

MODULE 6: THE CHURCH AGE

Under the 'Church Age', we mean the rest of the New Testament, from Acts to Revelation. Acts tells the story of how the church began, matured and multiplied to fill the Roman Empire with the Gospel. Teachers in the early Church wrote letters, sermons and an apocalypse to help strengthen the Church in her mission.

SESSION 1 PART 1 - JERUSALEM, JUDEA AND SAMARIA (ACTS 1—9)

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read Isaiah 32:14-16; 43:8-13; 49:6-7; Acts 1-9.

Summary of the Video: Module 6, Part 1

Note: This is a long video! So, if you wish, you can skip bits:

- **Start the video at 17:16**
- **Fast forward the first Q&A – 29:39-42:19**
- **Fast-forward the second Q&A – 1:25:30 to end**

New Testament theologians summarize the story of the NT as the fulfillment of the promises in the OT: the establishment of God’s reign through his Messiah and the Spirit. This has already begun to happen, but it will not achieve its consummation until Christ’s return.

We look at a table with elements of the biblical story to see the stage of each element as it progresses in the story: chaos, creation, commission, sin and judgment.

Two maps show us the regions described in the Gospels and early chapters of Acts (Israel/Palestine) and then the rest of Acts and the New Testament (Eastern Mediterranean).

We divide Acts according to Luke’s division (Acts 1:8), looking sequentially from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria (Acts 1-9) and then to the ends of the earth (Acts 10-28). We see Luke’s organization of Acts and how this helps him communicate his main points.

In this session and the next, we focus on the first nine chapters of Acts.

First, we see how Isaiah gives Luke the language to talk about the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. Quotes from Isaiah come at crucial points in Luke’s story and show how the promises have been fulfilled but not in ways that might have been expected. For example, “restoration of the kingdom to Israel” has happened, but not in the way Jews expected (Acts 1:6).

The first half of Acts seems particularly suited for a Jewish audience while the second half appears very accessible to a Gentile audience. What do we know about the particular aims of Luke in his writing? Luke wrote two parts: Luke and Acts. Andrew Wilson is impressed by the idea that Luke writes to prove the “innocence” of Christianity in terms of Roman law. They should have the same legal status as Jews and therefore shouldn’t be persecuted.

Who was the first “Gentile” to become a Christian? We need to distinguish between ethnicity and religion. The Ethiopian was a proselyte who already worshiped Israel’s God, so he wouldn’t be considered fully “Gentile”. Therefore, Cornelius was first. But Acts 8-10 can be seen as a transition from exclusively Jewish church to both Jew and Gentile church.

What can you tell us about the feast of Pentecost (celebrated by the Jews) and the day of Pentecost experienced by the first Christians? The feast celebrates fifty days after the exodus and represents the giving of the law. God descended on the mountain in fire. Compare that to how Jesus redeems us and liberates us from captivity and then fifty days later the Spirit descends on his people with fire and fills them with the Spirit to help them fulfill the law. 3,000 were killed at Sinai for idolatrous breaking of the law; 3,000 were saved for loyal obedience at the (Christian) Pentecost.

The coming of the Spirit in Acts emphasizes “witness” whereas in Paul the emphasis seems to be on “assurance”, “gifts”, or “unity”. Is this tension or just different emphases? Different emphases at different times by different authors reveal the fullness of what the Spirit does in Christians.

Following these questions, Andrew Wilson introduces us to five tricky interpretive questions from Acts 1. The first three questions about Judas address apparent contradictions with Matthew 27. The fourth concerns what is required to be an apostle; must one witness the resurrection? Acts 1 appears to say one must, but Acts 13 appears to say you need not. The fifth question asks if we should continue “casting lots” when making decisions as Christians today. We’ll address one of these questions in our discussion time together.

Some suggest the casting of lots for the “replacement apostle” was a mistake. Lots is a bad tool; Paul was the correct replacement. What do you think? If Paul were the correct replacement, Luke would have said so. He doesn’t. As for lots, the early church was allowed to use them because it was before Pentecost, but, because the Spirit came in the next chapter, they would not have used lots later (and neither should we).

Terms You’ll Need to Know:

Already and not yet—some of what the OT promised and Jesus inaugurated about the “kingdom” can “already” be seen in the life and ministry of Jesus and the church, but some of it has “not yet” come.

Inaugurated eschatology—Jesus began the fulfillment of some OT promises about the kingdom; just as a president, prime minister, or king “inaugurates” their reign and begins to make changes, so also we see Jesus begin making the changes that, when finished, will result in his perfect kingdom.

D Day and V Day—D Day marks the final battle that liberated Europe from Nazi Germany while V Day marks the actual day in which Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered.

Atonement theology—Jesus died “for us” so that we might be brought into relationship (“at one”) with God; atonement theologies ask “how” this happened, what did Jesus accomplish on the cross?

Watch Video

Watch Module 6 Episode 1 (Total length (without skipping the sections highlighted above): 1hr 58 mins).

The Church Age

- I. The Story So Far
- II. Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1-9)
- III. The Ends of the Earth (Acts 10-28; Galatians; 1&2 Thessalonians)
- IV. Romans
- V. 1&2 Corinthians
- VI. The Prison Letters
- VII. The Catholic Epistles
- VIII. Revelation

1

The New Testament and the Story So Far

- In Greg Beale's massive (and outstanding) *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old in the New*, he summarises the plotlines of the Old and New Testaments as follows
 - OT: "The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom, and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, to his glory."
 - NT: "Jesus's life, trials, death for sinners and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfilment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign, and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God's glory."
- Similarly, the opening paragraphs of Tom Schreiner's *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* explains the theology of the NT like this:
 - "The thesis advanced in this book is that New Testament theology is God-focused, Christ-centred and Spirit-saturated, but the work of the Father, Son and Spirit must be understood along a salvation-historical timeline; that is, God's promises are already fulfilled but not yet consummated in Christ Jesus. We will see that the ministry of Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit are fundamental for the fulfilling of God's promises. The coming of Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit are the prime indications that God is beginning to fulfill the saving promises made to Abraham."
- And then Tom Wright, in his *The New Testament and the People of God*:
 - "First-century Jews looked forward to a public event, a great act of liberation for Israel, in and through which their god would reveal to all the world that he was not just a local, tribal deity, but the creator and sovereign of all. YHWH would reveal his salvation for Israel in the eyes of all the nations; the ends of the earth would see that he had vindicated his people. The early Christians, not least in the writings that came to be called the New Testament, looked back to an event in and through which, they claimed, Israel's god had done exactly that."

2

Where the Early Church Fits in the Biblical Story

Genesis 1-3	Genesis 4-11	Exodus – Deuteronomy	Joshua – 2 Chronicles	Ezra – John the Baptist	Matthew – Revelation 20	Revelation 21-22
First chaos of earth and waters	Chaos of earth and waters at the flood	Chaos of oppression & Egypt's plagues	Chaos of exile & wilderness for 2 nd generation	Chaos of oppression & destruction in land and exile	Chaos of oppression & destruction as "exile" continues	Chaos of last destruction of heavens and earth
First creation	New creation	Exodus & new creation through Red Sea	Exodus and new creation through Jordan	Exodus and new creation through return from exile	New creation in Christ's life, death and resurrection	Final, permanent, new creation
First commission of Adam for God's glory	Commission of Noah as new Adam for God's glory	Commission of Israel as corporate Adam for God's glory	Commission of Israel as corporate Adam restated	Commission of Israel as eschatological corporate Adam	Commission of Christ as new Israel / new Adam for God's glory	Final, lasting commission of saints as a corporate Adam
Sin of Adam	Sin of Noah, the new Adam	Sin of Israel, the new Adam, with the golden calf & in wilderness	Repeated sin of Israel under judges and kings	Israel's sin in the land & forfeiture of eschatological role	Christ, as eschatological Israel and last Adam, resists sin	Final, lasting resistance to sin by the saints
First Adam's judgment and exile	Judgment and exile throughout earth at Babel	Judgment & exile in the wilderness for first generation	Judgment in the land & exile to Babylon	Judgment of continuing exile, despite Israel's return to the land	Continuing physical exile in the world, despite spiritual rescue	Final, lasting deliverance of the saints from exile

Source: G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 59-61

3

Israel / Palestine in the New Testament Period



The Book of Acts in One Sentence

- As Acts begins, Luke makes it clear that this is the second part of his history, and that the first part dealt with "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (1:1). The clear implication is that he hasn't finished doing and teaching!
- Luke then explains the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension (1:2-3), before reporting his instruction that his disciples remain in Jerusalem until they are baptised in the Holy Spirit (1:4-5)
- Then the disciples ask if now, finally, he will restore the kingdom to Israel
 - Jesus does not answer the question directly, but tells them that they do not need to know the times and seasons the Father has fixed
 - And then, in explaining what will happen next, he summarises the whole book of Acts: "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 sentence serves as a guide to the entire structure of the book
 - Receiving power from the Holy Spirit (chapter 2)
 - Being witnesses in Jerusalem (chapters 2-6)
 - Being witnesses in Judea and Samaria (chapters 6-9)
 - Being witnesses to the ends of the earth (chapters 10-28)
- It also indicates the now-and-not-yet of the kingdom
 - You will not know when the Father will finally establish the kingdom ...
 - ... but until he does, you will receive power, and will be witnesses to the King all over the earth

7

The Structure of Acts

Commission (Acts 1:8)	Section of Acts	Coming of the Spirit	Conclusion of the Section
"You will receive power, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ..."	1:1–6:7	2:1-13 (on 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 (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 numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (9:31)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Gentiles)	9:32-12:24	10:44-48 (on Gentiles, but within Israel)	"But the word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Asia)	12:25-16:5	19:1-7 (on Gentiles, in Asia)	"So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (16:5)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Europe)	16:6-19:20		"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" (19:20)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Rome)	19:21-28:31		No conclusion – still ongoing!

8

Echoes of Isaiah in Acts 1:8

- Isaiah, more than any other OT writer, is the prophet of Israel's restoration. He prophesies the return from exile, the coming of the Spirit, the witness of God's people, and the gospel going to the ends of the earth
- Luke, particularly in Acts 1:8, uses Isaiah's language (in the LXX) to explain the power and purpose of the church
 - Isa 32:15: "Until the Spirit shall come upon you from on high, and Carmel shall be desert, and Carmel shall be counted for a forest."
 - Isa 43:10: "You be my witnesses, and I too am a witness, says the Lord God, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know, and believe."
 - Isa 43:12: "You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am the Lord God." (cf. 44:8)
 - Isa 49:6: "I have given you ... for a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the end of the earth."
 - Acts 1:8a: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."
 - Luke 24:49: "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you, but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."
 - Luke 1:35: "The angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."
 - Acts 1:8b: "And you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth."
- When we read the Isaianic prophecies in context, it looks like Luke (with Jesus) is saying that Israel's restoration, and the breaking in of the promised new creation, is coming about through the pouring out of the Spirit upon the church for mission

Source: Max Turner, *Power From on High*, 300-302; Beale, *NTBT*, 574

9

Five Discussion Questions from Acts 1

- Five questions emerge in Acts 1:15 onwards, which are worth discussing briefly
- Three concern Judas. (1) How did he die, (2) why is the field called "Field of Blood", and (3) who bought it?
 - Acts 1:18: "Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood."
 - Matt 27:5-8: "And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day."
- Another question is (4): do apostles need to have witnessed the resurrection?
 - 1:21-25: "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."
- And there is also a question relating to the casting of lots:
 - 1:26: "And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."
 - (5) Should this be normal practice in the church? Why / why not?

10

Pentecost as Theophany (or “Appearance of God”)

What is the feast of Pentecost? When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

Where in the OT do we see mighty rushing winds?

What is the word for “wind” from heaven? And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

When in the OT do we read of the “house” being “filled”?

God descends in fire in the OT. When? Why? And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Who or what is filled with the Spirit in OT theophany? So what?

What kinds of languages? For what purpose? So what?

11

The Purpose of Pentecost

- It is very important to consider the *purpose* of Pentecost within the story of Acts
- Within Charismatic circles, it can easily be understood in terms of our own experience, and so in a limited way
 - One Charismatic writer puts it like this. “What does being baptised in the Spirit look like? Look in Acts 2 and we see exactly what it looks like. When I was 19 I knew I had been regenerated by the Spirit and knew the Spirit was with me and gave me insight into scripture and answered my prayers, but I had never had anything comparable to what happened on the day of Pentecost. When I was baptised in water at 15, I went down dry and came up drenched. Despite all I knew of the Lord, I was spiritually dry, and thirsty and I came to the Lord and asked him to baptise me in the Spirit like in Acts 2, and I can only describe it like being drenched. There were no tongues of fire, but I knew I was filled with the Spirit and I spoke in tongues and was filled with ‘inexpressible and glorious joy.’”
 - This is wonderful – but none of this fits with what the text of Acts actually says (even the “tongues” here are not earthly languages)
 - The original Pentecost experience comprised (a) mighty rushing wind, (b) divided tongues of fire, (c) comprehensible, unlearned, earthly languages, (d) declaring the mighty works of God
- In Acts, the purpose of Pentecost is much less to do with an individual experience of satisfaction in God (as valuable as that is), and much more to do with several other things
 - Demonstrating that the church is the eschatological temple of God, in which God now lives by his Spirit
 - Empowering the church to be witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection (as in 1:8) and to preach boldly
 - Marking the dawn of the new age, in which the Spirit is poured out on “all flesh” and “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord” is saved
 - Reversing the curse of Babel, and incorporating people from all over the world into one united community

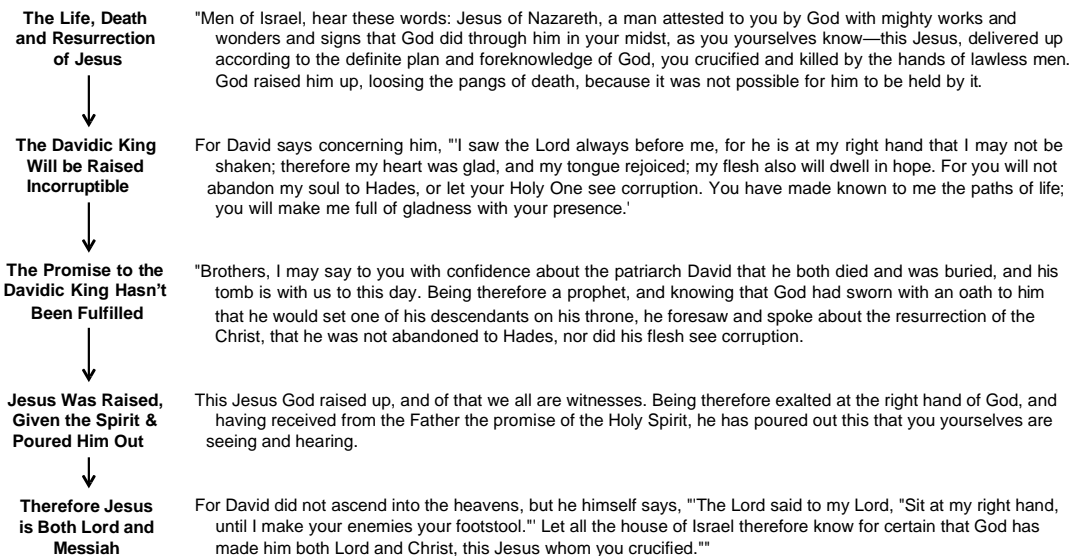
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The Purpose of Pentecost (cont.)

- Put differently, the gift of the Spirit, as Luke presents it at Pentecost, is
 - Eschatological – it demonstrates that the ends of the ages have come
 - Ecclesiological – it demonstrates that the church is now the temple of God's presence on earth
 - Evangelistic – it equips people to witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
 - Ethical – it empowers people to live transformed lives as part of God's new creation
 - Ecumenical – it shows that the participants in God's kingdom are of all languages, ages, strata and sexes
 - Experiential – it makes the believer aware that all of these things have happened to them
- **DISCUSSION:** rank these in order of emphasis in your life / church / ministry
 - Where does your emphasis lie, and what do you neglect?
 - Where do you think Luke's emphasis lies?
 - If there is a difference, why do you think that is?
 - Is there anything that we can/should do about that?

13

The First Evangelistic Sermon (Acts 2:22-36)



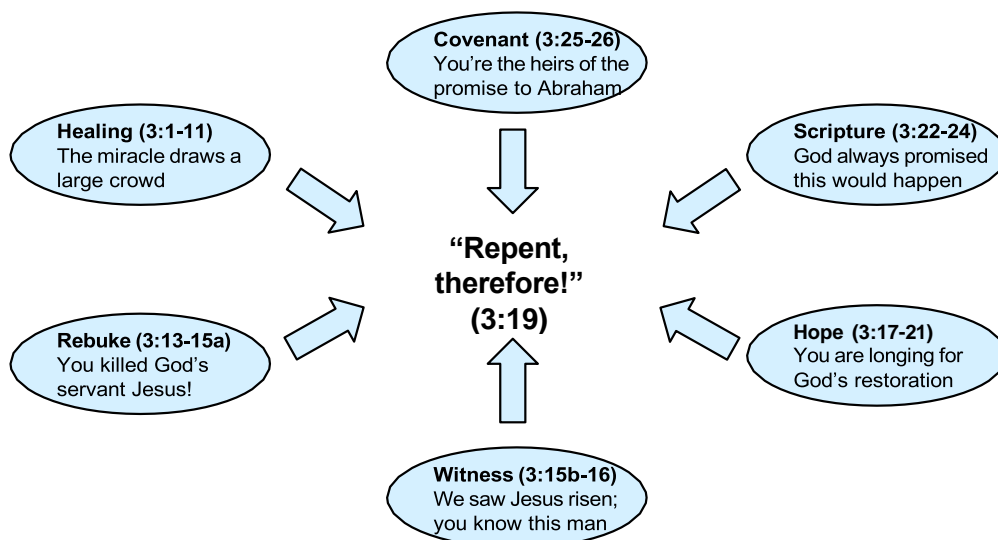
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The Response to the Gospel

- A typical explanation of our response is often framed as the “Peter package”, based on Acts 2:38-39. Of these, the first two are essential for salvation, and the second two are not
 - Repent
 - Believe
 - Be baptised in water
 - Receive the Holy Spirit
- This is strange, because this is not what Peter says at all! Instead, he talks about two things we do, and two things God does. There is no indication that baptism is not essential, nor that the gift of the Spirit will come later
 - We repent
 - We get baptised in water
 - God forgives our sins
 - God gives us his Holy Spirit
- Then, in the last few verses of the chapter, we see what the life of the Spirit-filled community looked like (2:42-47)
 - Devoted to teaching
 - Devoted to “commonness”
 - Devoted to breaking bread
 - Devoted to prayer
 - Awe upon every soul
 - Many signs and wonders
 - Common possessions
 - Happiness and praise
 - Favour
 - Salvation on a daily basis

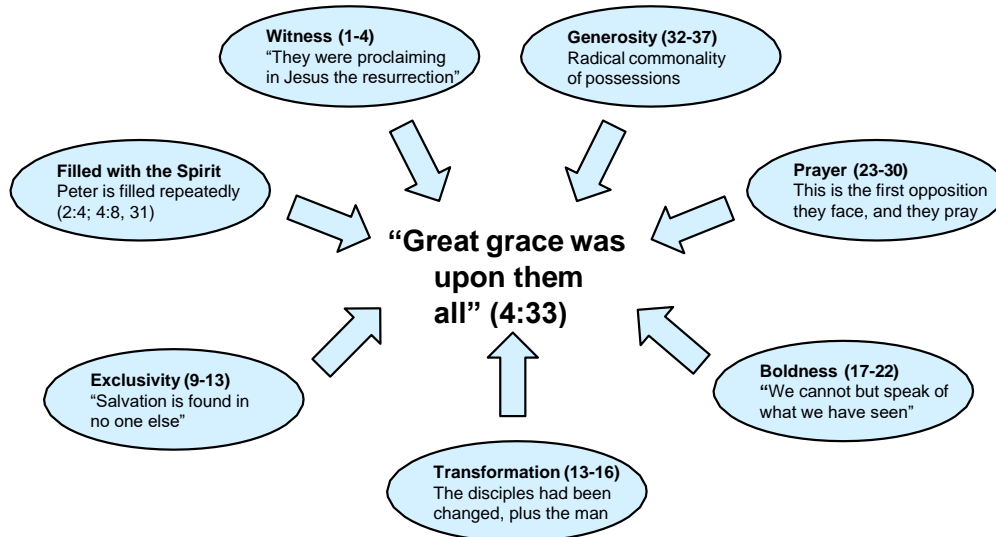
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Witness in Jerusalem: Ordinary People (Acts 3)



16

Witness in Jerusalem: Priests, Sadducees, Elders and Scribes (Acts 4)



17

Opposition and Conflict (Acts 5-7)

	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
SEVERE	<p>Problem: <u>deceit</u>. Ananias and Sapphira, perhaps as a result of the honour given Barnabas, exaggerate their giving (5:1-10)</p> <p>Response: Peter is uncompromising, since they are lying to the Holy Spirit / God</p> <p>Result: great fear comes upon all who hear these things; signs & wonders continue</p>	<p>Problem: <u>false accusation & martyrdom</u>. Stephen is accused of blasphemy, and eventually stoned (6:8-8:1)</p> <p>Response: Stephen confronts the council, and even in his death worships Jesus</p> <p>Result: persecution intensifies, but those who are scattered preach the Word wherever they go</p>
MILD	<p>Problem: <u>division</u> between the Hellenists and the Hebrews in the daily distribution of food (6:1-7)</p> <p>Response: the apostles ask for seven men, full of the Spirit and wisdom, so they can keep preaching and praying</p> <p>Result: the number of disciples multiplies greatly, and lots of priests become obedient to the faith</p>	<p>Problem: <u>persecution</u>. The high priest arrests the apostles, has them beaten, and throws them in prison (5:17-42)</p> <p>Response: an angel breaks them out. The apostles stand firm: “we must obey God rather than men.” Gamaliel argues that opposing them is useless</p> <p>Result: the apostles rejoice in sufferings. They don’t stop preaching Jesus as Christ</p>

18

Stephen's Speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7)

- Stephen's extraordinary and brave sermon can be hard to read. It could sound like an unsorted ramble through the Old Testament
- But actually, it's a very deliberate comparison of the hand of God and the hands of men
 - The Jewish authorities were putting Stephen on trial for, apparently, speaking out against the temple in Jerusalem. They wanted to preserve the symbol of God's presence
 - But Stephen wanted to expose their hypocrisy. So he told the OT story, emphasising all the ways in which Israel had rejected God's work amongst them, because they wanted to control things themselves
 - He contrasts the hand of God – the God who promised a land to Abraham, brought Israel out of Egypt, spoke to them through the prophets, sent Jesus, and raised him from the dead ...
 - ... with the hands of men – human beings who build idols, try and constrain God within the walls of temples (or even churches?), and silence anyone who challenges them
 - From Stephen's point of view, the punchline of the sermon is in verses 48-53. "God doesn't live in houses made by human hands. In fact, his hand made everything. But you always resist what God is doing by his Spirit, don't you? God's hand has raised Jesus, and you're still trying to cling on to what your hands built!"
 - So they killed him. They used their human hands to cover their ears, and pick up rocks to throw at Stephen and silence him forever
- They failed, of course. Human hands always do, in the end. We're still reading Stephen's sermon today
 - And 2000 years later, the temple built by human hands is still a ruin – with a mosque on the top! – whereas Jesus, whom God's hand raised up, is the one who divides history into before and after

19

Philip's Evangelistic Ministry (Acts 8)

- Acts 8 is a rollercoaster of a chapter on evangelism. It is absolutely full of action
 - Scattering (8:1-3)
 - Evangelising and healing (8:4-13)
 - Receiving the Spirit (8:14-17)
 - Confronting Simon Magus (8:18-24)
 - Continuing to preach (8:25)
 - Bible studying and evangelising (8:26-35)
 - Baptising (8:36, 38)
 - Teleporting (8:39-40)
- What do you make of the fact that the Samaritans did not receive the Spirit when they believed and were baptised?



20

Baptism in the Spirit: Scores Out of Twelve?

- How many of these statements do you agree with?
 1. All who are in Christ today have been born of the Holy Spirit.
 2. All who are in Christ today are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and are temples of the Holy Spirit.
 3. All who are in Christ today have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 4. All who are in Christ today have the Holy Spirit.
 5. All who are in Christ today are led by the Holy Spirit.
 6. All who are in Christ today have received the Holy Spirit.
 7. All who are in Christ today have received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out *Abba!*
 8. All who are in Christ today have the Spirit like rivers of living water welling up within them.
 9. All who are in Christ today have been given the Holy Spirit to drink.
 10. All who are in Christ today have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.
 11. All who are in Christ today have been filled with the Holy Spirit.
 12. All who are in Christ today have been baptised in the Holy Spirit.

21

Baptism in the Spirit: Which Quadrant Are You In?

Descriptions of different interpretations

	Pentecostal	Empowerment / Assurance	Inauguration	Initiation
What?	Definitive experience other than conversion, resulting in greater power, with tongues as visible sign	Definitive experience other than conversion, resulting in greater power and assurance; tongues not necessarily	Not a technical term, but simply means 'drenching in the Spirit'; used by John to refer to the start of the new age of the Spirit	Spirit's activity at conversion / initiation, resulting in faith and integration into the church
When?	Always after conversion	May occur at conversion, but often afterwards	At and after conversion, repeatedly throughout life	Always at conversion
Where?	Acts 2	Acts 8 and 19	Matthew 3:11f and parallels	1 Corinthians 12
We ...?	'Tarry' (wait) for and seek it, like the Pentecost disciples	Pursue it, as we may be like those in Samaria or Ephesus	Go on being baptised / filled / drenched in the Spirit	Already received it; seek filling or 'fulness'

- You can be a Christian and never have been baptised in the Spirit, like those in Samaria (Acts 8) and Ephesus (Acts 19)

- A second experience is to be understood as a step change in the Christian life

- The main difference between the two is the role of tongues as a sign of Spirit-baptism

- You cannot be a Christian and never have been baptised in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9); Acts 8 is unique, and those in Ephesus were never Christians at all

- A second experience is to be understood as a difference of degree, rather than of category

- The main disagreement is over whether Spirit-baptism is a one-off (at conversion) or an ongoing experience

22





The Resurrection Appearance to Saul (Acts 9, 22, 26)

Acts 9:1-19	Acts 22:1-16	Acts 26:8-18
Saul ... went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.	I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers.	And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme ... In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.
Suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"	About noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'	At noon, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun. And I heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
"Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."	"Who are you, Lord?" And he said to me, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting. Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do."	"Who are you, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and <u>stand upon your feet</u> , for <u>I have appeared to you</u> for this purpose, <u>to appoint you as a servant</u> and <u>witness</u> to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom <u>I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light</u> and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."
The Lord said to Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized.	Ananias came to me, and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? <u>Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.</u> ' When was Saul's conversion? Why?	What sorts of OT stories do these phrases reflect? Why do you think that is?

GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. In your reading of Isaiah and Acts, what connections did you notice?
2. Choose one of the "five discussion questions from Acts 1" and discuss together. How did Judas die? Why is the field called "field of blood"? Who bought the field? Do apostles need to have witnessed the resurrection? Should the casting of lots be normal practice in the church today?
3. Looking at the six purposes of Pentecost (that start with E), put them in order of how important they have been in your life or church. Consider: how well does your order correspond with Luke's hierarchy?
4. Discuss the differences between the sermons in Acts 2, 3, and 4. How did the preacher try to convince each different audience to trust Jesus? What elements do you think would work well when preaching in your community?

5. Identify as many different ways of evangelizing as you can from Acts (especially chapter 8). Which of these have you seen to be effective in your life? Which would you like to try?

6. Discuss some of your responses to the baptism of the Spirit statements. Which did you agree with? With did you disagree with it? In which quadrant did you land?

Meditation on Scripture

Acts 1:6-8

Acts 2:37-40

Putting This Session into Practice

At least two themes emerge from this session: Mission and Spirit-filling. In Acts, the emphasis of Spirit-filling is on empowerment for mission (though elsewhere in the NT the Spirit fills us for other purposes). Let's pray that the Spirit would fill us this week with fresh power for evangelism and then use the various approaches we see in Acts to share the Gospel with those around us.