

Luke's View of the Holy Spirit **By Mark Moore**

In the first century it was not uncommon to entitle a book “Acts” when it featured the noble deeds of one’s hero. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Luke labels his second volume “Acts.” The question is, “whose acts”? One might assume that the heroes of this book are the Apostles. That *can’t* be right. Only two of the thirteen are featured significantly and then very little of their total ministries are detailed. Actually, the spotlight of this book falls squarely on the Holy Spirit. He is Luke’s hero and the subject of our present investigation. Specifically we want to ask, “What portrait does Luke paint of the Holy Spirit?”

Where Did Luke Get His Theology of the Holy Spirit?

It is really no secret. Luke loves of the Holy Spirit. He mentions him fifteen times in his gospel and a full fifty five times in Acts.¹ Compared to the meager six mentions in Mark and the twelve in Matthew, it is clear that this is one of Luke’s key themes. It is also clear that Luke does not rely on the other two synoptics for his pneumatology. In fact on several occasions, Luke “imports” the Holy Spirit where Mark and Matthew did not mention him.² (1) Matthew 7:11 says if we ask for good gifts God will give them to us. Luke, however, substitutes the good gifts for the greatest gift – the Holy Spirit (11:13). (2) Matthew 10:19 says not to worry when standing before civil authorities for the words will be given you by the Spirit. Luke 12:12 makes his role more active: “The Holy Spirit will *teach* you at that time what you should say.”(3) In Matthew 11:25 Jesus rejoices that God revealed the mysteries of the kingdom to children. Luke 10:21 says the same thing but adds that Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit over this. In addition, if one follows

¹ Not only does he mention him frequently, he wastes no time getting him on stage. In the first four chapters of Luke the Holy Spirit makes an appearance no less 15 times: 1:15, 17, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-27; 3:16, 22; 4:1, 14:14, 18.

² F. F. Bruce, “The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles,” *Interpretation* 27/2 (1973) 168.

the textual variant of Luke 11:2 we would have a fourth inclusion of the Holy Spirit which reads, “Let the Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.”³

So if Matthew and Mark are not the source of Luke’s emphasis on the Holy Spirit, perhaps one could look to Paul, after all he has his own penchant for the Holy Spirit. Moreover, if Paul is Luke’s mentor, one might expect him to rub off a bit. Herein lies a curiosity: Luke’s theology of the Spirit is different than Paul’s . . . not contradictory, mind you, but clearly different.

When Paul talks about the Holy Spirit, he does so frequently in terms of intimacy with the disciple. That is, the Holy Spirit brings inward, spiritual benefits such as conversion (Rom 2:29; 8:11; Gal 3:14; Titus 3:5), sanctification (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Gal 3:3; Eph 4:12; 2 Thess 2:13), and sealing as God’s possession (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13).⁴ He assures us of God’s love (Rom 5:5; 15:30; Col 1:8) and confirms that we are God’s children (Rom 8:16-17; Gal 4:6) thus granting us access to God (Eph 2:18) even interceding for us when we can not pray (Rom 8:26-27). We live our lives under the direction of the Spirit rather than the Mosaic law (Rom 7:6; 8:1-16; 2 Cor 3:3, 6, 8; Gal 3:2-3; 5:16-18; 5:25), being transformed into God’s spiritual nature (2 Cor 3:17-18). Now all of this is quite wonderful; it really is. But it is not *Luke’s* emphasis.

When Luke talks about the Holy Spirit, he describes his role as one of empowerment for witness.⁵ In other words, Paul talks most about what the Holy Spirit does *in* the believer while

³ Bruce 169. In all fairness we should point out that there is one place in Mt (12:28) where Luke does not mention the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:20), and one place in Mk (13:11) that Luke leaves him out (Lk 21:15). But clearly Luke dominates the pneumatological landscape of the synoptics.

⁴ To say that the Holy Spirit’s role is internal and spiritual is not to say that it is individual rather than corporate. The fact is, Paul was entrenched in a corporate society and this is reflected in the contexts even where Paul talks about the Holy Spirit indwelling the body (usually to be read “the church”), cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:22; 4:3-4; Php 2:1; 3:3.

⁵ James Sheldon, *Mighty in Word and Deed* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) clearly demonstrates this to be Luke’s emphasis.

Luke stresses what the Holy Spirit does *through* the believer.⁶ Therein lays a huge difference between these two theologians. A brief survey of Luke’s books bears this out:

Chart #1

Text	Spirit Filled Person	Empowerment to:	Involves Communication*
Lk 1:15	John the Baptist	Prepare the way for Jesus	*
Lk 1:35	Mary	Conceive the Messiah	
Lk 1:41	Elizabeth	Announced Jesus in Mary’s womb	*
Lk 1:67	Zechariah	Prophesied concerning John	*
Lk 2:25-27	Simeon	Recognize Jesus’ coming	*
Lk 3:22; 4:1	Jesus	Withstand the wilderness temptation	
Lk 4:14, 18	Jesus	Preach	*
Lk 10:21	Jesus	Speak with Joy	*
Lk 12:12	Disciples	Evangelize with boldness	*
Acts 1:2	Jesus	Instructed the Apostles	*
Acts 1:8	Apostles	Evangelize the world	*
Acts 1:16	David	Write Scripture	*
Acts 2:4, 33	Apostles	Speak in Tongues	*
Acts 2:17-18	All people	Prophesy	*
Acts 4:8	Peter	Testified before the Sanhedrin	*
Acts 4:25	David	Write Scripture	*
Acts 4:31	Church	Speak boldly	*
Acts 6:10	Stephen	Speak boldly	*
Acts 8:29	Philip	He was directed to the Ethiopian	*
Acts 8:39	Philip	He was transported to Azotus	
Acts 9:31	The church	Grow	
Acts 10:19; 11:12	Peter	He was directed to go with the Cornelius’ servants	*
Acts 10:38	Jesus	Perform miracles	
Acts 10:44-47; 11:15-16; 15:8	Cornelius’ house	Speak in tongues	*
Acts 11:28; 21:11	Agabus	Prophesy	*
Acts 13:2-4	Paul & Barnabas	Go out on their first missionary journey	
Acts 13:9	Paul & Barnabas	Rebuke Elymas	*
Acts 15:28	James & Co.	Write a decree to the Gentiles	*
Acts 16:6-7	Paul & Co.	Hindered by the Holy Spirit and forced into Macedonia	
Acts 19:2, 6	Ephesian disciples	Prophesy and speak in tongues	*

⁶ Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), pp. 10-11 rightly objects to the theological tendency to interpret Luke’s pneumatology in light of Paul’s. This is especially misleading where Luke’s unique vocabulary dominates. For example, Luke speaks of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit three times whereas Paul mentions it but once; he uses the phrase “filled with the Spirit” nine times compared to Paul’s single usage. Clearly, at this point, Luke’s emphasis should be given first priority over Paul, or at least be allowed to stand independently on its own.

Acts 20:22-23	Paul	Be compelled to travel to Jerusalem	
Acts 20:28	Elders	Become leaders	
Acts 21:4	Brothers	Warned Paul	*
Acts 28:25	Isaiah	Write Scripture	*

Two things jump off the page from this chart. First, it is really long. In fact, there are only fourteen verses in both books (excluding Acts 8:15-19, which will be discussed below) that mention the Holy Spirit without directly saying he empowered someone.⁷ Second, only eight of these thirty four references (24%) don't specifically mention speaking. In short, 76% of the time the Spirit comes upon someone, he empowers them to speak as opposed to some other ministry or task. Clearly, what the Spirit cares most about is verbally promoting Jesus Christ as savior of the world. To be truly Spirit-filled, therefore, is most clearly demonstrated through preaching, teaching, and evangelism.

So if Matthew, Mark, and Paul are not the genius behind Luke's pneumatology, who is?⁸ He had to learn it from someone! Obviously, we can not say with certainty who Luke's theological mentor was. What we can trace, however, is the similarities between documents. And the kissing cousin to Luke, at least on the subject of the Holy Spirit, is the gospel of John.⁹ John speaks most about the Holy Spirit in chapters 14-16. His basic outline of the Spirit's role is virtually identical to Luke's description in Acts.¹⁰

Chart #2

⁷ Furthermore, five of these are direct threats against the Spirit's opposition (Lk 12:10; Acts 5:3, 9, 32; 7:51) and five of them are simply statements of a person's character (Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55; 11:24; 13:52). This leaves only Lk 11:13; Acts 1:5; 2:38; and 9:17 as statements about the Holy Spirit to God's people without explicit reference to empowerment.

⁸ "Absent [in Luke-Acts] is typical Pauline terminology such as "the fruit of the Spirit," "the gifts of the Spirit," and "the seal of the Spirit" Stronstad 76.

⁹ There are also striking similarities between Luke and John in the passion narrative. Both say Satan entered Judas, albeit at different times (Lk 22:3-6; Jn 13:27), they describe the charges against Jesus before Pilate (Lk 23:2; Jn 18:29-30), both emphasize that Pilate found Jesus innocent (Lk 23:4; Jn 18:38), and most striking, only Luke and John narrate Peter and John running to the empty tomb (Lk 24:9-12; Jn 20:2-10) and the disciples in the upper room (Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-25). This is not to assert primacy for either book, merely similarities.

¹⁰ W. F. Lofthouse, "The Holy Spirit in the Acts and the Fourth Gospel," *Expository Times* 52 (1940-41) 335-336.

John	Acts	Description of the Holy Spirit's Role
15:26; 20:22 (cf. 7:38-39)	2:33	Given by Jesus after his ascension ¹¹
14:16-17, 26; 16:13-15	8:29; 10:19; 13:2-4; 15:28; 16:6-7; 20:22-23	Paraclete – one to come alongside. Essentially he replaces Jesus as a teacher and guide.
1:32-33	Empowers: 1:5, 8; 2:17-18; 6:3-5; 10:38; 11:24; 20:28. Validates: 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 11:15-17; 15:8; 19:1-7	The Spirit descends upon Jesus/Christians, to empower and validate their ministries.
3:34	1:2, 8; 4:8, 31; 6:10; 11:12, 28; 13:9; 21:4, 11.	He empowers us to speak , sometimes prophetically.
15:26; 16:7-11	5:32	Testifies about Jesus and convicts the world.
3:5-8; 6:34; 7:39	2:38; 9:17, 31; 13:52	The Spirit births believers, giving them new life and refreshment , like rivers of water.
14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:14-15	Lk 1:35; 3:22; Acts 1:2-4; 2:33; 16:6-10	Trinitarian

For Luke and John the purpose of the Spirit is to carry on the ministry of Jesus after he ascends to the Father. Whatever Jesus did for the disciples while on earth, the Spirit continues to do post-Pentecost. In a nutshell, he teaches, leads, validates, and empowers.

Beyond Johannine influence, , “the writings of Luke are plainly indebted to the Old Testament tradition,”¹² and specifically, to the wording of the LXX.¹³ Luke’s use of the O.T. shows up in several ways. First, in the Jewish Bible the Spirit is portrayed as the dynamic force of God which typically acts *upon*, sometimes *through* an individual or group.¹⁴ His purpose is not salvation or sanctification (Paul’s emphasis), but service (Luke’s emphasis) to the people of God (cf. Chart #1).

¹¹ According to Bruce 166, Matthew and Mark portray the Spirit coming with John the Baptist whereas Luke and John portray it as a post-resurrection experience.

¹² I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970) 56.

¹³ R. Stronstad, “The Influence of the Old Testament on the Charismatic Theology of St. Luke,” *Pneuma* 2/1 (1980): 32-50 and Stronstad, “Charismatic Theology,” 13-20.

¹⁴ See M. V. Van Pelt, W. C. Kaiser, & D. I. Bock, “רוּחַ” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997) 1073-77 and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, Tr. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

A second connection between Luke and the LXX is this idea that the power of the Spirit can be passed from one person to another through the laying on of hands: Moses empowered the 70 elders (Numbers 11:17, 25); and later he passed the baton of leadership to Joshua (Numbers 27:18-20); likewise, Elijah gave his mantle to Elisha (2 Ki 2:8-15); Samuel anointed Saul as king (1 Sam 10:10) and then replaced him by anointing David (1 Sam 16:13). Luke also shows the power of the Spirit being passed on through the laying on of hands (cf. Deut 34:9). Once Jesus has passed on the Spirit by pouring him out at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), the Apostles are able to bestow spiritual gifts by laying their hands on people (Acts 6:6, 8; 8:6, 18; 9:17; 19:6).¹⁵

A third connection between Luke and the O.T. presentation of the Spirit is the call to vocation. That is, the Spirit comes upon a person and enables him/her to carry out a particular ministry or task (Acts 6:3-5; 20:28)¹⁶ whether that is architecture (Bezalel, Exo31:3; 35:31), judgment (Num 11:17:25-29), military expertise (Joshua, Num 27:18; Deut 34:9; Othniel, Jdg 3:10; Gideon, Jdg 6:34; Jephthah, Jdg 11:29), or miracles (2 Ki 2:9). Most commonly, however, in both the O.T. and in Luke, the Spirit empowers people to speak the word of the Lord whether that is in prophecy (Acts 11:28; 21:11),¹⁷ tongues (Acts 2:4, 33), or most commonly preaching/evangelism (Lk 12:12; Acts 4:8, 31; 6:10).

While Luke leans heavily on the Old Testament for his presentation of the Holy Spirit, he is certainly not merely mimicking it. In two important ways, Luke differs with the Old Testament

¹⁵ Paul also talks about the bestowal of gifts through laying on hands (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), but they are not identified as gifts connected to the Spirit as they are in Luke.

¹⁶ While Paul does talk about the gifts of the Spirit for ministry (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4, 7-12; Eph 4:11-13), this theme doesn't hold near the prominence for the Apostle as it does for Luke.

¹⁷ While these are the only two specific examples of predictive prophecy in the book of Acts, the phenomenon of speaking the word of the Lord, whether predictive or exhortational, was clearly widespread. It was promised in Acts 2:17 and prophets are identified in Jerusalem (Judas and Silas, Acts 15:32), Antioch (Acts 13:1); and Caesarea (Philip's four daughters, Acts 21:9). In addition we should mention the visions of Peter (Acts 10:9-16), Ananias (Acts 9:10-16), and Paul (9:12; 16:6-10; 22:17-21; 23:11; 27:23-24), which are closely associated with prophecy. Moreover, the Spirit is consistently given credit beyond the human authors for various O.T. texts (cf. Acts 1:16; 4:25; 28:25).

view of the Holy Spirit. First, the O.T. portrays the Spirit almost as an inanimate force, connected with God, but never clearly identified as a distinct entity.¹⁸ Not so for Luke. While he clearly demonstrates a Trinitarian view of the Spirit (Lk 1:35; 3:22; Acts 1:2-4; 2:33; 16:6-10), the Spirit has his own personality and identity. Second, the Holy Spirit was, in the Old Testament, the exclusive property of elite leaders with very few exceptions.¹⁹ When the church is birthed in Acts 2, suddenly the Spirit is poured out on all flesh, according to the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29 (cf. Acts 2:39). Now every member of the church is a priest (cf. 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10). Male and female, slave and free, rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles have equal access to God and ministry through the reception of the Holy Spirit. This is an extraordinary change in the new covenant. This is all the more striking given the fact that contemporary Judaism, to a large degree, believed that Spirit-induced prophecy had ceased (cf. 2 Baruch 85:3; Josephus, *Against Apion*, I. 41; *Tos Sot* 8:2)²⁰ and would only be rekindled when the Messiah had come. Thus, when groups such as the Maccabees or the Qumran covenanters claimed prophecy in their midst, it was an eschatological claim that the final Messianic age had dawned (cf. Isa 44:3-4; 59:20-21; Eze 36:27-28; 37:14; 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-3:1).²¹ Obviously, when the church of Acts

¹⁸ Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996) 15. "One can say that in Israelite history the Spirit was originally either a spirit-like being or a nonmoral invasive energy; then it became an extension of the personal presence of God. Finally it began to be thought of as a person or mode of being in the Trinity," Donald Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000) 66.

¹⁹ Primarily prophets, priests, and kings. Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology* 16.

²⁰ Hermann Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, Tr. Roy A. Harrisville and Philip A. Quanbeck II (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 68 and C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958) 153. Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997) 14-15, however, correctly cautions that there were always Jewish sects and individuals who taught the continuation of prophecy, much to the chagrin of the Jewish aristocracy.

²¹ While this is true, we need also to point out that the Jewish literature of the intertestamental period was quite varied. See Robert Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 54* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 53-112.

demonstrates the power of the Spirit through tongues, prophecy, and miracles, it was evidence for the claim that Jesus was, in fact, the promised Messiah.²²

The Spirit's Role in Luke/Acts

When we talk about the role of the Holy Spirit – the kinds of things we might expect him to do – the cardinal rule is this: The Holy Spirit does what he wants, where he wants, when he wants, and how he wants, with or without your permission. He is infinitely creative and innately unpredictable and far too large for any theological box we might construct. The fact is, the Holy Spirit tends to be claustrophobic. So, by talking about his role, we are not predicting (or constricting) what he *will* do, but tracing what he *has* done. Surveying the landscape of Luke and Acts, we see three broad regions of the Holy Spirit's work.

The Holy Spirit Empowers God's People for Service

Both Luke and Acts begin with a birth narrative heavily infused with the Holy Spirit. Luke 1-2 tells the story of the birth of Jesus; Acts 1-2 tells the story of the birth of the church. Acts 1:8 is the first mention of the Holy Spirit in Acts and sets the stage for the rest of his appearances, “But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit **comes on** you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This stands squarely on the shoulders of the paradigm already established in Luke 1:35²³ says, “The Holy Spirit will **come upon** you, and the **power** of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” Notice the two terms in bold. “Come upon,” used eight times in Luke/Acts and only twice elsewhere, is a particularly Lucan term and is connected with “power” in both verses. Truly we have a pattern being established here. From the

²² Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology* 38.

²³ Luke 1:35 is actually the second mention of the Holy Spirit in Luke but the first (1:15-17) is no different. It speaks of the Holy Spirit empowering John the Baptist from birth so that he would have “the spirit and **power** of Elijah.”

very beginning of both books, we are prepared to view the Holy Spirit in relation to power (cf. Lk 4:36; 5:17; 24:49).²⁴

Jesus, of course, becomes the model in Luke after which the disciples of Acts are patterned. Interestingly, Luke is the only Gospel writer to note that Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit to do might works (cf. 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 24:19; Acts 1:2; 2:22; 10:38), especially prominent in his baptism, temptation, and first sermon in Nazareth. Stronstad argues,

In the structure of Luke-Acts, the Pentecost narrative stands in the same relationship to Acts as the infancy-inauguration narratives do to the Gospel. In the Gospel of Luke these narratives not only introduce the motifs which define the mission of Jesus, but they also show that Jesus will execute His mission in the power of the Holy Spirit. In a similar manner, the Pentecost narrative introduces both the future mission of the disciples and the complementary empowering of the Spirit.²⁵

Hence, for both Jesus and the disciples in Acts, to have the Holy Spirit meant to have power. In fact, Gunkel argues that the early church was not interested in a theology of the Holy Spirit (creedal statements) but in his concrete acts.²⁶

The question becomes, then, “Power for what?” What did the Holy Spirit enable the disciples to do? The short answer is simply, “Whatever necessary to promote Jesus.” Obviously that included miracles, such as healing (Acts 2:43; 3:6-7; 5:12, 15-16; 6:8; 8:6-8; 9:18, 34, 40; 10:38; 14:3, 8; 19:11-12; 20:10; 28:8-9), exorcism (Acts 5:16; 16:18), divine escapes (Acts 5:19;

²⁴ Luke’s terminology of the Spirit “coming upon,” “being baptized,” “empowering,” “filling,” “being clothed with” and “outpouring” are essentially the same and they reflect the O.T. images of Spirit-empowered men such as Balaam (Num 24:2), Othniel (Jdg 3:10), Gideon (Jdg 6:34), Jephthah (Jdg 11:29), Samson (Jdg 14:6, 19; 15:14), Amasai (1 Chron 12:18), Zechariah (2 Chron 24:20), John the Baptist (Lk 1:17), and Jesus (Lk 4:14).

²⁵ Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology* 49.

²⁶ Gunkel, *Influence of the Holy Spirit* 15. This is not surprising. People living in subsistence societies tend to be pragmatic in their theology. For example, Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in African Context* (Pretoria: Universtiy of South Africa, 1991) 58-68, demonstrates that power is a central theme to all African religions, hence, when Christianity is adopted, any theology of the Spirit must include an explanation of how the Spirit can empower their lives.

12:7; 27:23-26), even punishment (Acts 5:5, 9; 8:20; 13:11). But far and away the most common response to Spirit empowerment is speaking. As chart one shows, when the Holy Spirit comes upon a person, s/he speaks in some way 76% of the time. Keener says, “Luke-Acts refers to the Spirit frequently, but in most cases focuses solely on the Spirit of prophecy or inspired speech (e.g., Luke 1:15-17, 41-42, 67; 2:26; 12:12; Acts 1:2, 8; 2:4, 17; 4:31; 5:32; 6:10; 7:51; 11:28; 13:2, 4, 9; 20:23; 21:4, 11) . . . Luke 3:16 may represent the one clear exception.”²⁷

Now, this speech may take several forms: Tongues (Acts 2:1-4; 10:45-46; 19:6); Prophecy (Lk 21:20-24; Acts 11:28; 21:11); bold preaching (Lk 4:18; 6:10; 12:12; Acts 4:8; 13:9), joyous declarations (Lk 2:25-27; 10:21), doctrinal letters (Acts 15:23-29), even poetic/musical utterances (Lk 1:46-55, 67-79). They are made by both women and men, young and old, Jewish and Greeks, Apostles, deacons, priests, prophets, preachers, and laity. Truly the Holy Spirit uses his greatest creativity and variety for announcing the good news of Jesus.²⁸ Truly Joel 2:28 has come to pass, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” The Holy Spirit is clearly zealous for the proclamation of the Gospel. If we claim to be Spirit filled people, we had better back it up by being verbose about the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit Orchestrates Evangelism

In light of what has just been said, it comes as no surprise that Spirit takes charge of the mission of the church. Acts 5:32 becomes the banner before the marching kingdom of God: “We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit.” Green nails it when he says, “Every

²⁷ Keener, 190.

²⁸ Because of this we strongly contend with Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997) 51, who restricts the convicting work of the Holy Spirit to the Bible: “The Holy Spirit always works through the word of God. . . . The Holy Spirit always uses the word . . . In order to do His work, the Spirit uses the word of God.” Yet in the book of Acts the Spirit is never monolithic in the tools, methods, or people he uses. While we must be cautious (perhaps even skeptical) of the current popularity of such phrases as, “The Spirit is leading me” or “God told me,” we also must recognize and submit to the variegated communication of the Spirit of God. He does still speak. In fact, that has always been and continues to be his primary task.

initiative in evangelism recorded in Acts is the initiative of the Holy Spirit.”²⁹ Not only does he empower his people to speak but he choreographs their movements. Simeon, among some 19,000 other priests goes to just the right spot in the courtyard of the temple, roughly the size of 16 football fields (Lk 2:25-27) and Anna joins him (Lk 2:38). Jesus was taken by the Spirit into the wilderness (Lk 4:1). Philip was led to the exact spot on a deserted road at just the right time to meet the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:29), and was “snatched” away to Azotus (Act 8:39);³⁰ Ananias was given the street address of where to meet Saul (Acts 9:11); Peter, at exactly the right time, was told to go with the three messengers from Cornelius (Acts 10:17-20; 11:12); Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2); and later Paul was specifically led to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10) and Jerusalem (Acts 20:22). Evangelism is our commission, but it is clearly the *Spirit’s* mission. We, more than he, are spectators in this global climactic event.

The Spirit does not merely set up the meeting, however, he seals the deal (cf. 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13). Granted, it is Paul who speaks most about the Spirit’s role in conversion (Rom 2:29; 8:9; Gal 3:14; Titus 3:5). Sheldon rightly cautions us, “Although Luke is not averse to associating the Holy Spirit with conversion, this is not his major pneumatological thrust.”³¹ Nonetheless, the Spirit is still connected with conversion in Acts. In particular, he is associated with water baptism (Acts 2:38-39; 9:17-22; 19:2-5, with the exception of 8:15-18 which will be discussed below).

The Holy Spirit Sustains and Encourages the Church

²⁹ Michael Green, *Evangelism in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 149.

³⁰ This physical movement by the Spirit is seen in the O.T. as well. He “lifts up” (1 Ki 18:12; 2 Ki 2:16; Eze 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5) [גָּשָׂא], “snatches away” (Eze 3:14) [לָקַח], and “sets in another place,” (2 Ki 2:16) [הִשְׁלִיךְ], (Eze 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5) [הִבְרִיא], (Eze 37:1) [הִיצֵא]. Friedrich Baumgärtel, “Πνεῦμα” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol 6, Ed. Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Tr. Geoffrey Bromily (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968) 362.

³¹ Sheldon 127.

The Spirit is a lover of humanity. His purpose is not merely to bring us into a right relationship with God, but to build us, sustain us, and encourage us through the body of Christ. This manifests itself in at least two specific ways in Luke's literature: joy and prayer. Luke must have had a jovial bent. He mentions joy frequently (Lk 1:14, 28, 44, 47, 58; 2:10; 6:23; 10:17-21; 15:7-10; 19:6, 37-40; 24:41, 52; Act 3:8-9; 5:41; 8:8, 39; 14:17; 16:34). On several occasions joy is specifically tied to the Spirit (Lk 1:41, 46, 67; 10:21; Acts 11:23-24; 13:52),³² most notably, Luke 10:21, "At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said . . ." and Acts 13:52, "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." While his ultimate purpose is greater than our personal satisfaction, because of his great love, he will settle for nothing less than the complete health of the body of Christ, which includes joy over God's great work in us.

Luke also emphasizes the Spirit's connection to prayer. Montague says, "Most significant about Luke's presentation of the Holy Spirit during the ministry is its close relation to the prayers of Jesus."³³ Luke makes this even more explicit by incorporating the Holy Spirit into Luke 11:13 to read, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Paul's statement about the Spirit interceding for us (Rom 8:26) is wonderful. Luke's, however, is even better. Through prayer, we can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 3:21; Acts 1:14; 4:31; 8:15).

Specific Passages Reexamined

So far we have come to this conclusion: Luke's presentation of the Holy Spirit is not primarily about conversion or sanctification, but power – power to carry out the commission of

³² See Peter Cullen, "Euphoria, Praise and Thanksgiving: Rejoicing in the Spirit in Luke-Acts," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 6 (1995) 13-24.

³³ George Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 257.

Christ, specifically by speaking on his behalf. With that in mind, let us reexamine two clusters of texts in Acts that have been the source of no little contention.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8; 2:4; 10:44-48)

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was originally prophesied by John the Baptist (Lk 3:16-17; Jn 1:33; Acts 1:5). Jesus somehow inundates believers in the Spirit (as opposed to baptizing unbelievers with fire). Now what exactly is this baptism? Here's what we know for sure. It is identified twice in the book of Acts (2:1-4; 10:44-46; 11:16). Here we find the Apostles' (cf. Acts 1:26; 2:1, 5, 7, 14, 37) and Cornelius' household speaking in tongues as evidence of God's approval. At Pentecost, God was validating the Apostles as spokesmen and witnesses of the resurrection. At Cornelius' house, God was validating the first Gentiles as *bonafide* prospects for conversion. In neither case was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit equivalent to nor necessary for salvation. The Apostles were already saved and Cornelius commenced to be baptized in water according to the normal 1st century practice of Christian conversion. Bottom line: The only two times the N.T. identifies the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, it was not for salvation but validation. This is likewise true of the Spiritual gifts exercised by the Samaritans (Acts 8:15-18) and the Ephesian converts (Acts 19:6-7). So we can say with assurance that the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts was for validation either of spokesmen for the gospel or new converts.

Is it, therefore, a phenomenon reserved for a select few? Certainly not. When John prophesies about this baptism (Mt 3:11), he offers it as an experience the whole crowd could receive by accepting Jesus. Furthermore, Peter's citation of Joel 2:28-32 suggests that all people will receive this outpouring of the Spirit, not just the Apostles or a few idiosyncratic converts who need extra validation. The standard Pentecostal doctrine has been that this baptism,

evidenced by tongues is the gift and even duty of every believer,³⁴ which seems to run counter to Paul's statement that no all speak in tongues (1 Cor 12:30).³⁵

Luke's interest, not to mention the Holy Spirit's, is not in the manifestation of the gifts, except in so far as they are necessary for carrying out the great commission of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is for every believer (which Paul agrees with, although he articulates it in relation to conversion, 1 Cor 12:13³⁶). Those who want to make it equivalent to miraculous gifts (particularly glossalalia) run afoul since the gifts are distributed diversely by the Spirit for the edification of the body. In other words, not everyone gets the same gift. On the other hand, those who want to make the Baptism of the Holy Spirit equivalent to conversion (via Paul), run up against Luke's emphasis of power as opposed to conversion in his pneumatology (not to mention the fact that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not identified with conversion in Acts). So what is it? Any "either/or" answer will fail, but a "both/and" answer works quite nicely. Simply put, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to Luke is the power of the Holy Spirit inundating every Christian's life empowering him/her to carry out their ministry. Sometimes it manifests itself at the point of water baptism (Acts 19:4-6), sometimes before (Acts 10:44-48), sometimes after (Acts 8:15-18).³⁷ Remember, the cardinal rule of the Holy Spirit: He does what he wants, when he wants, where he wants, and how he wants, with or without your permission. The bottom line is that the Holy Spirit empowers God's people to proclaim Christ to the nations. One seeking

³⁴ Don Basham, *A Handbook on the Holy Spirit Baptism* (Pittsburgh: Whitaker House, 1969). "The only clear evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues" (p. 81). "Any person receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit *can*, from the moment he accepts the Holy Spirit into his life in this new and powerful way, speak in tongues" (85).

³⁵ For a variety of opinions on the subject, see Wayne Grudem (ed.), *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

³⁶ Paul uses the same phrase "baptism in/of" and the same dative case as John the Baptist. Hence it appears that he is speaking about the same thing.

³⁷ We must keep in mind the distinction here between the power of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Baptism) that Luke emphasizes and the sealing which Paul describes. The power may or may not come commensurate with baptism, but salvation appears to be promised along with immersion by a variety of authors (Mark 16:16; John 3:5-6; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-6; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21).

this power should remember it is generally in speaking, not some inwardly focused, selfish, mystic experience. The Holy Spirit is little interested in making you feel good; he is greatly committed to making you effective in your witness. So if you are looking for true Spiritual empowerment, posture yourself where the power of the Holy Spirit is necessary to carry out the work of God.

The Samaritan & Ephesian “Anomalies” (Acts 8:14-18; 19:1-7)

The question with the Samaritans is, “Why were they converted without receiving the Holy Spirit?” The question for the Ephesians is, “Were they really disciples prior to being ‘rebaptized’ into Christ?” While these are completely different questions, they stand on the same false premise – Luke’s pneumatology has to do with conversion. When these texts are viewed through Luke’s lens of power rather than Paul’s lens of salvation, they present much less of a problem.

Several denominations gravitate toward Acts 8:15-18 as a proof-text for a two-step conversion. The Catholics glean from this passage confirmation – a baby is baptized, hence saved, but must come to an individual faith through confirmation sometime around adulthood.³⁸ It is then that they receive the Holy Spirit. Holiness groups, on the other hand, argue for a second work of grace. That is, sometime after a person’s conversion, usually in connection with a deep season of prayer, a person is empowered to shed the sinful life and become wholly holy.³⁹ Pentecostals, using the same logic, come to a very different conclusion, that the Samaritans were

³⁸ P. T. Camelot, “Confirmation,” *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol IV (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1967) 145.

³⁹ See Richard Gilbertson, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit: The Views of A.B. Simpson and His Contemporaries* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1993) and John Gresham, *Charles G. Finney’s Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987).

saved through conversion but later empowered through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by the speaking in tongues.⁴⁰ All of these assume that conversion comes in two stages.

Others have argued that conversion is simply one stage, that is, baptism and the Holy Spirit belong together. Hence the Samaritans' conversion is either deficient⁴¹ or an anomaly.⁴² But what if Luke was not speaking of conversion primarily? What if he were speaking about empowerment that validated these converts? Three things suddenly fall into place. First, the Spirit's power was visible. The Apostles noticed that it was missing and Simon noticed immediately when it was manifest. This matches external gifts far better than the Spirit's seal on the believer. Second, the language of "come upon" is Lucan terminology for power (see fn. #23), not conversion. Third, laying on of hands is never used for conversion but is for bestowing spiritual gifts (see above, p. 5).

This takes us to the Ephesian converts of Acts 19. Were they *really* disciples of Jesus or merely of John the Baptist? Many expositors argue that Luke can not portray them as full believers because they did not have the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9).⁴³ Dunn goes so far as to say that Luke gives a subtle clue that they are not real believers by using the word "disciple" without the article.⁴⁴ While this is possible, such subtlety would probably be as baffling to Luke as it is to modern students. Perhaps the reason this question is confusing is because it is not the issue Luke was addressing! They did become fully followers of Jesus. How do we know that? Because they manifested the power of the Spirit. Just when that happened is a less important to Luke. The

⁴⁰ Howard M. Ervin, *Spirit Baptism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987) 71-74.

⁴¹ See G. Campbell Morgan, *Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), 159 or more recently James Dunn, *Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1970) 63-68.

⁴² See John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* in *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994) 152-153 or Richard Longenecker, *Acts* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 359.

⁴³ E.g. John Polhill, *Acts*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992) 339 and Gareth Reese, *Acts* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1976) 667.

⁴⁴ Dunn, *Baptism* 83-88.

important thing is that they were able to successfully encounter the demonic forces at play in Ephesus through the Baptism of Jesus which they could not do merely with the Baptism of John. Hence, Jesus, through his Spirit, proves superior to all other spiritual leaders whether John, the sons of Sceva, or Artemis. In each of these instances we've surveyed (Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-18; 10:44-48; 19:1-6) the Spirit intervened in power so his people could be authenticated and empowered to carry out the gospel to the ends of the earth. This, in a nutshell, is Luke's view of the Holy Spirit.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Summarize Luke's view of the Holy Spirit and how does this differ (and overlap) with the John and Paul?
2. What kinds of power did the Holy Spirit make available to Christians in Acts?
3. How can we access the power of the Holy Spirit for ministry in our own lives?
4. How does Luke's view of the Holy Spirit challenge you to be a better disciple?

Essential Reading:

Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997).

James Sheldon, *Mighty in Word and Deed* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991).

Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984).