

THE CHURCH'S WITNESS IN JERUSALEM (1)**Coming of the Spirit and Birth of the Church
Acts 1–2**

Memory Verse: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8 ESV).*

Background Helps:

The Book of Acts is Volume II of Luke's two-volume work on the beginnings of Christianity. Compare Acts 1:1 with Luke 1:1-4 to review the purpose of Luke's writing. He wants to establish the solid historical basis for our Christian faith. The so-called "we" sections in the book of Acts show that Luke was an eyewitness to some of the events he records: Acts 16:9-12; 20:5-21; 18; 27:1–28:16.

Although Acts presents a history of the early church, it is a selective history, tracing the movement of Christianity from the Jews to the Gentiles and from the geographical center of Jerusalem to Antioch, and finally to Rome. Acts is a missionary book, narrating the early expansion (or should we say, explosion!) of the church of Jesus Christ.

As Acts 1:1 implies, the book records the continuing activity of the risen, exalted Christ which he began while on earth. The Holy Spirit, whom the exalted Christ sent, plays a prominent role throughout Acts, working through the apostles and other chosen representatives. The book has been well-called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." The ministries of two primary apostles are featured: Peter, the apostle to the Jews in chapters 1–12; and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles in chapters 13–28. Perhaps we might summarize and say that Acts is "The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by His Spirit through His Apostles."¹

Acts 1:8, our memory verse, is the key to the whole book and supplies us with a handy outline:

- The church's witness in Jerusalem (chaps. 1–7)
- The church's witness in Judea, Samaria, and beyond (8–12)
- The church's witness to the world (13–28)

Charts #16 and #18 and Map #8 of your Map and Chart Set will be valuable helps during our study of Acts.

Lesson Helps:

A suggested lesson aim: My students will learn about the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, so that they will bear witness of Christ to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹ John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 34.

A suggested lesson outline:

Introduction (Acts 1)

A. The Apostles are prepared for their witness by:

1. The promise and commission of Christ (1:8)
2. Prayer (1:14)
3. The replacement of Judas (1:15-26)

B. Now in chapter 2, we will study the role of the Spirit in the work of evangelism

I. The Spirit Empowers Believers (2:1-21)

(Note: The three signs of wind, fire, and tongues [the miraculous ability to speak in known languages unknown to the speaker] dramatized the historical coming of the Spirit and the launching of the church. Since Pentecost, these signs do not normally accompany the Spirit's working, but his power given to believers for witness certainty should be normal and expected!)

II. The Spirit Glorifies Christ (2:22-36).

Trace the emphasis of Peter's message on Jesus as Lord and Christ. Have a student demonstrate sharing the gospel with a friend in class.

III. The Spirit Convicts Sinners (2:37-41).

Conclusion:

- Notice the kind of Spirit-filled church produced by such Spirit-empowered witness (2:42-47).
- Challenge your students to write down the name of an unsaved friend. Pray for opportunities to witness this coming week.
- Share testimonies next week of what happened!

Home Assignment:



Read Acts 3:1–4:31.



Memorize Acts 4:12.