

STUDY GUIDE

PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH
BUILDING HIS CHURCH
FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT
ACTS 1:1-8; 2:1-13
02/18/2018



MAIN POINT

When Christians proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, people will believe and become a part of Christ's body, the church.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most dramatic thing you have ever witnessed? Do you enjoy telling people about what you experienced? Why or why not?

What, in your own words, does it mean to be a witness? Why do you think Jesus chose that word to describe what His followers would be in the world?

Acts 1:8 gives the church, both past and present, its marching orders. We are to faithfully share with the rest of the world the story of what Jesus has done for us. We can do so confidently because we believe that we have been changed by Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and sent out as witnesses to change the world.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 1:1-8.

In your own words, what was Jesus' mission?

What was Jesus' purpose during the forty days after His resurrection? What does that have to do with us 2,000 years later?

During the forty days after His resurrection and prior to His ascension, Jesus taught the disciples further about the kingdom of God and indicated that they would be part of His mission to continue the things He had begun "to do and teach." Today, believers need to know what Jesus did and taught about the kingdom of God so they can understand their own mission as witnesses for Him.

According to Jesus in verse 8, what purpose does the power of the Holy Spirit serve? How does the scope of the task Jesus issues relate to this power?

Jesus directly connected the power to accomplish the commission He was giving with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The equation is simple: without the Spirit, there is no power. The Spirit is the One who enables believers to overcome their fears and to fulfill what their Master has asked them to do.

What evidence could you point to that shows the Spirit's power at work in your life or the life of our church?

Why was the Spirit important for the mission of the disciples? Why is He important for ours?

While the disciples clearly did not fully understand the nature of God's kingdom in Christ, Jesus did not chastise them for their misunderstanding. Rather, He affirmed that they could never fully know what God had fixed to occur by His authority. Their role as Jesus' disciples was to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit to share the truth of the gospel locally and globally.

What does it mean to be Jesus' witness? What are we witnesses to?

Are we witnesses if we never share Christ with others?

In a court of law, a witness is someone who has seen or experienced something and then tells others about it. In Christianity, a witness is someone who has experienced Jesus Christ through the gospel and then tells others about Him. But either way, the witness must be communicated.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:1-13.

What is the significance for Luke that the believers were "all together in one place" (v. 1)?

What happened when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers? How do you interpret these signs?

The miraculous signs that accompanied the Spirit included sound, sight, and speech. The sound and the sight were preliminary; the speech was evidence they were filled with the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to be empowered by the Spirit. On this occasion the Spirit gave them ability for speech.

How does being filled with the Holy Spirit relate to bearing witness to Jesus?

In what ways does the reality of the Spirit's life-giving, permanent presence in your heart affect your view of Christian living?

In the old covenant era (the Old Testament), the Holy Spirit came upon men and women to empower them for the work God had called them to accomplish, but His work was not on such a grand scale. When God promised to establish a new covenant, He also promised to give His Spirit. And the nature of the Holy Spirit's work would be different in the new covenant than in the old. All who belong to God because of the work of Jesus Christ receive the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence.

What were the two basic reactions of the residents of Jerusalem to the phenomenon of tongues?

Because of the festival celebrations, many foreigners were in Jerusalem at this time from all over the known world (vv. 9-11). Through the Holy Spirit's power, the disciples were enabled to communicate the gospel to people who spoke a wide variety of languages. This amazed the crowd. Some even thought the disciples were drunk. Miracles and signs alone aren't enough to introduce people to Jesus and the salvation He offers, but what happened on the Day of Pentecost did give the apostles, led by Peter, a good foundation for teaching the gospel and a curious audience to hear it.

How does having the Holy Spirit's power make a difference in how you have been able to serve God?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Based on our study today, why would you say it is essential to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

What evidence shows that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit? How would you explain being filled with the Spirit to a new believer?

As a member of the church, how does the Spirit enable you to share the gospel and join in the church's mission? What is your next step in the mission?

PRAY

Pray that in the midst of your roles that encompass family, work, and social contacts, you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to reap the harvest. Pray for the willingness to participate in God's mission globally in any way He sees fit. Give thanks to God for choosing to involve you in the expansion of His Kingdom.

COMMENTARY

ACTS 1:1-8

1:4-5. What would these disciples do after the Lord left them? The first command was to wait. They were not to engage in ministry until they had been empowered by the gift God promised. As we read words like this in the Bible, we're reminded of the great history of the church that has preceded us and the resources He has provided to continue that heritage.

Jesus taught the disciples, the disciples taught people of their generation, who taught others, until today you and I have both the opportunity and responsibility to enjoy the gift and to tell others about it. In this case the gift is not just the gospel in general, but the specific coming of the Holy Spirit. This was not a new theme. Jesus had talked about it in John 14:16-21; 15:26-27; 16:7-15.

Believers are somewhat divided on the terminology "baptism of the Holy Spirit." Certainly Luke had in view that as the New Testament church got under way, Spirit baptism placed believers into that group of believers the New Testament calls the body of Christ. Throughout the Book of Acts, we will see different reactions when people receive the Holy Spirit, so we should not conclude that any one particular pattern is the only way God deals with us. The coming of the Holy Spirit took place ten days after Jesus' ascension, at which time the believers experienced the same power in which Jesus carried out His ministry.

1:6-7. The disciples' question revived their political goals, an ideal they could never quite stifle. Throughout the Gospels they wanted Jesus to throw off the iron hand of Rome, tell the nation He was their Messiah, and set up the kingdom. Surely now that He had risen from the dead and instructed his troops, it was time for the rebellion to begin. The Lord's answer offers a warning Christians have not heeded very well for almost two thousand years: It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority (v. 7). The fact of that return is absolute. The time was not revealed to Jesus' own disciples at the time of the ascension, and it will never be known by any human until the Lord comes again, regardless of what someone may claim. We can't criticize the disciples too much, however, because the Old Testament links Spirit baptism with the coming kingdom (Isa. 32:15-20; Ezek. 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-3:1). The Lord did not deny the kingdom is coming but only warned the disciples that God's schedule is none of their business.

1:8. Some have suggested that this key verse of our book may contain a threefold table of contents: Jerusalem, Acts 2:42-8:3; Judea and Samaria, Acts 8:4-12:24; ends of the earth, Acts 12:25-28:31. We cannot know if Luke had that kind of division in mind, but the book unfolds in a fascinating manner somewhat along that pattern. Notice that the call to witness is not limited to any select group of people, since it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on

throughout the pages of Acts. Nor can we restrict it only to service in our own churches or to some kind of “professional ministry.” Every believer should be a “world Christian,” able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.

ACTS 2:1-13

2:1-2. Throughout this book Luke records the togetherness the early Christians enjoyed. Here, at the beginning of everything, we find them all together. They heard a sound like the blowing of a violent wind, certainly an experience with which all of us can identify. The word for “wind” is *pneuma*, the same word Jesus used in talking about the Spirit and the wind with Nicodemus (John 3:7-8). Wind filling the whole house reminds us of God’s presence filling the temple in the Old Testament. Luke was probably not present for this event, but we can imagine that he heard his colleagues describe it scores of times, for it was a day they could never forget.

2:3. We need to be careful with the language of the text. The sound was not a wind but like a wind. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire. Apparently, the fire started as one and then separated and came upon them. Like wind, the Bible commonly associates fire with the presence of God, as Moses found out one day in the desert (Exod. 3:2).

2:4. A third physical phenomenon experienced on the Day of Pentecost was the use of different languages. Throughout Acts, Luke uses different verbs to describe the coming of the Spirit upon new believers. This first time was a unique event, never again repeated in exactly the same way. When we look at the entire New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit, we see the word “baptism” associated with initial conversion and the word “filling” with ministry. The first seems to happen once without repetition; the second occurs with frequency as believers allow God’s Spirit to produce powerful work through them.

2:5-6. Like Paul, Luke occasionally engages in deliberate exaggeration such as his suggestion that there were pious Jews residing in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. Probably we should understand him to mean that people speaking many other languages were present on the Day of Pentecost and each heard the message in his or her own language or dialect. We might ask, if they resided in Jerusalem, wouldn’t they have understood Aramaic, or at least Greek? Doubtless many of them did; but part of the miracle was God’s ability to proclaim His message in multiple languages through uneducated people who spoke almost exclusively Aramaic and Greek. Some have suggested that the Feast of Pentecost might very well have attracted over two hundred thousand Jews from all over Palestine and the Mediterranean world. Nothing indicates that they heard the wind or saw the flames; but the sound of languages—perhaps dozens of them—captured their attention immediately.

2:7-11. The speakers amazed Jerusalem’s visitors as much as did the language: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?” After the introductory question raised by the bewildered guests, they identified fifteen language groups, roughly scattered from east to west, who heard the believers declaring the wonders of God in their own languages. Luke tells us they were bewildered and perplexed. Twice he used the word “amazed.” Many of the disciples (all of the eleven) came from Galilee, but that label for the group does not necessarily mean that all 120 came from that province. Jesus was a Galilean, and His followers were therefore known by that group name.

Luke’s list of fifteen geographical locations was a group of nations or areas in which known Jewish populations existed and would likely have sent representative groups to the Feast of Pentecost. Everyone there who spoke a language other than Greek or Aramaic heard the message of the Christians in that language—maybe fifteen languages, maybe fifty, maybe more. The languages differed; the message remained the same: the wonders of God.

2:12-13. Like most congregations, not everyone agreed that this event had significant meaning. Some simply mocked, “They have had too much wine” (v. 13). This word for wine (*gleukos*), used only here in the Bible, leaves no doubt of the mockers meaning. Peter’s explanation in the following verses says pointedly, “These men are not drunk, as you suppose” (v. 15).