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Acts 1

“The Purpose and Person of the Holy Spirit”

Pastor Gary Hamrick

As we get started in our series in the Book of Acts, it will be helpful to know some of the background about the author, the purpose for the book, etc. Luke wrote the Book of Acts sometime between 60 and 69 AD. Luke is also the writer of his own gospel, the Gospel of Luke, and is interestingly the only Gentile to be picked by the Holy Spirit to write any books of the Bible. Luke was a physician and also a traveling companion of Paul ([Colossians 4:14](#)). Acts and Luke were both addressed to Theophilus ([Acts 1:1 and Luke 1:3](#)).

[Acts 1:1–11](#) records the final things related to Jesus’ public ministry before He goes back into heaven and we learn three important things about Jesus in these verses. The first is that He appeared for 40 days after his resurrection until his ascension ([1:3](#)). He spent 40 days on earth in a resurrected, glorified body appearing to many and giving convincing proof He was alive. Secondly, He assured us of the baptism of the Holy Spirit ([1:4–5](#)). Thirdly, He ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives and will return to the same place ([1:10–12](#)). There will come a day when Jesus will return! And He will not only return in the same manner, but to the same place! We learn in verse 12 this place is the Mount of Olives. Also, [Zechariah 14:3–4](#) tells us that the place of Jesus’ return will be the Mount of Olives.

But the primary focus of the book is the person and power of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to Alfred Nobel, who went out of his way not to be remembered solely as the inventor of dynamite, there is one in the Book of Acts who wants to be remembered and associated with dynamite! The word dynamite in the Greek is *dunamis*, which means power. Dunamis happens to be found 12 times in the Book of Acts while “Holy Spirit” is recorded 57 times. And so this book is about the person and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells us about the coming of the Holy Spirit ([John 14:25 – 26; 15:26](#)). In [Acts 1:8](#) Jesus says, “*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.*” Jesus is speaking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit! It is that overflowing work of God’s Spirit in the life of a believer.

Now, some people's traditions don't believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but God's Word speaks of it. Jesus himself spoke of it ([Acts 1:5](#)) and John the Baptist spoke of it ([John 1:32-34](#)). Unfortunately, there is much controversy and confusion, debate and division about this subject. It is sad that as Christians we tend to fight and bicker about the Holy Spirit! The reality is that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God! ([Acts 1:4](#)) It must grieve God that the Church is fighting over this precious gift!

Since there is so much confusion and debate, it is good to first talk about the Person of the Holy Spirit before the baptism of the Holy Spirit can be understood.

The Holy Spirit is a person – a spiritual being – the 3rd person of the Trinity

1. Jesus uses personal pronouns to describe the Holy Spirit ([John 16: 5-16](#)).
2. The Holy Spirit has all the attributes of personality including a mind ([1 Corinthians 2:11](#)), will ([1 Corinthians 2:11](#)), and emotions ([Ephesians 4:30](#)).

The Holy Spirit has always existed, co-eternal and co-equal with God

3. He was there at Creation ([Genesis 1:2](#)).
4. He anointed specific people in the Old Testament (Gen. – Joseph, Exodus – Moses, Deuteronomy – Joshua). The Holy Spirit also anointed certain judges and kings (Saul, David).
5. Only since Pentecost ([Acts 2](#)) has He been available to all believers ([John 7:37-39](#)).

The Purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

6. There is a difference between the indwelling and the overflowing work of the Spirit. The disciples received the Holy Spirit at salvation ([John 20:19 – 22](#)). This was the indwelling of the Spirit. The disciples received the overflowing or the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ([Acts 2:1-4](#)).
7. The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is two-fold:
 - a. To **empower** us for service ([Acts 1:8a](#)). God gives us His Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit so that we might serve Him! We should want the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. We should avoid focusing on man-made things to build His church. Instead, we should be praying for and seeking the power of God's spirit to move in mighty ways¹.

¹ "If the Holy Spirit were removed from the church today, 95% of what we were doing would carry on as usual and no one would know the difference; but if the HS were removed from the Early Church, 95% of what they were doing would come to a screeching halt and everyone would know the difference." – A.W. Tozer

- b. To **embolden** us as witnesses (**Acts 1:8b**). **First Peter 3:15** tells us, “*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*” **Luke 12:12** says, “*...for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.*”

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Acts 1:1–11** to provide an overview of today’s study.
3. **Acts 1:1–11** really is the bridge between the four gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the church age. Have you ever considered how important these eleven verses are to us as Christians? Why are the things learned about Jesus in these verses so valuable to us?
4. Pastor Gary told us that the Book of Acts is referred to as, “The Acts of the Apostles,” but that it really could be called, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles.” Why is this distinction so important?
5. Many of us have come from different church backgrounds and traditions. Is anyone willing to share of having any past confusion regarding the subject of the Holy Spirit? Have you been involved with this subject causing division within the body of Christ? Have you ever considered the Holy Spirit as a Gift from God?
6. How can we be assured of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when we become a believer? Take a look at these verses and discuss (**Galatians 3:2, 4:6** – The Bible expressly says it is so) (**Romans 8:9** – Those without the H.S. are considered unbelievers)(**1 Corinthians 3:16** – All believers are spoken to as though they have the H.S.)(**Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 2:12** – The H.S. is a gift, not a reward for faith or service).
7. One of the reasons for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to empower us (**Acts 1:8a**). Pastor Gary made the statement, “We can’t affectively do anything that would glorify God apart from the work of His Spirit working and ministering through us. We need the power of God.” Take time to discuss how we all have tried to accomplish things for God in our own strength, versus the times we have relied on the Holy Spirit.
8. The second reason for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to **embolden** us as witnesses (**Acts 1:8b**). In spite of our weaknesses, God will use our limited abilities to work through us to accomplish His purposes. Does anyone want to share a story of witnessing? What was the impact, if you know, on the person you shared with? What was the impact it made on you?

9. Close your time by allowing everyone in your group to: silently thank the Lord for the promises He made before ascending into heaven; to thank the Lord for the indwelling and baptism of the Holy Spirit; and to ask God to help us trust and rely on the Holy Spirit to empower us for service and to embolden us as witnesses.