



Acts of the Apostles

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE BOOK OF ACTS.

WEEK 2

CLASS BY PASTOR GLYN NORMAN

Note: Many of these notes are from R. Longenecker, "Acts", *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9

Question:

Being filled with the Spirit – something that happens at conversion, or the need for an additional dramatic filling?

Acts 2:1-41 The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2:1-4 The Pentecost Event

1. The Links and Parallels

- link between John the Baptist's prophecy (Lk 3:16) and the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 11:16)
- John's baptism of Jesus, the Spirit baptizing the believers are paralleled – the final preparation for ministry (of Jesus, and of the church)

2. The Significance of Pentecost

see Lev 23:15,16, Ex 23:16, Lev 23:17-22, Num 28:26-31

Feast of Weeks, came after 7 weeks of harvesting. By the end of the first century, in Christian circles, it was considered to be the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. (see Ex 19:1)

- important point. For Jews, Pentecost was the day for the giving of the law; for Christians it became the day of the giving of the Spirit.
- parallel is not only with the baptism of Jesus, but also in continuity and contrast to the Law.
- both the ministry of Jesus, and the ministry of the church, are dependent on the Holy Spirit

Luke's parallels make the point strongly that:

a) the Spirit's coming on Pentecost shows that the giving of the Spirit is in continuity with God's purposes in the giving of the Law, and

b) the Spirit's coming signals a difference between the Jewish faith and commitment to Jesus:

Jewish faith: Torah centered and Torah directed

Christian faith: Christ centered and Spirit directed

- where did this happen? Probably not the temple, but the previously mentioned upper room (1:12-26)

3. The Holy Spirit – Wind, Fire and Inspired Speech

- evidence of the Spirit – in this case, sound of wind, tongues of “fire” and inspired speech, each of them viewed as evidence of God’s presence in Judaism

- wind, spirit. Hebrew (*ruach*), Greek (*pneuma*). Free association between the two. See John 3:8.

Breath of God blowing over the dry bones (Ezek 37:9-14) and giving them new life.

- fire as a symbol of the divine presence

e.g. burning bush (Ex. 3:2-5), pillar of fire that guided Israel (Ex 13:21), the consuming fire on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:17), the fire that hovered over the wilderness tabernacle (Ex 40:38).

John the Baptist’s prophecy that the Messiah would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Lk 3:16)

Tongues of fire as visible representations of the presence of the Spirit of God.

Previously the divine presence rested on Israel corporately – now individually

- inspired speech

Prophetic utterances often associated with the Spirit (e.g. Eldad and Medad, Num 11:26-29)

Judaism expected with the coming of the messianic age, there would be an outpouring of the Spirit (in fulfillment of Ezek 37)

- tongues

Often identified with the ecstatic utterances that Paul describes in 1 Cor 12-14.

Why?

a) in both cases, the expression “other tongues” (Gk – *heterais glossais*, *heteroglossois*) is used

b) the verb translated “enabled” or “gave utterance” was used in Greek literature in connection with ecstasies and the giving of oracles

BUT

the tongues spoken were identifiable as real languages to those listening, whereas at Corinth, no one could understand without an interpretation, so probably a different type of tongues. So tongues in this context is best understood as “languages”.

- this event is sometimes regarded as the birth of the church.

4. The Reaction Of The Crowd Acts 2:5-13

- v7,8 Galileans were thought to be “linguistically challenged” with their strong accent and difficulty with pronunciation, so it was amazing that they could speak so many languages, as it is unlikely they could have learned them by themselves.
- v12,13 This miraculous event did nothing to really inform them about what was going on. They knew it was unusual, but did not know the cause. Some were merely puzzled, some mocked calling it drunkenness. It all required an explanation.

5. Peter’s sermon Acts 2:14-41

- the sermon can be divided into three parts:
 - 1) an apologia (explanation) of the phenomena that had just been witnessed (14-21)
 - 2) a kerygma (proclamation) of the apostolic message in basic form (22-36)
 - 3) a call to repentance with the promise of blessing (37-41)

The Apologia (14-21)

- the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. His use of the passage is “*peshet*” (interpretation) with the emphasis on the fulfillment rather than a detailed exegesis.
- addition of “and they will prophesy” – not in Joel passage – placed for emphasis
- the way Peter uses Joel is significant because it shows us:
 - 1) how the new church exegeted, and what some of their doctrine was
 - 2) a pattern for our own treatment of the OT
- this, which Joel spoke about, is what the church is experiencing
- these are the last days of God’s redemptive program
- the validation of this is the return of prophesying (Jews thought it had ceased)
- how to interpret v19,20, the spectacular physical signs?
 - realized eschatology – to be interpreted spiritually – this is what actually happened in some spiritual form, on that Pentecost day, or that these things had occurred around the time of the death of Jesus, when the sky went dark (Lk 23:44)
- v21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Acts as an intro to his sermon.

Kerygma Section (22-36)

- From Dodd – 6 themes that occur in Peter’s sermons in Acts 2-4
 1. “The age of fulfillment has dawned”
 2. “This has taken place through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, of which a brief account is given, with proof from the Scriptures”

3. "By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel."
4. "The Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory."
5. "The Messianic age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ."
6. "The kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of 'salvation,' that is, of 'the life of the age to come,' to those who enter the elect community."

(C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936)

- in this sermon, all these themes are present, except the return of Christ
- Peter's sermons in Acts 2-4 are key, since they represent the kerygma of the early church – this is what they preached and proclaimed as true about Christ and salvation
- not verbatim reports. They have been styled and shaped by Luke, but are not simply reproductions of his (or his spiritual mentor, Paul's) theology, put in the mouth of Peter.
- the early church was interested in the life and death of Jesus, because he was the content and focus of their preaching, so Peter includes a brief summary of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- some elements of the sermon:
 - divine necessity (*dei*) and human freedom interplay (v23). A seeming paradox. God has overall control, but the fulfilling of his plan depends on the evil of wicked men.
 - resurrection of Jesus attributed to God.
 - impossible for death to keep its hold on him.
 - quotes from Ps 16:8-11 and Ps 110:1 to support what he has said about Jesus in v24. David "must" have been talking about the messiah, because he would not have said about himself that he would not see decay or die (v27). So Peter interprets David's Psalms as a direct messianic prophecy.
 - the "therefore" refers to accreditation by God because of his resurrection and exaltation

A Call to Repentance and a Promise of Blessing (37-41)

- effective preaching, they were "cut to the heart", "Brothers, what shall we do?"
- Gk word "*katanyssomai*", (see Ps 109:16), connotes a sharp pain associated with anxiety and remorse.
- repent (Gk – *metanoesate*) – complete change of heart and confession of sin
- be baptized – links repentance and baptism with the forgiveness of sins
- sounds familiar – John the Baptist (Mk 1:4), Jesus (Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15, Jn 3:22, 26; 4:1-2)
- but three new and distinctive elements:
 - 1) Peter calls for "every one" to be baptized – calling for an individual response, as in "not saved by family or race but by your own personal decision."

2) Repentance and baptism done specifically in the name of Jesus Christ (cf. 22:16)

3) The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit (note, not the “gifts”) The gift of the Spirit ministers the saving benefits of Christ’s redemption to us. The gift of the Spirit is the logical outcome to repentance and baptism.

Discussion: What has been your experience of “receiving the gift of the Spirit?”

- the promise is of forgiveness, and the gift of the Spirit.
- “those who are far off” – Diaspora Jews, or Gentiles also? Peter probably meant the former; Luke probably wanted to emphasize the latter
- “warned and pleaded.” Earnest, heartfelt – the passion of an evangelist
- baptism – usually for converts to Judaism only (proselytes), but on that day, for the Jews too. It is significant, because for a Gentile it implied a break with his Gentile past...and a break with the past, the old covenant, for a Jew, was huge. It is a revolutionary step.