FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Unit 3 notes

Chapters 5, 6, 7

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 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.