FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Unit 2 notes

Chapters 3, 4

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

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

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

CHAPTER 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.