

# School of Theology



- 20th March 2021
- Acts 1-8
- God's Power in us

Chapter 1

- Luke says it's part two of his account: part one told all that Jesus BEGAN to do and teach.
- There's been 40 days between the resurrection and ascension; then he recounts the Lord's instruction that the disciples wait in Jerusalem to receive power from the Holy Spirit.
- Their question is whether now is the time that Jesus will restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus evades the question telling them they don't need to know times etc. Rather he sums up the whole of the book of Acts with one sentence:

**“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 1:8**

This verse contains an inspired outline of the Book of Acts. Note that it refers to persons (Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit), a power (of the Holy Spirit), and a program (ever expanding worldwide witness). Luke proceeded to record the fulfilment of this prediction until the gospel and the church had reached Rome. From that heart of the empire God would pump the gospel out to every other remote part of the world. Starting from Jerusalem the gospel message radiated farther and farther as ripples do when a stone lands in a placid pool of water. Rome was over 1,400 miles from Jerusalem.

Commissioning Acts 1:8	Verses	The Holy Spirit comes	How does it end?
“you will receive power and be my witnesses in Jerusalem”	1:1 – 6:7	2:1-13 The Spirit comes on the Jews	“So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly” 6:7
“...and in all Judea and Samaria”	6:8 – 9:31	8:4-25 The Spirit comes on Samaritans	“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit it grew in number” 9:31
“..and to the ends of the earth” Gentiles	9:32 – 12:24	10:44-48 The Spirit comes on Gentiles within Israel	“But the word of God continued to increase and spread” 12:24
Asia	12:25 – 16:5	19:1-7 The Spirit comes on Gentiles outside of Israel	“So the churches were strengthened” 16:5
Europe	16:6 – 19:20		“The word of the Lord spread widely” 19:20
Rome	19:21 – 28:31		TBC.....

## Chapter 2

### Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) – what?

- What is the feast of Pentecost? Harvest festival. Jewish men from all over come to Jerusalem. No work. Party atmosphere
- Disciples in a room. Echoes of the Last Supper before Christ's passion; now at the dawn of the Spirit-born church
- Sound of mighty wind brings to mind OT references to Red sea parting; God passing Elijah. Wind = Breath = Spirit (*ruach, pneuma*)
- Filled the house. What did the Spirit fill in the OT? The tabernacle and temple. So?
- Tongues of Fire. When does fire come in the OT? Pillar of fire; on the sacrifice with Elijah and Baal; on the mountain. Holiness and awe
- Other languages. Earthly languages for witness to the gospel

### Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) – why?

- They were filled. The church is the eschatological temple
- They spoke with other languages. All nations and peoples will be reached with the good news. Reversal of Babel in Genesis 11
- They received power. Signs and wonders which announce the kingdom; bold preaching which results in mass conversion
- A new age, as prophesied by Joel where 'all flesh' will receive the Spirit
- A new community. All nations incorporated into the holy people, not just Israel

Sinai - Exodus 19	Pentecost – Acts 2
7 weeks after Passover	7 weeks after the cross
Moses goes up the mountain	Jesus ascends
God's presence descends	God's presence descends
God sends fire	Tongues of fire
Noise from heaven: thunder	Noise from heaven: rushing wind
The gift that defines God's people is given – Law	The gift that defines God's people is given – Spirit
Dwelling place of God established – tabernacle	Dwelling place of God established – church

## Peter's Pentecost sermon

- Facts of the life and passion of Christ
- OT promises of hope in a King from David
- David is not the answer
- Christ fulfils the promise
- We've seen **the ascension**, and we've received the promised Spirit, which you now witness
- Don't you see, Jesus is the Messiah and the Lord?
- Response? Repent and be baptised. God will give you his Spirit and forgive your sins

## The new Spirit-filled community

- DEVOTED TO
  - Teaching
  - One another
  - Breaking bread
  - Prayer
  - Reverential fear

- MARKS
  - Signs and wonders (power)
  - Sharing everything
  - Joyful and thankful
  - Favour of all the people
  - Daily conversions

### Chapter 3 – Jerusalem - crowds

- Healing miracle
- Peter preaches
- To the Jews: you killed God's servant
- Witness of the truth of the resurrection of Christ
- You want God to restore just as we do
- God has always promised this, if you have eyes to see
- You are Abraham's heirs of promise
- You can be delivered from your sin

### Chapter 4 – Jerusalem - leaders

- Peter preaches, filled with the Spirit (2:4; 4:8, 31)
- There is no other name under heaven....
- Recognised as changed and Jesus as the agent
- Extreme boldness. We can not but speak
- Opposition leads to prayer
- They pray for boldness!!
- Characterised by extreme generosity among themselves

Acts 4: 27 – 30, 33

<sup>27</sup> “For indeed both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, <sup>28</sup> to do as much as your power and your plan had decided beforehand would happen. <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, pay attention to their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your message with great courage, <sup>30</sup> while you extend your hand to heal, and to bring about miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

<sup>33</sup> “With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all.”

## Chapter 5 – Opposition – Internal deceit

- What could possibly go wrong?! V 1-11
- FF Bruce “The story of Ananias is to the book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives, an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.”
- Joshua 7 <sup>25</sup>  
Joshua said, “Why have you brought disaster on us? The LORD will bring disaster on you today!” All Israel stoned him to death.
- Acts 5  
How have you thought up this deed in your heart? You have not lied to people but to God!” <sup>5</sup> When Ananias heard these words he collapsed and died, and great fear gripped all who heard about it.

## Chapter 5 – Opposition – External persecution

- Imprisonment
- Miraculous release
- Boldness preaching
- Arrested: “We must obey God rather than people”
- “God raised up Jesus, whom you killed!”
- Gamaliel’s counsel takes the heat out of the situation
  - <sup>38</sup> So in this case I say to you, stay away from these men and leave them alone, because if this plan or this undertaking originates with people, it will come to nothing, <sup>39</sup> but if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them, or you may even be found fighting against God.”
- Gamaliel: a manifesto for Luke

## Chapter 6:1-7

- Chapter 5 ends with gospel preaching throughout the city
- Chapter 6 begins with complaining within
- Gathered the church to discuss: didn't impose
- Seven deacons appointed to avoid apostles being distracted
- Church choose the seven
- Diakonia - same word used of the apostles and the seven
- Differing ministry/service but both ministry/service
- \*\*Vital ministry: a divided community subverts the gospel\*\*

## Chapter 6:8-15

- Stephen, a man full of the Holy Spirit, and one of the seven is arrested
- Accused of blasphemy against Moses and God, against the temple and the Law
- False witnesses called against him
- They saw his face shining, just as Moses' face had shone when he came down the mountain with the Law!

## Chapter 7 – Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin

- “Stephen serves as a one man summary of everything part one of Acts has told us we must be.... Equally at ease serving humbly in obscurity or preaching boldly in adversity. This is a man who studied Scripture, prayer bold prayers, performed great miracles, and made bitter enemies. In fact, he is such a model Christian that Luke deliberately portrays him as the perfect witness to Christ.” (Phil Moore)
- His speech is the longest ‘sermon’ in the book of Acts; a well crafted defence of his faith and reversal where he puts the Sanhedrin on trial. He shows the true faith and the true blasphemers .

## Chapter 8 – Philip the Evangelist

- Scattered 8:1-3
- Evangelising with signs 8:4-13
- Spirit filling 8:14-17
- Contratemp with Simon the magician 8:18-24
- Preaching continues 8:25
- Evangelising with Bible exposition 8:26-35
- Baptism follows conversion 8:36, 38
- Whisked away 8:39-40

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