

**EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**  
**(SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2017)**

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**SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 45:14-25; ACTS 1:1-8**

**INTRODUCTION**

What does a truly Spirit-filled church look like?

I am sure if you asked this question to different churches and Christians, you would likely get a lot of different answers.

Dennis Johnson writes:

Enthusiasm can be manipulated, liturgy can be mechanical, and meditation can be self-absorbed rather than Christ-centered. How, then, can we filter out the static of the counterfeit, in order to recognize the real signs of the Spirit's presence?<sup>1</sup>

God's Word gives the answer to this question in a number of passages.

In summary, a Spirit-filled church, a Spirit-filled believer seeks to walk in obedience and carry out the mission that is given to the church.

Every true believer has the Holy Spirit.

Not every believer, not every local church properly demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit as we are called.

Our focus today from Acts 1:4-8 is on the continued mission of the church that must be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**Make sure your focus is on the mission given to the church through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

We will focus our attention on verses 4-8 in two parts, verses 4 and 5, and then verses 6 through 8.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, 33.

## 1. WAIT FOR THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ACTS 1:4-5

Last week I presented a brief introduction to Acts.

One important point to always keep in mind is that Luke and Acts should be understood more as one book in two parts.

We see the connection in a variety of ways.

The two books have a similar introduction and are both written to Theophilus.

The end of Luke also beautifully connects with the start of Acts.

From Acts 1:3 we see that Jesus was with His disciples and with others for a total of 40 days after His suffering.

Adam Clarke in his commentary cites a listing of at least 8 accounts where the gospels and epistles speak of times where Jesus met with His disciples and others after the resurrection.

The seventh of these 8 appearances, he says was to James as we see in 1 Corinthians 15:7, which took place in Jerusalem and where Jesus gave the command that we see in Acts 1:4.<sup>2</sup>

**1 Cor. 15:7** After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

The verb used in verse 4, assembled together, is used only one time and suggests a special kind of fellowship, a meal.<sup>3</sup>

This particular gathering in Acts 1:4 is likely a parallel to what we have near the end of Luke.

Listen to Luke 24:48 and 49.

**Luke 24:48** And you are witnesses of these things. **49** Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

The verb command is used in the gospels only by Jesus. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who commands His apostles and His church in doing His will.

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<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), paragraph 41766.

<sup>3</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Acordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 62.

This command to not leave Jerusalem may seem obvious to us, but we have to consider that Jerusalem was not the home for any of the apostles really.

Jesus called His disciples when He ministered in Galilee.

The disciples were Galileans not those who had their home in Jerusalem.

Howard Marshall writes:

The disciples might have been tempted to return to Galilee, but Jerusalem was the divinely intended scene for the giving of the Spirit; the place where Jesus was rejected was to be the place where fresh witness to him would begin.<sup>4</sup>

The apostles were to wait for the Promise of the Father.

Again we see in the opening verses of Acts such a beautiful testimony to the Triune nature and work of God.

The word **promise** is used in connection with God's covenant promises to Israel beginning with Abraham and also is used to refer specifically to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to two very important passages from Ephesians and Galatians.

**Eph. 1:13** In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

**Gal. 3:13** Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*"), **14** that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

All believers who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are trusting in the work of Christ have received the promise of the Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a second blessing.

The Holy Spirit is with all true believers.

Verse 5 presents a comparison and contrast between John's ministry and baptism and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

This comparison and contrast was first announced by John.

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<sup>4</sup> Marshall, 62.

**Luke 3:16** John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Later in Acts, Peter also recounted the words of Jesus in verse 5.

**Acts 11:16** Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, “John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’

We must keep in mind as we will do later, that the promise of the Holy Spirit did not begin with John.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is found throughout the OT especially in Ezekiel and Isaiah.

One of the questions that might come to mind is was the Holy Spirit present in the lives of believers in the OT?

The answer is yes.

God’s work of salvation has always been the same, but there is a progression in the work of God.

Dennis Johnson writes,

The Spirit's work in the church is a climax of God's plan, announced through Isaiah, to heal and empower His people to be His servant-witnesses among the nations.<sup>5</sup>

In comparison then to OT believers, we enjoy the fullness of understanding the great history of redemption that would be found in the Lord Jesus Christ and the spread of that glorious message after the coming of the Holy Spirit.

If you are ever in need of conviction, it is good to read some of the Psalms like Psalm 42 or Psalm 63.

**Psa. 42:1** As the deer pants for the water brooks,

So pants my soul for You, O God.

**2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?

**Psa. 63:1** O God, You *are* my God;

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson, 34.

Early will I seek You;  
My soul thirsts for You;  
My flesh longs for You  
In a dry and thirsty land  
Where there is no water.

Is this your testimony?

If we are honest, we all must say, it often is not.

All this is to say, that although all believers enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are far from being perfected or fully sanctified.

It is through the Spirit's work that we are sanctified according to God's Word.

By His grace, we do grow in our awareness of our need for God and how so often we do not live like we truly need God's grace and strengthening every moment.

## **2. THE FULLNESS OF THE MISSION, ACTS 1:6-8**

Verse 6 begins with another reference to the disciples being gathered with Jesus.

I think we are best to assume this is a continuation of verses 4 and 5, but there is a transition.

Here the apostles for the first time speak.

The NKJV translates the second phrase of verse 6 as, they asked Him...

The NET version points out that this verb is better translated as they began to ask Him.

They began to ask Him, meaning probably it wasn't just one question but a conversation of questions on a very important subject.

Considering all that had just transpired and what was promised soon to come, did all these things indicate that the kingdom would be restored to Israel?

The verb restore is a verb used only 8 times in the NT. It is used to describe those that Jesus healed: a man with a withered hand and a blind man.

Importantly the verb also is used by Jesus in Matthew 17:11 to describe the work of John the Baptist.

**Matt. 17:11** Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.

The noun form of this verb is also used in Acts by Peter in his sermon in Acts 3.

**Acts 3:19** Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, **20** and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, **21** whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Most likely then the meaning of restore here in Acts 1:6 has the idea of bringing restoration to Israel as a political power, restoring her to a position of rule rather than subservience to foreign powers, which had been her lot for many, many years.<sup>6</sup> The restoration included the fullness of the blessings spoken of in some of the prophets.

The response of Jesus to His disciples is similar to what we find in other places.

Already they had come to understand much that they did not before.

Jesus here did not directly respond to their question but we can say redirected their attention to God’s prerogative and the Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

The response of Jesus has two parts that we see in verses 7 and 8.

The first part is a type of rebuke, verse 7.

It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

So often Christians are focused on timing.

We want to know when things will take place. There are things that God has not revealed to us. We don't have a right to know.

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<sup>6</sup> See Adam Clarke, Dennis Johnson, and others. Clarke does point out there is a meaning of restoration in Greek literature that has the idea of ending or abolishing, but he states that is not the most likely meaning here.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, 35.

One of the aspects of timing that I believe is significant to this passage and to Romans 11 is related the fullness of the Gentiles and a much greater outpouring of grace on Jewish people who for the most part are blinded from seeing the glory of Jesus Christ and the gospel.

When this will take place is not for us to know but is in God's timing as is the final return of Christ.

The words of Christ in verse 7 could be applied in other areas.

It is part of the call to trust and wait on God.

The second part of Jesus' response directs the apostles to consider that the restoration that Scripture promised was even greater than they currently understood.<sup>8</sup>

The call for the apostles then was to consider what was placed before them, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the call to be a witness of Christ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Last week in my introduction to Acts, I showed how this verse provides a basic outline for the book of Acts.

Chapters 1-7 have Jerusalem as their focus.

Chapters 8-12 deal with the spread of the gospel in Judea and Samaria.

And chapters 13-28 show the spread of the gospel to the nations.

Last week I also showed how Acts 9:15 gives additional details regard this third part of Acts focused on Paul's ministry.

What might also be very interesting to consider is how these three categories might also relate to what is called the Table of Nations that is presented in Genesis 10, a listing of all the nations that came from the three sons of Noah.<sup>9</sup>

Before we conclude, I want to show how Acts 1:8 is connected to a number of passages in Isaiah.

As I do this, I want to assert two points. One theological and one practical.

The theological is that we again marvel at the unity and harmony of Scripture.

The practical is that we seek to give greater attention to the parts of God's Word that are often neglected, and I speak most of the later books of the OT in this regard.

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, 35.

<sup>9</sup> G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the NT Use of the OT*, 528. Marshall the author of the chapter on Acts cites the writing of one named Scott, who has made this suggestion.

It is a challenge for most Christians. And it is not that you will be loved by God more because you truly seek to study and reflect on these chapters, but since this is God's Word, we should do our best to read, meditate, and study all of His Word.

From Isaiah and especially the Greek translation of it, we can understand better the call of Jesus Christ and the mission that He gave to His apostles and to all His Church.

First, the opening part of verse 8 – when the Holy Spirit comes upon you is connected to Isaiah 32:15.

**Is. 32:15** Until the Spirit is poured (ἐπέλθη) upon us from on high,

And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,

And the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

What strengthen this connection is that the verb comes used in Acts 1:8 is used for the Holy Spirit only a handful of times.<sup>10</sup> The same verb is used in the Greek translation of Isaiah 32:15.

Second, the phrase you shall be my witnesses is connected to at least three verses in Isaiah 43 and 44.

**Is. 43:10** “You *are* My witnesses,” says the LORD,

“And My servant whom I have chosen,

That you may know and believe Me,

And understand that I *am* He.

Before Me there was no God formed,

Nor shall there be after Me.

**Is. 44:8** Do not fear, nor be afraid;

Have I not told you from that time, and declared *it*?

You *are* My witnesses.

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<sup>10</sup> Beale and Carson, 528. See Acts 19:6; John 15:26; 16:7.



Is there a God besides Me?

Indeed *there is* no other Rock;

I know not *one.*' ”

Third, the phrase to the ends of the earth is found in at least two passages in Isaiah 45 and 49.

**Is. 45:22** “Look to Me, and be saved,

All you ends of the earth!

For I *am* God, and *there is* no other.

**Is. 49:6** Indeed He says,

“It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant

To raise up the tribes of Jacob,

And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;

I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,

That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ”

The words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 bring together three key themes that we see in the last part of the book of Isaiah (Servant Songs).

1. The Spirit of God is poured out upon God's people
2. God's people are His witnesses, testifying on the basis of the saving acts that they have seen that He alone is God and Savior.

3. Their witness extends to the ends of the earth, calling pagan nations to abandon their idols and turn to the Lord for salvation.<sup>11</sup>

## **CONCLUSION:**

Verse 8 along with the end of Matthew 28 give a summary for what is to be the mission of the church, of all Christians, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I asked the question at the beginning of the message, what does a Spirit-filled church look like?

It is a church that is focused on the mission that Jesus gave to His disciples through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And speaking in broad terms, the Holy Spirit leads us to walk in holiness and empowers us to bring a faithful witness.

### **Read Gal. 5:16-26**

As we read the book of Acts, we might say, well the mission of the apostles was very clear, much clearer than what we see in our own age.

Perhaps in one sense this is the case, but every generation of Christians is called to say, this is the mission we are given.

And we do this as individuals and as a local church. There is no conflict but rather overlap.

As a church and as individuals we must always be seeking to reach the lost, both near and far.

We don't all have the same identical calling, but we can all be part of this in prayer, in giving, and in seeking to reach the lost in a variety of ways as God gives opportunity.

Currently we support in prayer and in giving seven mission outreaches apart from the direct ministries of the church:

- 1) MERF
- 2) Rev. Vanden Bosch
- 3) Greenville Seminary
- 4) Go! International – Howard and Bonnie Carlson

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<sup>11</sup> Johnson, 36.

5) Robert Rodgers

6) Rob Zins and CMI in South Africa

7) Vine School in South Africa

It is wonderful that we support these works. This form of outreach is made possible by this local church at least at the levels we give.

I would encourage you as much as possible to pray and learn more how you can pray for these ministries.

This is something I am going to focus on in terms of helping this congregation in this year.

But consider also how the Lord would have you be part of this mission.

**Make sure your focus is on the mission given to the church through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**Prayer**

**Hymn 496**

**Benediction and Commission –**

**1 Cor. 15:57-58**

But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.