empowered by the Spirit, it needed to give itself to the proclamation of the gospel and the mobilization of workers to reach out to Ephesus and all of the province of Asia.

19:8 Paul spoke boldly

• Boldness is a characteristic of Spirit-empowered witness (compare Acts 4:29-31; 9:28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 28:31).

• The fact that Paul preached with great boldness, even in the midst of great opposition (compare 1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:9-10), is an indication that many years after his initial infilling with the Spirit (9:17-18), he was still full of the Holy Spirit.

• Paul's ministering in the power of the Spirit is also indicated by the fact that he laid hands on others to receive the Spirit (19:6) and was used by God to work extraordinary miracles (v. 11).

• The proclamation of the gospel with signs following is the second pillar of Paul's

missionary strategy (see Figure 12.2).

About the kingdom of God

• The kingdom of God is a key theme in Luke-Acts. It is mentioned 39 times in Luke and 8 times in Acts.

19:9 He took the disciples with him

• This is likely a reference to the same twelve disciples mentioned in verse 1.

• Once these twelve men had been filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul immediately took them into the synagogue with him to preach the gospel. This is mentoring at its very best.

Discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus

• Once Paul had ensured that the church in Ephesus was empowered by the Spirit, and while he was yet proclaiming the gospel with signs following, he set up a training school for missionaries and church planters.

• This represents the third pillar of Paul's missionary strategy, mobilization (see Figure 12.2).

19:10 Two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord

• What an amazing accomplishment! In just two years everyone in Asia, even those of various cultures and ethnic backgrounds, heard the gospel.

• Many churches were planted, including the seven churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation 2-3.

• Church history reveals that Asia became a center of Christian witness for many years. All these accomplishments testify to the effectiveness of Paul's strategy.

Further Insight: Paul's Missionary Strategy

• Luke includes the story of Paul's ministry in Ephesus as his most comprehensive example of Paul's missionary strategy.

• It in effect sums up his missionary strategy demonstrated in his first and second missionary journeys.

• Paul employed this strategy in reaching all of Asia with the gospel of Christ in

just two years.

• We will do well to understand and employ this strategy in our own missionary and church planting efforts today.

• In the Ephesian campaign, Paul's strategy included three key "pillars."

Pillar One: Empowering

• The first pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was empowering (see Figure 12.2).

• This empowering was twofold. It first involved the empowering of the missionary himself. Every missionary and church planter must go to ministry full of the Holy Spirit. Empowering also involved the empowering of the churches to be planted.

• Paul entered Ephesus full of the Holy Spirit. He thus ministered as a Spirit-empowered witness in accordance with Jesus' prescription in 1:8.

• Paul understood, however, that it was not enough for him alone to be full of the Spirit. He knew that if the work was to prosper, any church he planted must also be Spirit-empowered.

• Therefore, upon arriving in Ephesus, his first order of business was to ensure that the believers in that city had been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

• That is why he asked the twelve disciples, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And that is why he immediately prayed with them to receive the Spirit.

• This concern of Paul's surely remained throughout his entire time in Ephesus. Also, Paul must have persisted in his insistence that all of those who were being added to the church were also baptized in the Holy Spirit and thus empowered for witness.

• Paul must have also worked to form in his disciples this same passion to see their converts empowered by the Holy Spirit.

• Thus, the two essential aspects of the first pillar are the empowering of the missionary and, equally important, the empowering of disciples in the church being planted.

• This twofold empowering laid the spiritual groundwork for the emerging missionary work of the Ephesian church. Having been empowered, the church in

Ephesus was to become a powerful center of missionary activity, reaching out to every corner of the province.

Pillar Two: Witness (proclamation of the gospel with signs following)

• The second pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was witness. This is to be expected since witness is the spontaneous result of one's being empowered by the Spirit (1:8).

• The commentary on 19:8 names this same pillar "the proclamation of the gospel with signs following."

• As with empowering, witness also has two aspects: proclamation and demonstration.

• First, Paul bore witness to the gospel through powerful proclamation. This proclamation began in the synagogue in Ephesus, where Paul "spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God" (19:8).

• He also taught "publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (20:20-21, NASB).

• The second aspect of witness is demonstration. Paul's oral witness was accompanied by powerful demonstrations of kingdom power through mighty signs following (vv. 11-20; compare Romans 15:17-19).

• No doubt, the witness of Paul's newly Spirit-filled colleagues included the same two aspects.

Pillar Three: Mobilization

• The third pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was mobilization.

• Once the church had been empowered by the Spirit, and while the gospel was yet being preached and its power demonstrated, Paul began mobilizing the church for regional missions.

• This mobilization is indicated in verse 10: "This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord."

• Without ever leaving Ephesus, Paul was able to reach the entire province of Asia with the gospel in just two years. This could only have been done by effectively

mobilizing the believers in Ephesus.

• As with the other two pillars, this pillar also has two aspects: training and sending.

• Paul trained workers and church planters in the school of Tyrannus. There seems to be a direct link between Paul's training and the fact that in the space of only two years, everyone living in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

• The school's curriculum must have included a strong emphasis on church planting and evangelism, and the atmosphere of the school must have been saturated with the presence of the Spirit.

• While the disciples were being trained, Paul sent them into every corner of the province to preach the gospel and plant Spirit-filled churches.

• No doubt, Paul's disciples employed the same missionary strategy as Paul.

• The application of this strategy resulted in a spontaneous multiplication of churches throughout the entire region "so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (19:10).

A New Testament Strategy of the Spirit

• Paul's strategy for Ephesus and Asia Minor did not originate with him. It was part of a larger New Testament strategy of the Spirit.

• Paul was simply following the example of Jesus when He sent His church into the world. And Jesus himself was following the plan that the Heavenly Father used in sending Him into the world.

• When the Father sent Jesus into the world, He sent Him with a clear mission: to redeem mankind. First, however, Jesus had to be empowered by the Spirit (compare Matthew 3:16-4:17; Mark 1:9-15; Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-14; and John 1:29-2:11).

• He then ministered in the Spirit's power, preaching the gospel and demonstrating the power of God's kingdom through signs and wonders.

• Jesus then used the same strategy in sending His church into the world. He mobilized His followers by training them and sending them out. As they went, they were to preach the gospel and to demonstrate its power with signs following.

• Before they did any of this, however, they were to wait in Jerusalem to be

empowered by the Spirit. This occurred on the Day of Pentecost and on many other occasions in Acts.

• Paul in his Ephesian campaign was simply "working the plan." He was following the example of the Father in sending Jesus into the world and of Jesus in sending His church into the world.

The Story: Further Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-41)

During Paul's time in Ephesus, God did extraordinary miracles through him. People would take cloths that had touched his body and place them on the sick, and they were cured and evil spirits left them.

One day some Jews, the seven sons of Sceva, tried to cast demons out of a man. They commanded the evil spirits to come out "in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches." To their surprise one of the evil spirits spoke back to them saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" At that, the demon possessed man jumped on them and gave them a beating. When word got out about what had happened, the people of Ephesus feared and held the name of the Lord Jesus in honor. Believers then began to come forward and publicly confess their misdeeds. A number of sorcerers brought their scrolls and burned them publicly. In this way the gospel message grew in power and spread throughout the region.

Paul then decided to return to Jerusalem, passing through Achaia and Macedonia on his way. After that he planned to visit Rome. He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia to prepare the way; however, he remained in Ephesus for a while.

About that time, an idol-maker named Demetrius incited a great disturbance in Ephesus. He did this because the growth of the church was beginning to hurt his business. He stirred up a large crowd by claiming that Paul was defaming the Ephesian goddess, Artemis. Soon the entire city was in an uproar, with a wild mob shouting over and over, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

The crowd then seized two of Paul's companions and dragged them into the theater. Paul himself would have followed them there, but the disciples and city officials restrained him. After about two more hours of confusion and shouting, the city clerk was able to quiet the crowd. He explained to the people how Paul and his companions had neither robbed the temple nor blasphemed the Ephesian

goddess. If Demetrius and his colleagues had a complaint against these men, he said, they could file it in the courts. He then dismissed the assembly.

Commentary on Acts 19:11-41

• Success in ministry does not always bring applause; sometimes it results in bitter opposition.

• In Ephesus so many people were coming to the Lord that the local idol-making industry was severely impaired. Because of this, the leaders of this industry stirred up a riot against the church.

Spirit-Empowered Ministry (vv. 11-20)

• Paul's ministry in Ephesus was marked by power encounters. Luke cites two examples.

• The first was the overcoming of demons through "extraordinary" means (vv. 11-12).

• The second was the almost comical result of the seven sons of Sceva's misuse of the name of Jesus (vv. 13-19).

• As a result of seeing the power of God displayed, many people turned to the Lord (v. 20).

19:11 God did extraordinary miracles

• Paul's preaching in Ephesus was accompanied by powerful manifestations of divine power.

• Note that the subject of this sentence is "God." Paul was the channel; the miracles, however, were wrought by the power of the Spirit.

• Though God can, and at times will, work such extraordinary miracles, they are not to be considered normative.

19:17 The name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor

• The Spirit-empowered activities of Paul and others in Ephesus resulted in powerful witness. This is the predominant theme of the book of Acts.

• Because of this witness, "the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."

• Power encounter should be a part of our evangelistic ministries.

Riot and Vindication (vv. 12-41)

• As in every other case in Acts where the apostles were brought before the governing authorities, they were found innocent of any charges of treason or sedition.

19:23 A great disturbance about the Way

• In Ephesus the proclamation of Christ took place in the midst of great opposition.

• While there, Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, where he said, "I fought wild beasts in Ephesus" (15:32), and "there are many who oppose me" (16:9).

19:26 Large numbers of people in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia

• In spite of strong opposition, Paul and those he discipled continued to preach the gospel throughout the entire city and region.

• Thousands came to the Lord, and many churches were planted. Among these churches were probably the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3.

The Story: Final Ministry in Europe and Asia (Acts 20:1-38)

After the riot, Paul took time to encourage the Ephesian believers. He had hoped to set off immediately for Syria; however, because of a Jewish plot against his life, he decided to go first to Macedonia. Everywhere he went along the way, he encouraged the brethren. From Macedonia he went to Greece, where he remained for three months. With Paul and Luke was an international team of missionaries, including Sopater and Secundus from Macedonia, Gaius and Timothy from Galatia, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. These men took a different route than Paul; however, they eventually rejoined him and Luke in Troas.

On Sunday the believers in Troas met to receive the Lord's Supper and to hear Paul speak. Because he was going to leave the next day, Paul talked until midnight. As he spoke, a young man named Eutychus became so sleepy that he

fell from the window of the third story room where they were meeting. Rushing down, they found Eutychus dead. Paul, however, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said to the people. "He's alive!" Greatly encouraged, the disciples went back upstairs and continued their meeting until the next morning.

From Troas Paul went by foot to Assos, where he met the missionary party that had gone ahead of him by ship. The group then proceeded to Miletus, where Paul sent for the elders of the Ephesian church to come and meet with him. Knowing that this was the last time he would see them, he spoke with great affection. He reminded them of his conduct and his trials when he was with them and how he had gone about preaching the kingdom of God and had not hesitated to teach them everything they needed to know about following Christ. He further told them that the Spirit was compelling him to go to Jerusalem. Though he had been warned through prophetic words that he would be captured and put in prison there, he knew that he had to obey the Spirit's voice. His chief desire in life was to complete the mission that the Lord Jesus had given to him and to testify concerning the gospel of God's grace. He further told the elders that he was innocent before man and God because he had not hesitated to proclaim to them the whole will of God.

Paul then instructed the Ephesian elders to remain true to God and to the calling the Spirit of God had given them. They were to be faithful shepherds of the church, which Christ had purchased with His own blood. He further warned them that "savage wolves" would soon come in and ravage the church. Some would even arise from among them. They should therefore be vigilant and guard the flock of God.

Finally, Paul committed them to God and His grace. He exhorted them to follow his example of generosity, honesty, and hard work. They were to take care of not only themselves but also the weak among them, remembering the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

After Paul had finished speaking, everyone knelt down and prayed. They began to weep and embrace and kiss Paul. What caused them the most grief was Paul's statement that they would never see his face again. They then escorted him to the ship, where they bade him farewell.

Commentary on Acts 20:1-38

• Paul, during his stay in Ephesus of over two years, had established a strong church in the city and throughout the province of Asia. He had done this by applying his missionary strategy of the Spirit.

• In the process he had mentored and trained many leaders with whom he had formed strong bonds of affection. These bonds are seen in this story.

• Also seen is a glimpse of some important elements of Paul's teaching ministry. His pastoral concern for the Ephesian elders, and for those to whom they were called to minister, is evident.

• At the heart of all that he said and did was his unswerving commitment to the calling he received from Christ. Paul must have transferred that same commitment to these elders.

• Jesus said, "Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

• Paul continued to move under the Spirit's direction. It was the Spirit of God who was directing him to go to Jerusalem and eventually to Rome (v. 22; compare 19:21).

International Missionary Team (vv. 1-6)

• Paul often moved with others in missionary teams. Many times those teams were international in makeup.

• We see a similar thing happening today. Missions has come full circle. It is now from all nations to all nations.

• Twenty-first century missionaries are often called upon to work in international teams. This requires that today's missionaries know how to relate cross-culturally not only with their host cultures but also with others on their missionary team.

20:2 Speaking many words of encouragement

• Again, we see Paul's pastoral heart. Everywhere Paul went, he encouraged the saints in those places.

20:4 He was accompanied

• In Paul's missionary team were men of at least four different nationalities.

• These men were traveling with Paul to help deliver the relief funds to the church in Jerusalem.

• They also, no doubt, assisted Paul in his missionary ministry along the way.

Eutychus Raised from the Dead (vv. 7-12)

• During Paul's short stay in Troas (where he had many years earlier received his Macedonian vision), the church met to receive the Lord's Supper and to hear the apostle's words of exhortation.

20:10-12 He's alive!

• The raising of Eutychus was indeed an outstanding miracle. As a result of this miracle "the people... were greatly comforted."

• Divine healing not only alerts sinners to the power of the gospel but also brings blessing and comfort to believers.

Farewell to the Ephesian Elders (20:13-38)

• Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders is one of the most moving speeches in Scripture.

• His words are full of emotion and concern for these fellow workers. They reveal Paul's great heart, a heart filled with love for Christ and His church, and his great commitment to the cause of Christ.

20:17 The elders of the church

• These are men whom Paul had trained and mentored during his two-year stay in Ephesus.

• They were now leaders in the church and were training and shepherding others.

• One of the greatest ways a missionary or pastor can extend his ministry is through the training and mentoring of others.

20:20 Publicly and from house to house

• Paul did not limit his teaching and preaching to public settings only.

• His passion to communicate Christ also took him from house to house preaching and teaching the message of Christ.

20:22 Compelled by the Spirit

• As had been the case so often in his ministry, Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit to do as he did (compare 11:28-30; 13:1-4; 16:6-10).

• Paul did not proceed to Jerusalem with no knowledge of what was to come. The Holy Spirit had given him ample warning of how prison and hardships awaited there (v. 23; compare 21:4, 11).

• Again, the Holy Spirit acted as the Superintendent of the Harvest.

20:24 If only I may finish the race

• Paul was not moved by threat of hardship or even death.

• He was moved by an intense desire to complete the task that the Lord Jesus had given him: to preach the gospel to those who had never heard (compare Romans 15:20).

20:27 The whole will of God

• While we are to preach the gospel to the lost, we are required to teach "the whole counsel of God" (NKJV, that is, the complete teachings of the Bible) to the church.

20:28 The Holy Spirit has made you overseers

• Pastors and elders are to realize that it is the Holy Spirit who made them overseers and shepherds of the church, which Christ purchased with His own blood.

• They must, therefore, look to Christ and then to the Word of God for direction about how they should conduct their ministries.

• They must never forget that church leaders will be held accountable to God for how they do their work (Romans 14:12; Hebrews 13:17; James 1:3).

20:33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing

• Those ministers of the gospel who love money have disqualified themselves from effective Christian service.

• Paul was not motivated by the love of money or fine clothes. He was motivated by the Spirit of God and by love for Christ and the ones for whom He died.

• Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith: "Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man

of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:10-11).

• This is the way for true ministers of Christ.

Conclusion

• So ends the story of Paul's three missionary journeys. It does not, however, end the apostle's passion to take the gospel "where Christ was not known" (Romans 15:20).

• Paul still hoped to visit Jerusalem, and from there travel to Rome (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:15). From Rome he hoped to take the gospel even farther westward into Spain (Romans 15:24, 28).

• Paul would, indeed, visit Rome, but not as he had originally planned. He would visit as a prisoner.

• In the next two chapters we will look at Paul's visits and ministry in Jerusalem and Rome.

Figure 12.1: Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Figure 12.1. The route of Paul's third missionary journey, as named in this chapter. The journey began in Antioch and moved through pastoral visits, the Ephesian campaign, and final ministry in Europe and Asia toward Jerusalem.

• Antioch: After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out. Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if he took anyone with him.

• Phrygia and Galatia: A second pastoral visit. In each place he traveled, he strengthened the disciples.

• Interior of Asia: Paul set out from Phrygia and traveled westward through the interior of Asia.

• Ephesus: The twelve disciples receive the Spirit. Paul teaches two years in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. All in the province of Asia hear the word of the Lord.

• Macedonia: After the riot, because of a Jewish plot, Paul goes first to Macedonia, encouraging the brethren along the way.

• Greece: He remains three months. An international team travels with Paul and

Luke.

• Troas: The church meets for the Lord's Supper. Eutychus falls and is raised. The disciples are greatly comforted.

• Assos and Miletus: Paul meets the party at Assos, then sends for the Ephesian elders at Miletus. The Spirit is compelling him to go to Jerusalem.

Figure 12.2: Missionary Strategy

Figure 12.2. The three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy, as Luke sums them up in the Ephesian campaign.

• Empowering: Twofold: the empowering of the missionary himself, and the empowering of the churches to be planted. A Spirit-empowered church was the first pillar.

• Proclamation of the gospel with signs following: The second pillar. In the Further Insight section this pillar is also called witness, with two aspects: proclamation and demonstration.

• Mobilization: The third pillar, with two aspects: training and sending. Paul trained workers in the school of Tyrannus and sent them into every corner of the province.

Important Terms

Ephesian outpouring. The seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts, when the Spirit came on the twelve disciples in Ephesus.

Empowering. The first pillar of Paul's missionary strategy: the missionary and the church being planted must both be full of the Holy Spirit.

Proclamation of the gospel with signs following. The second pillar: preach the gospel, and God confirms the word with demonstrations of kingdom power.

Mobilization. The third pillar: train workers and send them out so the whole region can hear the gospel.

Initial physical evidence. Speaking in tongues as the Spirit enables, the first result Luke teaches we can expect when a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Empowerment-witness motif. Luke's repeated pattern from Acts 1:8: the Spirit

comes, and witness follows.

Lecture hall of Tyrannus. The place in Ephesus where Paul taught daily for two years, training missionaries and church planters.

Spirit-empowered missional church. A church filled with the Spirit that can carry the gospel out into the region around it.

Key People

• Paul: Begins the third journey from Antioch, often at first alone. In Ephesus he prays with the twelve to receive the Spirit, teaches two years in the hall of Tyrannus, and is later compelled by the Spirit toward Jerusalem.

• Apollos: A learned man from Alexandria, Egypt, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had received only the baptism of John, yet taught about Jesus accurately. Priscilla and Aquila taught him more thoroughly. He later strengthened the church in Achaia.

• Priscilla and Aquila: Heard Apollos in the Ephesian synagogue, took him aside, and taught him the ways of God more thoroughly. The church, or part of it, possibly met in their household.

• The twelve disciples: True Christians in Ephesus who had been born again but had not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Paul laid hands on them, the Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

• The seven sons of Sceva: Jews who tried to cast out demons "in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches." The evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" and the possessed man beat them.

• Demetrius: An idol-maker who incited a great disturbance because the growth of the church was hurting his business. He claimed Paul was defaming the Ephesian goddess, Artemis.

• Eutychus: A young man in Troas who fell from a third-story window while Paul spoke until midnight. They found him dead. Paul threw himself on him, and he was alive. The people were greatly comforted.

• The Ephesian elders: Men Paul had trained and mentored during his two-year stay. He sent for them at Miletus, warned them of savage wolves, and committed them to God and His grace.

• The international missionary team: With Paul and Luke: Sopater and Secundus from Macedonia, Gaius and Timothy from Galatia, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. Men of at least four different nationalities, traveling to help deliver relief funds to Jerusalem.

Key Places

• Antioch: Where Paul began his third missionary journey after an extended stay, his final journey in Acts.

• Phrygia and Galatia: The journey began with a second pastoral visit here. In each place Paul strengthened the disciples.

• Ephesus: Provincial capital of Asia, about 750 thousand inhabitants, site of the Temple of Artemis (Diana). Scene of the Ephesian outpouring and a two-year campaign.

• Lecture hall of Tyrannus: Where Paul taught daily for two years, training missionaries and church planters.

• The province of Asia: Paul's goal was to evangelize and establish churches throughout this Roman province. In two years all the Jews and Greeks there heard the word of the Lord.

• Macedonia and Greece: After the riot Paul went first to Macedonia, then to Greece for three months, encouraging the brethren along the way.

• Troas: Where the church met for the Lord's Supper, Eutychus was raised, and years earlier Paul had received the Macedonian vision.

• Miletus: Where Paul sent for the Ephesian elders, spoke his farewell, and was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

Key Event

The Ephesian outpouring: Paul lays his hands on the twelve disciples, the Holy Spirit comes on them, and they speak in tongues and prophesy (Acts 19:6).

This is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. Luke uses the same wording as Acts 1:8 so readers will understand that the Spirit came on these men as at Pentecost, not to bring about their new birth, but to empower them for witness. It launches the Ephesian campaign.

Key Verse

"When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied."

Acts 19:6

Remember This

• Paul's concern for people did not end when he led them to the Lord.

• The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh key outpouring in Acts.

• Boldness is a characteristic of Spirit-empowered witness.

• Power encounter should be a part of our evangelistic ministries.

• Missions is now from all nations to all nations.

Life Application: Go Forward Even If You Begin Alone

• Sometimes in gospel ministry we must "go it alone" as did Paul at the beginning of his third missionary journey.

• At such times, we must not be tempted to withdraw or shirk our responsibilities to God. We must press forward to the work.

• If we will be faithful to do the work that the Lord assigns us, even when we have to do it alone, in His time He will bring companions to our side to help us.

• Although Paul began this journey alone, before it was completed he had a large team of workers with him (compare 20:4).

Life Application: Mentor Individuals in the Faith

• When public or classroom teaching is not sufficient, sometimes we must do as Priscilla and Aquila did with Apollos.

• We must personally instruct certain individuals and mentor them in the faith and in ministry.

• We must do this so that they might more clearly understand the gospel and their responsibility in spreading it.

Life Application: Use a Biblically Based Strategy

• We as missionaries and church planters must approach our work with a well-thought-out, biblically-based strategy. Everything we do must be focused and intentional.

• Our labors must be aimed at planting Spirit-empowered missional churches.

• To do this, we must make sure that we enter ministry full of the Holy Spirit, and we must further ensure that the people we lead to Christ and the churches we plant have also been empowered by the Spirit.

• Only then will these believers and churches have the spiritual dynamic necessary to spread the gospel to the surrounding areas.

• Further, we must preach the gospel in the power of the Spirit, expecting Christ to confirm His word with signs following.

• Finally, we must carefully mobilize the churches we plant for further missional ministry. We can do this through focused intentional training and the effective sending and placement of those who have been trained.

Life Application: Expect Opposition

• When we enter new areas to preach Christ, we can expect opposition, especially if we are successful.

• Local religious and business leaders will often rise to oppose our efforts to establish the church in their area.

• In such cases we should not be deterred. We must stay full of the Spirit and remain focused on the task that God has given us.

• As we do, we can expect God to confirm the preaching of the gospel with miraculous signs.

Life Application: Stay Faithful to the Calling

• As ministers of the gospel, our chief desire in life must be to be faithful to the calling we have received from Christ.

• We can do this only if we will keep our motives pure, live holy lives, remain full of the Spirit, and stay true to the Word of God.

• Every minister of the gospel must be steadfast in prayer and always open to the voice of the Spirit.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. From where did Paul begin his third missionary journey? Who went with him? Did this affect his outlook or ministerial effectiveness?

• 2. Luke's terminology in verse 6, "the Holy Spirit came on them," reminds us of what promise in Acts 1:8?

• 3. What was Paul's first question to these men when he arrived in Ephesus? What was his purpose in asking the question?

• 4. List and describe the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy.

• 5. What type of cross-cultural challenges might face international missionary teams today? Why is it so important to meet these challenges successfully?

Quick Review

1. From where did Paul begin his third missionary journey, and who went with him?

Answer: He began from Antioch. Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if he took anyone with him. Beginning alone did not stop the work: before the journey was completed he had a large team with him (compare 20:4).

2. Which of the seven key outpourings is the Ephesian outpouring?

Answer: The seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. It occurred twenty-five years after the Day of Pentecost.

3. What was Paul's first question to the twelve men in Ephesus, and why did he ask it?

Answer: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" He was not inquiring as to their salvation. He was inquiring as to their readiness to participate in the mission of reaching Ephesus and Asia with the gospel.

4. What are the three pillars of Paul's missionary strategy?

Answer: Empowering; proclamation of the gospel with signs following (also called witness); and mobilization.

5. How long did Paul teach in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, and what was the

result?

Answer: Two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Chapter Summary

The Ephesian outpouring is the seventh and last key outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts. In the Ephesian campaign, Luke sums up Paul's missionary strategy in three pillars: empowering, proclamation of the gospel with signs following, and mobilization.

• Paul began the third journey from Antioch. Unlike his first two journeys, we are not told if he took anyone with him. He first strengthened the disciples in Phrygia and Galatia.

• In Ephesus the Spirit came on twelve disciples (Acts 19:6). Paul then taught two years in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, and all in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

• The Spirit later compelled Paul toward Jerusalem. At Miletus he charged the Ephesian elders to shepherd the church Christ purchased with His own blood.

Enter ministry full of the Spirit, plant Spirit-empowered missional churches, preach the gospel expecting signs following, and mobilize trained workers to reach the whole region.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Paul begins the third journey from Antioch, the Spirit is poured out on the twelve in Ephesus, and a two-year campaign using three strategy pillars reaches all of Asia.

CHAPTER 13 · UNIT 5 · DAY 4

Jerusalem and Trials

Arrival and arrest in Jerusalem; Paul's speeches; a plot against Paul; trials before Felix and Festus

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 13)

Chapter purpose. This chapter follows Paul as the Spirit leads him to Jerusalem: his arrival and arrest, his speeches, a plot against his life, and his trials before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa, with Rome now set as the next place of witness.

After the third journey the Spirit directs Paul to Jerusalem, then toward Rome.

Bible reading: Acts 21:1-25:32

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 21:1-25:32. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading: review Acts 21:1-36; read Acts 21:37-23:11; Acts 23:12-35; Acts 24:1-27; Acts 25:1-12; and Acts 25:13-26:32.

Learning Objectives

• Describe how James and the elders received Paul's report about his ministry among the Gentiles, and why they asked him to take a purification vow.

• Explain how Paul understood the Spirit's warnings about Jerusalem, as distinct from those who tried to stop him from going.

• List Paul's five trials in Acts and state the outcome of each.

• List and describe three ways the Holy Spirit enables the church to fulfill its mission to preach the gospel to all nations.

• State the fivefold commission Christ gave Paul, as Paul testified before King Agrippa, and how that commission applies to the church today.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 21:1-25:32

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts

21:1-36; read Acts 21:37-23:11; Acts 23:12-35; Acts 24:1-27; Acts 25:1-12; Acts 25:13-26:32.

The Big Idea

The Spirit was leading Paul to Jerusalem. He knew he was moving in the will of the Lord. What was important to him was that he obeyed the voice of the Spirit and completed the ministry Christ had given to him.

The Spirit Leads Paul to Jerusalem

• The Spirit was leading Paul to go to Jerusalem.

• Paul wanted to meet with James and the other leaders of the church and report to them how the work of the Lord had progressed among the Gentiles.

• After that he wanted to go to Rome, where he would establish a new missionary base, from where he would range even further westward into Spain (compare Romans 15:24, 28).

The Story: To Jerusalem, Journey, Arrival, and Arrest (Acts 21:1-36)

Leaving the Ephesian elders in Miletus, Paul and his companions, including Luke, sailed to Tyre where they met some disciples. These disciples, speaking by the Spirit, urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul and his party, nevertheless, proceeded on to Caesarea, where they stayed with Philip the evangelist and his four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

While in Caesarea, Agabus prophesied that in Jerusalem Paul would be bound and handed over to the Gentiles. Hearing this message, everyone pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem; however, he was determined to go and told them, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When Paul and the other missionaries arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers greeted them warmly. The following day Paul reported to James and the elders of the church all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. Hearing

this, they glorified God. They then convinced Paul to take a purification vow and join four other Jewish Christians in the temple the next day. In this way, they surmised, those Jewish Christians who were zealous for keeping the law would have nothing of which to accuse Paul.

The next day Paul went into the temple. While he was there, some Jews from Asia saw him with another man, whom they assumed was a Gentile. They therefore seized Paul and began shouting, accusing him of defiling the temple by taking Greeks with him there. Word spread quickly, and an angry mob gathered. Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The Jews began beating Paul and would have killed him had not some Roman soldiers intervened. The Roman officer then seized Paul and took him to the barracks. All along, the crowd kept shouting, "Away with him!"

Commentary: Journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16)

• As Paul moved steadily toward Jerusalem, he was repeatedly warned that danger and imprisonment awaited him there. Some of these warnings came by the Holy Spirit.

• Many of his colleagues interpreted this to mean that he was not to go to Jerusalem. Paul understood their fears; however, he also knew that he was moving in the will of the Lord.

• He was prepared even to die in Jerusalem, if necessary. What was important to him was that he obeyed the voice of the Spirit and completed the ministry Christ had given to him.

21:7 We greeted the brothers

• Paul was greeted by a delegation of brothers in Ptolemais, a city in northern Galilee. This is the first time Luke mentions a church in this city.

• Luke does, however, talk about the growth of the church in Galilee (9:31). Ptolemais is one of hundreds of places where the church had been planted by many unnamed Christian brothers and sisters.

21:8 Caesarea

• This city was the site of the Caesarean outpouring some twenty years earlier

(10:44-46).

• In this verse we discover that there was an active church there. Philip the evangelist, formerly one of the seven "deacons" of Acts 6, and the gospel preacher of Acts 8, lived there.

21:9 Four unmarried daughters who prophesied

• Philip had four daughters who were prophetesses. This is in accordance with Joel's prophecy, quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, "Your...daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; compare 1 Corinthians 11:4-5).

• Women are given the Holy Spirit for the same reason men are given the Holy Spirit: that they might preach the gospel in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8, 14; 2:18).

21:10 A prophet named Agabus

• Prophets played a vital role in the expansion of the early church (compare Acts 2:17-18; 11:27; 13:1-2; 15:32; 19:6; 21:9-10).

• On this occasion Agabus visually and accurately predicted Paul's arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem.

• Although Agabus' prophecy told the future, the primary function of prophecy, according to Paul, is the "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" of believers (1 Corinthians 14:3).

• In Acts Luke portrays prophecy primarily as Spirit-empowered proclamation of the gospel to the lost.

21:11 The Holy Spirit says

• To speak as a prophet is to speak for God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

• Prophecies, however, since they always contain a human element, must be tested (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; see comment on 13:3). They are to be judged by other Spirit-filled believers in harmony with the Word of God.

• While Paul accepted the truth of Agabus' prophecy, he did not accept the interpretation others placed on the prophecy. They tried to stop him from going to Jerusalem.

• He, however, knew that it was God's will for him to go there, even if it meant

imprisonment or death (21:12-14).

Commentary: Arrival (Acts 21:17-26)

• Paul's meeting with James and the elders of the Jerusalem church is significant.

• Remember, it was James who led the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), and who wrote the letter that Paul delivered to the Gentile churches.

• James now rejoiced with Paul over what God had accomplished among the Gentiles.

• There were, however, still some traditionalists in the Jerusalem church and elsewhere (the Judaizers) who thought that one must keep the Law of Moses to truly serve Christ.

21:19 What God had done among the Gentiles

• The Greek word for Gentiles is ethn . It means the nations of the world.

• God's salvation and blessings are for all peoples and all nations (Genesis 12:3; Revelation 5:9; 7:9).

21:20 When they heard this, they praised God

• James and the elders of the Jerusalem church rejoiced when they heard how the Gentiles had received the gospel.

• We too should rejoice when the gospel is taken to the unreached tribes of the world. We should do all that we can to ensure that those tribes are reached.

How many thousands of Jews have believed

• Even as the word of the Lord was spreading among the Gentile nations, the work continued to prosper in Judea, for James reports that many thousands of Jews had believed.

Commentary: Arrest (Acts 21:27-36)

• Paul was arrested on trumped-up charges based on false perceptions.

• Nevertheless, the repeated accusations of some Asian Jews incited a mob of angry Jews who wanted to kill him.

21:27 Jews from the province of Asia

• These Asian Jews had probably come to know Paul during his ministry of over two years in Ephesus, in which Paul endured strong opposition and persecution from both the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 19:23; 20:19; 1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:9).

21:31 They were trying to kill him

• Again Paul's life was in danger. Throughout his ministry he faced the prospect of pain and death (1 Corinthians 15:30-32; 2 Corinthians 11:25-26).

• Paul, however, was not driven, nor paralyzed, by his fear. He was rather moved by the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:22; 2 Corinthians 5:14).

Life Application: Unnamed Laborers, Unselfish Motives

• There are more than one million pentecostal churches in the world today, along with many other evangelical churches. Most of these churches are faithfully preaching the gospel of Christ.

• However, much like the church in Ptolemais, few know the names of those who planted these churches or of the believers there. But God knows their names, and on the Day of Judgment those who have labored faithfully for Him will be lavishly rewarded.

• Like Paul, we should not be motivated by fear or any other selfish concern. We should be motivated by our love for Christ and the empowering presence of His Spirit within.

• We are further moved by a clear understanding of God's mission and our part in fulfilling that mission.

The Story: Paul's Speeches in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37-23:11)

On this occasion, Paul had to use his cross-cultural language skills to defend himself. When the Roman commander heard Paul speaking in Greek, he allowed him to address the crowd. Switching to Aramaic, Paul reminded his hearers of how he, too, was once a zealous follower of the Law of Moses and a violent persecutor of the church. He told them the story of how he had met the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus and how he was converted and commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. When the crowd heard him speak about the

Gentiles, they became furious and began throwing dust into the air, shouting, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" Seeing this, the commander ordered a centurion to flog and interrogate Paul. Paul, however, surprised the centurion by asking, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" Upon hearing that Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen, the commander relented and released him.

The next day, the commander called for a meeting of the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin and brought Paul to stand before them. After a brief confrontation with Ananias the high priest, Paul presented his defense. Knowing that the assembly was divided between Pharisees and Sadducees, he said, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, the Pharisees (who believe in the resurrection) and Sadducees (who do not believe in the resurrection) began arguing with one another. Finally, some of the Pharisees concluded that Paul was innocent and asked, "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" The assembly then fell into such confusion that the commander had to order his soldiers to rescue Paul and take him back to the barracks. The next night, the Lord appeared to Paul and told him, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

Commentary: Paul Addresses the Crowd (Acts 21:37-22:21)

• In his address to the angry crowd, Paul did not hesitate to proclaim the gospel. Although his very life was at stake, he remained true to his calling.

• This was the first of Paul's five trials in Acts. In each trial Paul was found innocent of all charges.

21:37-40 Do you speak Greek? He said to them in Aramaic

• Paul was a highly educated man and spoke several different languages. This ability greatly aided him in his missionary work.

• Language learning is a very important part of missionary work. Those who feel that God is calling them to cross-cultural missions must be prepared to learn the language of their host culture.

22:4 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death

• Paul admitted that his persecution of Christians resulted in the death of some. However, he did not let his past life hinder him. He knew that he had been completely forgiven by Christ.

• Instead, he used the memory of his past opposition to Christ to motivate him to even greater service for his Lord (compare 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Galatians 1:13-16).

22:21 Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles

• Paul received this direct command from Christ in a vision (compare vv. 17-18).

• It reminds us of Jesus' Great Commission to His church to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

• Paul's specific command was to go "far away to the Gentiles."

Paul's Five Trials in Acts

Paul's five trials in Acts. In each trial Paul was found innocent of all charges.

Trial · Setting · Passage

• Trial: 1. Setting: Before the Jewish mob in the temple. Passage: Acts 21:37-22:29

• Trial: 2. Setting: Before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Passage: Acts 22:30-23:10

• Trial: 3. Setting: Before Felix. Passage: Acts 24:1-27

• Trial: 4. Setting: Before Festus. Passage: Acts 25:1-12

• Trial: 5. Setting: Before King Agrippa. Passage: Acts 25:13-26:32

Commentary: Paul the Roman Citizen (Acts 22:22-29)

• When the Roman soldiers discovered that Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen, they were alarmed at the way he had been treated. They immediately began to treat him with more respect.

22:25 Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen?

• As a Roman citizen, Paul had certain legal rights. When it suited his purposes, he did not hesitate to use those rights, especially when it resulted in the furtherance of the gospel (compare 16:37-40; 23:27).

Commentary: Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23:11)

• Upon discovering that Paul was a Roman citizen, the Roman commander proceeded with more caution. Because he wanted to know the exact charges against Paul, he called for a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

23:6 I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead

• Paul again testifies concerning the resurrection of the dead.

• As we have discovered in our study of Acts, the message of Jesus' resurrection was the central component of the gospel Paul preached (Acts 17:18; Romans 10:9-10).

• He wrote, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:13-14).

• The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are key elements of true gospel preaching today (1 Corinthians 15:1-6).

23:11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul

• In a night vision the Lord again appeared to Paul, telling him to take courage because he must also testify in Rome.

• What an encouragement this must have been to Paul at this difficult time in his life.

Life Application: Christ Comes to Encourage Us

• In times of great stress and difficulty, we must remain focused on our mission and our message.

• If we will seek His face, Christ will come to us to encourage us. He will not always come in a vision, as he did to Paul in this instance, but He will come nevertheless.

• Jesus promised, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20), and "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

• Christ will come to us through the Holy Spirit and be our divine Comforter (John

14:16-18, KJV).

Further Insight: How the Holy Spirit Enables Mission

• In Acts, the Holy Spirit is actively involved in fulfilling the missio Dei. As we have shown in our study, He is indeed the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• He enables the church to fulfill its mandate to preach the gospel to all nations before Jesus comes again. He does this in at least three essential ways.

1. The Holy Spirit inspires mission

• It is the Holy Spirit who moves the church away from inactivity and motivates believers to participate in God's mission.

• When asked why he went to the Gentiles in Caesarea, Peter answered, "The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them" (Acts 11:12).

• When it was time for the church in Antioch to send out missionaries to the nations, the Holy Spirit moved in the church and spoke, saying, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (13:2).

• If we will ensure that our church members are filled with the Spirit, and if we will allow Him to move freely in our churches, He will inspire our people to get involved in missions.

2. The Holy Spirit empowers mission

• Jesus said that we would receive power for missional witness when the Holy Spirit comes upon us (Acts 1:8).

• The Spirit will empower our witness in various ways: He will inspire our teaching and preaching (2:14-41; 11:22-26; 18:25), giving us boldness and insight into the gospel and into the lives of the people to whom we are ministering (4:31-33; 14:9).

• As we preach the gospel, He will manifest His presence through spiritual gifts, including confirming signs and wonders (2:43; 5:12; 15:12).

• We, like the disciples before the Day of Pentecost, must faithfully "stay in the city until [we] have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

3. The Holy Spirit sustains mission

• The Spirit comes to those who are involved in fulfilling God's mission and encourages them in the work.

• As He did with Stephen, Paul, and others, the Holy Spirit will come to us in our times of great trial and discouragement. He will comfort us through dreams, visions, and inner works of grace (Acts 7:55; 16:9; 18:9).

• Through it all, as we seek the Lord's face, the Spirit will keep us focused on the mission of God.

• We can build ourselves up and keep ourselves in the love of God by praying in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:4; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20-21).

The Story: Plot and Escape (Acts 23:12-35)

The next morning a group of about forty Jews developed a plot to kill Paul. They bound themselves together with an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until Paul was killed. They told the Jewish rulers about their plan and asked for their help. As a ruse, the chief priests and elders were to ask that Paul be brought before the Sanhedrin for questioning. The conspirators would then kill him on his way to the meeting.

Paul's nephew, however, heard about the plot and told Paul, so Paul called for his guard and had him take the boy to Claudius Lysias, the commander of the barracks. The boy told Lysias about the plot. That night the commander had Paul transferred to Caesarea, escorted by a detachment of 270 soldiers. He wrote a letter to Felix, the governor of Judea, telling him of the situation and stating that he had examined Paul and had found no charge against him deserving death or imprisonment.

In Caesarea Paul was handed over to Felix. When the governor discovered that Paul was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." He then ordered that Paul be kept under guard in the palace of Herod.

Commentary: The Plot to Kill Paul (Acts 23:12-22)

• Not satisfied that justice had been done in the matter concerning Paul, a group of radical Jews conceived a plot to murder him before he could be tried.

23:12 A conspiracy

• The conspiracy to kill Paul was conceived in the hearts of evil men. Its origin, however, was demonic.

• Jesus taught that the "gates of Hades" (that is, the conspiracies of the devil) will not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18).

23:16 The son of Paul's sister heard of this plot

• It was no accident that Paul's nephew discovered the plot to kill Paul. It was providential, that is, it was arranged by the hand of God.

• God not only directs us by His Spirit, He also directs us by His providence.

Commentary: Paul Transferred to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-35)

• Guarded by a large contingent of Roman soldiers, Paul was secretly transferred in the night to Caesarea.

23:29 There was no charge against him

• Throughout all of his trials, Paul was found innocent of all charges.

• Luke wanted to show the Roman officials throughout the empire that the church was not a subversive organization but that Christians were law-abiding citizens. This would hopefully help to lessen the persecution that Christians were enduring.

Life Application: Our Lives Are in God's Hands

• Our lives are in God's hands. We can know that at all times God is at work for us.

• One way He does this is by providentially arranging the circumstances and the events of our lives so that we are blessed and His kingdom is advanced.

• Paul wrote, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

• Our job is simply to remain true to Him and seek to walk in the center of His will.

The Story: Paul's Trial Before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)

Five days later, Ananias, the high priest, took with him some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus and went to Caesarea. There before Felix they presented their case against Paul. Tertullus, after an attempt to flatter the governor, made his

charge against Paul. "We have found this man to be a troublemaker," he said, "stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple."

When Paul was given permission to speak, he calmly denied the charges against him. He did admit, however, that he worshiped "the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect." He testified concerning his hope in God that there will be a resurrection of the dead. He further stated, "It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today." Felix, who was himself well acquainted with Christianity, deferred his decision, claiming that he wanted to first hear from Lysias, the commander of the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem.

A few days later, Felix and his Jewish wife Drusilla sent for Paul. This time Paul spoke to them about faith in Christ. He talked about righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment. As Felix listened, he became fearful and demanded that Paul stop. "When I find it convenient, I will send for you," he said. Because he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, he sent for him often and talked with him.

Two years passed, and Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Because he wanted to win the favor of the Jewish leaders, Felix left Paul in prison.

Commentary: Paul's Trial Before Felix

24:14 I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way

• Christianity is called "the Way" five times in Acts (9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22).

• The name reminds us of Jesus' words, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

24:24 He spoke about faith in Christ Jesus

• Faith in Christ is the essence of true Christianity.

• By this time, Paul had already written his letter to the Romans, which he wrote while in Corinth during his third missionary journey. Paul, no doubt, spoke to Felix about many of the things written in that epistle.

• In Romans Paul used the word "faith" forty times and "believe" seventeen times.

In one place he wrote, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:17).

Life Application: Jesus Is the Only Way

• We should never forget that Jesus is the only way to God, both for us and for the ones to whom we minister.

• It is only through faith in Him that anyone can be saved.

• Christ should therefore be at the center of our lives, and He should be the main subject of our preaching and teaching.

• We must never forget that our primary task is to bring others to faith in Him.

The Story: Paul's Trial Before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)

Porcius Festus succeeded Felix as governor of Judea. Three days after arriving in Caesarea, he proceeded to Jerusalem. There he met with the chief priests and Jewish leaders, who immediately told him of their charges against Paul and pleaded with him to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem. They were secretly planning to ambush and kill Paul on his way there. Festus, however, denied their request, saying that they could come to Caesarea, where he would listen to their charges against Paul.

The next day, after arriving back in Caesarea, Festus convened the court and summoned Paul. The Jews who had come with Festus accused Paul of many serious crimes. They were, however, unable to prove any of them.

In his defense Paul denied that he had done anything against the Jewish law, the temple, or Caesar. Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor, so he asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial there. Paul answered, "I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well." He then pressed his case: "If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!" After conferring with his council, Festus replied to Paul, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

Commentary: Paul's Trial Before Festus

25:11 I appeal to Caesar!

• Paul's appeal to Caesar was more than a desperate attempt to beat the charges against him. It was a calculated, and possibly Spirit-led, move to ensure that he traveled to Rome.

• Paul had been compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (20:22). Although Luke does not say, it is quite possible that he was now compelled by the Spirit to appeal to Caesar. The context seems to indicate that this is the case.

Life Application: Live So That Charges Are False

• As gospel workers we may at times have charges leveled against us. We must live such lives, however, that these charges will always be false.

• Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (Matthew 5:11).

• Note that we are blessed only when men speak evil against us falsely. The Jews leveled charges against Paul, but they could not prove any of them.

• Paul wrote that ministers of the gospel "must be blameless" (Titus 1:6).

The Story: Paul's Trial Before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32)

A few days after Paul had appealed to Caesar, King Agrippa and his wife Bernice arrived in Caesarea. Festus discussed Paul's case with the king, telling him of the recent events. He told Agrippa that the Jews took issue with Paul concerning "a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive." He further told the king how Paul had appealed to Caesar. Hearing this, Agrippa wanted to speak to Paul himself; so a hearing was scheduled for the next day.

The next day Paul was brought before King Agrippa. Festus told the king how the Jews had filed charges against Paul, calling for his death. However, he had concluded that Paul had done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment. Nevertheless, because Paul had appealed to the Emperor, Festus had decided to send him to Rome. Yet, the governor faced a dilemma: he had no crime with which to charge Paul. Thus, he needed the king's help to know what to write to

Caesar.

When Agrippa finally gave Paul permission to speak, the apostle launched into his defense. He explained to the king that his "crime" was nothing more than believing what God had promised to the fathers, that there would be a resurrection of the dead. He told of how he had once persecuted the church in Jerusalem, and how one day, while on his way to Damascus, he had encountered the risen Lord. It was then that Jesus told him that he was to go to the Gentiles.

Paul explained to the king how he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision and how he immediately began to preach the gospel in Damascus and later in Jerusalem and Judea and to the Gentiles in many lands. He preached that they should repent of their sins, turn to God, and live holy lives. Then Paul continued, "I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

At this point Festus became so agitated that he shouted at Paul, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane." This Paul denied. Then, turning to the king, he said, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do." Agrippa responded, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" Paul replied, "Short time or long, I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

Having heard this, the king and his entourage left the room. After conferring with the others, Agrippa concluded, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." He then said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Commentary: Paul's Trial Before Agrippa

• King Agrippa was also known as Herod Agrippa II. He was the son of Herod Agrippa I, the one who killed James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1-4), and was the great grandson of Herod the Great.

• Agrippa had taken his sister Bernice to be his wife. So there were many reasons

why Paul could have feared the ruthless King Agrippa.

• Paul had to rely on the Holy Spirit's power to respond so clearly and courageously to such a powerful and ungodly ruler.

• Although God's messengers often minister to the poor or to common people, we must not forget that the wealthy and powerful are also in need of the Savior. God may also send His servants to witness to them.

• Paul's trial before Agrippa is his final trial in Acts. Here we see Paul the evangelist as he presses the claims of Christ on Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus.

Festus Consults King Agrippa (25:13-22)

• Festus, not knowing how to handle Paul's case, consulted with King Agrippa, since the king was better acquainted with Jewish customs (26:3).

• He was hoping that Agrippa could help him out of his predicament: he was sending Paul to Rome, but he had no crime with which to charge him.

• When Agrippa heard about Paul's case, he decided to interview the apostle himself the next day.

Paul Before Agrippa (25:23-26:32)

• Paul's meeting with Agrippa was a fulfillment of the words of Christ to Ananias that Paul would carry Christ's name "before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

26:16 To appoint you as a servant and as a witness

• Jesus appointed Paul as a servant and as a witness of what he had seen and heard.

• Two primary activities of missionaries are to be servants of God and the people to whom God has sent them and to be witnesses to Christ and His finished work on the cross.

• Verses 17-18 recount Jesus' commission to Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. His commission was fivefold: (1) to "open their eyes"; (2) to "turn them from darkness to light"; (3) to turn them "from the power of Satan to God"; (4) to see that "they may receive forgiveness of sins"; (5) to see that they may receive "a place among those who are sanctified by faith" in Christ.

• As Christ's ambassadors, we have been given that same responsibility today (compare 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

26:19 I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven

• More than twenty years after first receiving his commission from Christ, Paul testified that he had remained faithful to his original vision.

• He had traveled thousands of miles, often on foot. He had lived in constant danger. He had been beaten, stoned, and harassed by both Jews and Gentiles.

• He had at times gone without shelter, food, water, and sleep, laboring tirelessly for the cause of Christ (compare 2 Corinthians 11:25-28).

• In all of this, he had endured and had not lost his vision. Neither had he wavered from his original commitment.

26:20 I preached that they should repent and turn to God

• Not only did Paul remain true to Christ and His mission, he also remained true to Christ's message, that is, the message of the gospel.

• He faithfully preached about Christ's death and resurrection and how through faith in Him and repentance toward God, people could turn to God and find life everlasting (compare 20:21).

Life Application: Prove Faithful

• Above all else, Christ demands that His servants be faithful. No matter what the circumstances or the cost, we must remain faithful to Christ and His calling on our lives.

• Paul wrote concerning himself and his own ministry, "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

• We are stewards of the "mysteries of God," that is, the gospel, and we must faithfully preach that message, no matter what the personal cost.

Conclusion

• Paul had finished his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea. He would soon be on his

way to Rome, but not as he had previously expected.

• When he was departing from Ephesus during his third missionary journey, Paul had stated, "I must visit Rome also" (Acts 19:21).

• A few weeks later, when from Corinth he wrote to the Roman Christians, he told them, "I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you" (Romans 1:10).

• Now, Paul was indeed on his way to Rome; however, he was going not as a free man but as a prisoner.

Important Terms

ethn . The Greek word for Gentiles. It means the nations of the world.

Judaizers. Traditionalists who thought that one must keep the Law of Moses to truly serve Christ.

the Way. A name for Christianity in Acts, pointing to Jesus as the way to the Father.

Nazarene sect. Tertullus' charge against Paul before Felix: that he was a ringleader of this group.

missio Dei. Latin for the mission of God.

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

Fivefold commission. Christ's commission to Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, listed in five parts in Acts 26:17-18.

Providence. God arranging circumstances by His own hand, as when Paul's nephew heard the plot.

Key People

• Paul: Led by the Spirit to Jerusalem, arrested in the temple, testified through five trials, and appealed to Caesar so that he would go to Rome.

• James and the elders: Received Paul's report, praised God for what He had done among the Gentiles, and asked Paul to take a purification vow because of Jewish

Christians zealous for the law.

• Philip the evangelist: Formerly one of the seven "deacons" of Acts 6, and the gospel preacher of Acts 8. Paul stayed with him in Caesarea.

• Philip's four unmarried daughters: Prophetesses, in accordance with Joel's prophecy quoted on the Day of Pentecost: "Your...daughters shall prophesy."

• Agabus: A prophet who visually and accurately predicted Paul's arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem.

• Jews from Asia: Seized Paul in the temple on trumped-up charges, accusing him of defiling the temple by taking Greeks there.

• Ananias the high priest: Confronted Paul before the Sanhedrin, and later went with elders and Tertullus to Caesarea to accuse Paul before Felix.

• Claudius Lysias: Commander of the barracks. After Paul's nephew reported the plot, Lysias transferred Paul to Caesarea with 270 soldiers and wrote to Felix that he had found no charge deserving death or imprisonment.

• Paul's nephew: The son of Paul's sister. He heard of the plot to kill Paul. The textbook calls this providential, arranged by the hand of God.

• Felix: Governor of Judea. Well acquainted with Christianity. Heard Paul on faith, righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, hoped for a bribe, and left Paul in prison for two years.

• Tertullus: The lawyer who presented the case against Paul before Felix, calling him a troublemaker and a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.

• Drusilla: Felix's Jewish wife. She and Felix sent for Paul, and Paul spoke to them about faith in Christ.

• Porcius Festus: Succeeded Felix as governor of Judea. Heard the charges, found them unproved, and after Paul's appeal said, "To Caesar you will go!"

• King Agrippa: Also known as Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I and great grandson of Herod the Great. Paul's meeting with him fulfilled Acts 9:15. He concluded that Paul had done nothing deserving death or imprisonment.

• Bernice: Agrippa's wife, and his sister. Paul pressed the claims of Christ on Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus.

Key Places

• Miletus: Where Paul left the Ephesian elders before sailing toward Jerusalem.

• Tyre: Where disciples, speaking by the Spirit, urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

• Ptolemais: A city in northern Galilee. The first time Luke mentions a church there, one of hundreds of places planted by unnamed brothers and sisters.

• Caesarea: Site of the Caesarean outpouring some twenty years earlier. Paul stayed with Philip, was later transferred there under guard, and stood trial before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa.

• Jerusalem: Where Paul reported to James and the elders, was arrested in the temple, addressed the crowd and the Sanhedrin, and was told by the Lord that he must also testify in Rome.

• The temple: Where Paul took a purification vow and was seized by Jews from Asia on false charges of bringing Greeks inside.

• The barracks: Where the Roman officer took Paul after rescuing him from the mob, and where the Lord appeared to him at night.

• The palace of Herod: In Caesarea, where Felix ordered that Paul be kept under guard.

• Cilicia: Paul's home region. When Felix discovered Paul was from Cilicia, he said he would hear the case when the accusers arrived.

• Rome: Paul's intended next missionary base, and the place the Lord said he must testify. After the appeal to Caesar, Festus said, "To Caesar you will go!"

Key Event

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and told him, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11).

In a night vision the Lord again appeared to Paul. This word of courage set the path from Jerusalem toward Rome, the next movement in the unit and in Jesus' Acts 1:8 agenda.

Key Verse

"Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

Acts 23:11

Remember This

• I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

• The primary function of prophecy is strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

• We should be moved by the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

• Learning a language is an important part of missionary work.

• The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are key elements of true gospel preaching.

• In Acts, the Holy Spirit is actively involved in fulfilling the missio Dei.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. How did the elders in Jerusalem receive Paul's report concerning his missionary ministry among the Gentiles? Were they justified in their concern for Paul to correct the Jewish perception regarding his ministry and methods?

• 2. List and describe three ways that the Holy Spirit enables the church to fulfill its mission to preach the gospel to all nations.

• 3. According to Paul's testimony before King Agrippa, what five-fold commission had Christ given him? How might this commission apply to the church today?

• 4. Does God ever require His servants today to stand in witness before kings or rulers? Why is it important to be respectful and yet to present the gospel clearly to such leaders?

Quick Review

1. How did James and the elders receive Paul's report about what God had done

among the Gentiles?

Answer: They glorified God (they praised God). They rejoiced when they heard how the Gentiles had received the gospel.

2. What three ways does the Holy Spirit enable the church to fulfill its mission?

Answer: He inspires mission, empowers mission, and sustains mission.

3. What did the Lord tell Paul the night after the Sanhedrin hearing?

Answer: "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

4. Name Paul's five trials in Acts, and the outcome of each.

Answer: Before the Jewish mob in the temple, before the Sanhedrin, before Felix, before Festus, and before King Agrippa. In each trial Paul was found innocent of all charges.

5. According to Paul's testimony before Agrippa, what fivefold commission had Christ given him?

Answer: To open their eyes; to turn them from darkness to light; to turn them from the power of Satan to God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins; and that they may receive a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ.

Chapter Summary

The Spirit was leading Paul to Jerusalem. What mattered was that he obeyed the voice of the Spirit and completed the ministry Christ had given him.

• James and the elders praised God for Paul's Gentile ministry, then asked him to take a purification vow. He was arrested in the temple on false charges.

• Paul testified before the crowd and the Sanhedrin. The Lord told him he must also testify in Rome. After a plot against his life he was transferred to Caesarea.

• In trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, Paul was found innocent. He appealed to Caesar and would go to Rome as a prisoner.

Remain true to the calling received from Christ. The Spirit inspires, empowers, and sustains the church's mission, and He may send His servants to witness even before kings.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Paul went to Jerusalem in the will of the Lord, testified there through

arrest and five trials, and was told he must also testify in Rome.

CHAPTER 14 · UNIT 5 · DAY 4

Journey to Rome

Voyage to Rome, ministry in Malta, and open doors in Rome

Taught by Lec SK. KIERU

Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 14)

Chapter purpose. This chapter follows Paul's perilous voyage to Rome: the Spirit's warning, the storm and shipwreck, ministry on Malta, and open doors to preach the kingdom of God in Rome.

Paul's appeal to Caesar takes him to Rome, the ends of the earth in the book's geography, completing the Acts 1:8 outline.

Bible reading: Acts 27:1-28:30

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 27:1-28:30. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading: review Acts 27:1-44; read Acts 28:1-10; read Acts 28:11-30.

Learning Objectives

• State the warning from the Spirit that Paul gave at Fair Havens, and what the sailors did instead of following that warning.

• Describe the obstacles Paul overcame on the voyage to Rome, and what his ministry on Malta teaches about small communities and remote places.

• Explain what Paul did when he first arrived in Rome as a prisoner, and state his central message (Acts 28:23, 31).

• State the message of the book of Acts for the church today, as the textbook closes the study.

• Show how Paul's arrival in Rome relates to Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:8: Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 27:1-28:30

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts 27:1-44; read Acts 28:1-10; read Acts 28:11-30.

The Big Idea

Because Paul had appealed to Caesar, his path was set. On this perilous journey to Rome we see God at work through His Spirit and His providence. He directed Paul both by the Holy Spirit and by His controlling hand over nature.

The Path to Rome Is Set

• Because Paul had appealed to Caesar, his path was set.

• In this chapter we look at his perilous journey to Rome.

• In it we will see God at work through His Spirit and His providence. He will direct Paul both by the Holy Spirit and by His controlling hand over nature.

The Story: The Journey to Rome (Acts 27:1-44)

At Caesarea, Paul, under the guard of a Roman centurion, boarded a ship for Rome. With him were Luke and Aristarchus, a Christian brother from Thessalonica. Setting sail, the ship traveled northward then westward until it arrived at Myra, a coastal city of Lycia. There the party changed ships and set off again. After many days of slow and difficult sailing, they finally arrived at Fair Havens on the southern tip of the island of Crete. By this time winter had arrived, which was an extremely dangerous time for marine travel.

At Fair Havens Paul warned his fellow travelers, "Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also." Nevertheless, those in authority ignored Paul's warning and decided to sail for a nearby port called Phoenix, where there was a more suitable harbor to winter in. When a soft southerly wind began to blow, the pilot and owner of the ship thought that they had attained their purpose. They therefore weighed anchor and sailed west, staying close to the shoreline of Crete. Without warning a great storm arose, and a powerful hurricane-force wind blew in from the northeast. It drove the ship out from land into the violent waves of the sea. Day after day the

crew and passengers struggled desperately to keep the battered ship afloat. Finally, after many harrowing days, they gave up all hope of being saved.

Paul then encouraged the famished crew to take food. He reminded them that if they had heeded his advice, this tragedy would not have happened. He urged them to take heart and put their faith in God, for an angel of God had visited him in the night and had told him not to be afraid of dying because he must stand before Caesar. The angel also told him that God had given him everyone who was with him on the ship. Nevertheless, the ship would be wrecked on some island.

On the fourteenth night the ship did indeed approach an island and was about to run aground. Some tried to escape in the lifeboat, but Paul warned them, saying, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved."

Then, just before dawn, Paul urged everyone to eat so that they would have the strength for the ordeal ahead. He encouraged them, saying, "Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." Then, after he had given thanks to God, they ate together. Altogether there were 276 souls on board.

At daylight they spied a sandy beach and decided to let the ship run aground there. So, hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. When the ship struck a sandbar, the bow stuck fast, and the waves began pounding against the stern, breaking it into pieces. Paul ordered everyone to abandon the ship and head for land. In this way everyone was saved.

Commentary: A Warning from the Spirit (Acts 27:1-12)

• Before the ship departed from Fair Havens, Paul, speaking by the Spirit, gave the sailors a warning: If they tried to move the ship to another harbor, disaster would ensue.

27:10 Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous

• It seems that Paul here is speaking by revelation. Other translations render the phrase "I can see" as "I perceive" (RSV, NKJV, NASB).

• The phrase likely indicates a manifestation of the gift of the word of knowledge (compare 1 Corinthians 12:8).

• The same spiritual gift may be taking place in 8:23, 10:34, 14:9, 17:22, and

28:26.

27:12 The majority decided

• God's will is not decided by a majority vote but by the Word of God and by spiritual discernment.

Commentary: Hurricane (Acts 27:13-26)

27:14 A wind of hurricane force swept down

• The sea storm may have been providential, that is, brought about by the will of God. If so, it was God's hand directing Paul's pathway to Rome.

27:23 An angel stood beside me

• The angel ministered to Paul by giving him encouragement and hope. Paul was then able to minister that same hope to his fellow shipmates.

• Angels are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

27:25 I have faith in God

• This confession of Paul's faith sums up the core of his life and ministry.

• Once he wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

• This should be the confession of every minister of the gospel.

Commentary: Shipwreck (Acts 27:27-44)

• After many days at sea, the ship ran aground on a remote island and was broken to pieces. As Paul had prophesied, not one life was lost.

27:35 Gave thanks to God in front of them all

• Paul's giving of thanks in this instance served two purposes. First, it was an expression of genuine gratefulness to God. Next, it served as a witness to those who heard his prayer.

• Paul's confidence in God during this dangerous circumstance encouraged the others to trust in God also.

Life Application: Confident Faith Influences Others

• How we act, or react, in trying circumstances will influence others.

• Paul's steadfast confidence in God encouraged others to trust in Him. If we act in confident faith, it will witness to others. They, too, will be encouraged to put their faith in God.

• However, if we react in fear and unbelief, others will be reluctant to trust in God.

• We witness to others not only with our words but also by the way we conduct our lives and the way we respond to life's problems.

The Story: Ministry in Malta (Acts 28:1-10)

Once Paul and the others were safely ashore, they discovered that they had landed on the island of Malta. The kindness and spiritual interest of the islanders was soon clear to see. They quickly built a fire for the shivering survivors to warm themselves. Paul, as was his nature, helped gather firewood. As he put some sticks into the fire, a poisonous viper came out and fastened itself to his hand. The islanders saw the viper hanging from Paul's hand and felt that their gods were punishing this prisoner for his crimes. So they exclaimed, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." However, when Paul shook the snake into the fire and suffered no ill effects, they changed their minds. Now they said he was a god!

Publius, the chief Roman official of the island, lived on an estate nearby. He invited Paul and his fellow missionaries to his home and took care of them for three days. During that time, Paul prayed for Publius' father who was sick in bed suffering from fever and dysentery. Laying hands on him, Paul healed him. When this miracle became known, the rest of the sick on the island came, and they too were healed. When Paul and his colleagues were ready to sail, the islanders furnished them with whatever supplies they needed.

Commentary: Ministry in Malta

• The battered sea travelers were shipwrecked on the island of Malta. They stayed there for three months.

• During that time, Paul preached the gospel and demonstrated the power of the Kingdom to the inhabitants of the island.

• In all probability, Paul also planted a church on the island, as was his custom in every place he preached.

• It is inconceivable that he performed miracles without presenting Christ to the people. It is further inconceivable that Paul would lead people to Christ and then not gather them together into a church to worship God and further evangelize the rest of the people on the island.

• In any case, a providential event led to further witness of the kingdom of God on an isolated island in the Mediterranean Sea.

Divine Protection (28:1-6)

• On the island of Malta God miraculously delivered Paul from a venomous snake bite.

28:1 We found out that the island was called Malta

• Malta is a tiny island in the Mediterranean Sea just south of Sicily and Italy.

• The guiding hand of God caused Paul's ship to wreck on a sandy beach of that remote island.

28:4 This man must be a murderer

• Seeing the snake attach itself to Paul's hand, the Maltese interpreted the event according to their own worldview. They assumed that justice had caught up with Paul.

• Then, when he shook the snake off and suffered no harm, they changed their minds and thought that he was a god.

• Missionaries must be aware of and sensitive to the worldview of those to whom they minister. They must not, however, compromise the gospel to accommodate a people group's worldview.

28:5 Paul suffered no ill effects

• This miracle, and the subsequent healing ministry of Paul on Malta, is a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Mark 16:18: "They will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will

place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

The Sick are Cured (28:7-10)

• The healing of Publius' father opened a door for Paul to minister to the healing needs of many.

28:8 Paul placed his hands on him and healed him

• Healing is an integral part of the gospel message and should be an integral part of gospel ministry, as Paul's ministry on Malta illustrates.

• A miracle of healing can open up people's hearts to hear and respond to the gospel (compare Acts 3:11-16; 4:4; 8:4-8, 14; 9:34-35, 40-42).

Life Application: Proclaim the Truth and Demonstrate the Power

• As we go into the world preaching the gospel, we should expect the Lord to confirm the word by performing confirmatory miracles (compare Mark 16:15-20).

• We are not only to proclaim the truth of the gospel; we are also to demonstrate its power.

• We can do this only if we are daily walking in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The Story: Open Doors in Rome (Acts 28:11-30)

After a stay of three months on the island of Malta, Paul and his companions put out to sea and sailed to Sicily and then to the Italian mainland. In the city of Puteoli they found some brothers with whom they stayed for a week. Leaving there, they headed for Rome. The brothers in Rome, hearing that Paul and his companions were coming, sent an advance party to greet them on the way. When they finally arrived in Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself in his own rented house with only a soldier to guard him.

After three days Paul called a meeting of the Jewish leaders in Rome. When they had assembled, he presented his case to them, saying that he was innocent of all charges that the Jews in Jerusalem had lodged against him. He concluded by saying, "It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain." The Jews replied that they had not received any bad reports about him from Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, because people everywhere were speaking against the Christian faith, they wanted to hear what Paul had to say; so they arranged a meeting with him on a certain day.

When the day came, an even larger group of Jewish leaders gathered to hear Paul's words. From morning until evening he taught them concerning the kingdom of God. He tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Law and the Prophets. Some were convinced, but others rejected Paul's teaching. Quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10, Paul chided the Jews for their unbelief. "Therefore," he concluded, "I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"

Paul stayed in his own rented house for two whole years and received everyone who came to visit him. So, boldly and without opposition, he preached the kingdom of God and taught the people about Jesus Christ.

Commentary: Arrival at Rome (Acts 28:11-16)

• After a long, eventful journey from Caesarea, Paul and his fellow missionaries finally arrived in Rome.

28:13-14 Puteoli. There we found some brothers

• Puteoli is a coastal town about 80 miles (130 kilometers) south of Rome.

• The fact that Paul found some brothers there indicates that there was a church in this place. Could this have been a church plant from the church in Rome?

We came to Rome

• How Paul must have rejoiced when he finally arrived in Rome. Even though he had come as a prisoner, he knew that he was moving in the will of the Lord.

Commentary: Preaching the Kingdom in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)

• When he arrived in Rome, Paul took every opportunity to preach and to teach about Jesus Christ, both to the Jews and the Romans.

28:23 From morning till evening

• Paul's extended teaching session shows both his zeal for the gospel and the Jews' interest in what Paul had to say.

• It reminds us of his ministry in Troas where he taught all night (Acts 20:7-12).

He tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law and from the Prophets

• Just as Jesus after His resurrection had taught His disciples about himself from Moses and the Prophets (Luke 24:27), Paul used the Old Testament Scriptures to teach the Jews about Jesus, their Messiah and the Savior of the world.

• Apollos had also used the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:28).

• Whether preaching from the Old Testament or the New, our teaching and preaching should center on the person and work of Christ.

28:28 God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!

• This verse is in some ways a summary of the book of Acts.

• The salvation of God is for all peoples, and it must be preached to them in the power of the Holy Spirit (compare Acts 1:8).

28:31 He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ

• The book of Acts began with teaching about the kingdom of God (1:3), and it ends the same way.

• The kingdom of God is the overarching context of the entire book (compare 1:6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

Life Application: Walk Through Open Doors

• When a door to proclaim the gospel is opened to us, we should not hesitate to walk through it.

• Just as Paul did with the Jewish leaders in Rome, we must "make the most of every opportunity" to preach Christ (compare Ephesians 5:16).

• We should be prepared to preach the Word "in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Figure 13.1: Paul's Voyage to Rome

Figure 13.1. Paul's Voyage to Rome. The book's list of figures numbers this map 13.1. The voyage itself is narrated in this chapter. Stages below are the places named in the Chapter 14 story, not printed map labels.

• Caesarea: Paul boarded a ship for Rome under a Roman centurion, with Luke and Aristarchus.

• Myra in Lycia: After sailing northward then westward, the party changed ships here.

• Fair Havens, Crete: Southern tip of Crete. Winter had arrived. Paul, speaking by the Spirit, warned that to sail on would bring disaster.

• Phoenix: The majority ignored the warning and sailed for this nearby harbor. A hurricane-force wind from the northeast drove the ship to sea.

• Shipwreck: On the fourteenth night the ship approached an island, struck a sandbar, and broke up. All 276 souls were saved.

• Malta: Three months of ministry: divine protection from a viper, the healing of Publius' father, and the sick of the island cured.

• Sicily, then Puteoli: They sailed to Sicily and the Italian mainland. In Puteoli they found brothers and stayed a week.

• Rome: Paul lived in his own rented house and, for two years, preached the kingdom of God and taught about Jesus Christ.

Important Terms

Word of knowledge. A spiritual gift. The textbook says Paul's "I can see" at Fair Havens likely indicates this gift.

Providence. God's controlling hand over nature and events, directing Paul's pathway to Rome.

Worldview. The basic assumptions a people use to interpret events, as the Maltese did with the viper.

Confirmatory miracles. Miracles that confirm the truth of the gospel.

Kingdom of God. The overarching context of Acts. The book begins and ends with

teaching about the kingdom of God.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The powerful spiritual experience by which believers are empowered for witness.

Hermeneutical key. The key that unlocks the meaning of Acts: Acts 1:8.

Key People

• Paul: Spoke by the Spirit at Fair Havens, encouraged the ship's company, ministered on Malta, and in Rome preached the kingdom of God and taught about Jesus Christ.

• Luke: Traveled with Paul from Caesarea toward Rome.

• Aristarchus: A Christian brother from Thessalonica who sailed with Paul.

• The Roman centurion: Guarded Paul on the voyage from Caesarea.

• An angel of God: Visited Paul in the night, told him not to be afraid because he must stand before Caesar, and that God had given him everyone on the ship.

• Publius: The chief Roman official of Malta. He took care of Paul and his fellow missionaries for three days. Paul healed his father of fever and dysentery.

• The Jewish leaders in Rome: Paul met them after three days. From morning until evening he taught them concerning the kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Law and the Prophets.

Key Places

• Caesarea: Where Paul boarded a ship for Rome under a Roman centurion.

• Myra: A coastal city of Lycia where the party changed ships.

• Fair Havens: On the southern tip of Crete. Paul warned that to sail on would bring disaster. The majority decided otherwise.

• Phoenix: A nearby port with a more suitable harbor to winter in. Those in authority sailed for it against Paul's warning.

• Malta: A tiny island in the Mediterranean Sea just south of Sicily and Italy. Three months of witness, healing, and, in all probability, a church planted.

• Sicily: Reached after the stay on Malta, on the way to the Italian mainland.

• Puteoli: A coastal town about 80 miles (130 kilometers) south of Rome, where Paul found brothers and stayed a week.

• Rome: Where Paul lived in his own rented house for two years and, boldly and without opposition, preached the kingdom of God and taught about Jesus Christ.

Key Event

Paul arrives in Rome and, though a prisoner, preaches the kingdom of God and teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ for two years (Acts 28:30-31).

According to Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:8, the gospel has been preached in the power of the Spirit in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Although the part concerning the ends of the earth had not been fulfilled completely, its process had begun, and it had been fulfilled symbolically.

Key Verse

"He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts 28:31

Remember This

• Paul urged them to put their faith in God.

• God's will is not decided by a majority vote.

• Missionaries must be sensitive to the worldview of those to whom they minister.

• From morning until evening he taught them concerning the kingdom of God.

• When a door to proclaim the gospel is opened to us, we should walk through it.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. What warning from the Spirit did Paul receive? Rather than follow the voice of the Spirit, what did the sailors do?

• 2. What remarkable obstacles did Paul overcome on his voyage to Rome? What does the story of Paul's actions on Malta have to teach us about the value of small communities and the people who live in remote places?

• 3. Even though Paul was a prisoner, what did he do when he first arrived in Rome? What was his central message? (Acts 28:23, 31).

• 4. What is the message of the book of Acts for the church today?

• 5. How can you apply the message of the book of Acts to your ministry? List at least five specific applications or actions you can take to respond to God's Word in the book of Acts.

• 6. Let those in the class share their responses together and then pray over them. When we seek to apply God's Word, we can ask God to clothe us with pentecostal power for witness.

Quick Review

1. What warning from the Spirit did Paul give at Fair Havens, and what did the sailors do?

Answer: Paul warned that the voyage would be disastrous if they moved the ship to another harbor. Those in authority ignored the warning and sailed for Phoenix.

2. How many people were on board when the ship wrecked, and how many were saved?

Answer: Altogether there were 276 souls on board. As Paul had prophesied, not one life was lost.

3. What did Paul do on Malta after the shipwreck?

Answer: He was delivered from a venomous snake, healed Publius' father, and the rest of the sick on the island were healed. He stayed three months, preached the gospel, and demonstrated the power of the Kingdom.

4. Even though Paul was a prisoner, what did he do when he first arrived in Rome, and what was his central message?

Answer: After three days he called the Jewish leaders. From morning until evening he taught them concerning the kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Law and the Prophets. For two years he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:23, 31).

5. What is the message of the book of Acts for the church today?

Answer: If we are to participate powerfully in Christ's mission to take the gospel to all nations before His soon return, we too must be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and our churches must

clearly understand the church's mission in the world.

Chapter Summary

On the journey to Rome, God directed Paul both by the Holy Spirit and by His controlling hand over nature.

• Paul warned by the Spirit at Fair Havens. The sailors ignored him, a hurricane wrecked the ship, and all 276 were saved.

• On Malta Paul was protected from a viper, healed Publius' father, and ministered to the sick of that remote island.

• In Rome, though a prisoner, Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught about Jesus Christ for two years.

Walk through open doors to preach Christ. The salvation of God is for all peoples, and it must be preached to them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

What Have We Learned?

• So ends the book of Acts with Paul safely arriving in Rome.

• According to Jesus' prophecy in 1:8, the gospel has been preached in the power of the Spirit "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

• Although the part of the prophecy concerning the "ends of the earth" had not been fulfilled completely, its process had begun, and it had been fulfilled symbolically.

• From the book of Acts we have learned many things. Most importantly, we have learned about God's mission and how the first-century church went about fulfilling that mission.

• Hopefully, we will apply what we have learned to our own lives and ministries. And hopefully, we will personally experience the same power of God in our own lives as did the apostles and early disciples.

What is the message of Acts for the church today?

• The messages of Acts can be said to be as numerous as its readers, for, like any part of God's Word, the Holy Spirit can take and apply the individual passages and

incidents of the book to the specific situations of the reader.

• If, however, we are to take Acts seriously, we must find its message in the book's literary and historical context. Before we can really know what Acts has to say to us today, we must first determine what it had to say to its first-century readers.

• In this study we have discovered that Luke wrote with a clear purpose, found in 1:8, the hermeneutical key to the book: "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."

• Luke thus wrote to call the church back to its pentecostal and missionary roots. That purpose was then, and remains today, the primary message of Acts.

• Remember, Luke wrote to a second generation of Christians who lived remotely from Jerusalem. These believers, because of the persecution they were enduring, had lost their spiritual fervor and missionary zeal.

• In Luke's mind, they desperately needed to hear (or to hear again) the story of the church's powerful beginning and irresistible missionary advance.

• Luke thus wrote to demonstrate to his original readers the absolute necessity of every member of the church being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

• He further wrote to demonstrate that such an empowering comes as a result of a powerful spiritual experience called the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

• If Luke's readers would be thus empowered and remain resolutely focused on Christ's mission, they too could become a powerful missionary force, fully equipped to proclaim the gospel at home and abroad, just as had the first church. What is more, this could happen even in the midst of severe persecution.

The same message for us

• This, then, is the message of Acts. It is the same for us today as it was for those first-century believers: If we are to participate powerfully in Christ's mission to take the gospel to all nations before His soon return, we, too, must be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

• We, as church leaders, missionaries, and pastors, must work tirelessly to ensure that our churches, and every member in our churches, have been clothed with power from on high.

• And we must further work to ensure that our congregations clearly understand the church's, and thus their, mission in the world.

• If we will do these things, we will have gone a long way toward making the church the effective force in the earth that Christ intended it to be.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

God brought Paul through storm and shipwreck to Malta and then to Rome, where the prisoner preached the kingdom of God without opposition.