

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 7, Acts 1-2

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 7, Acts chapters one and two.

Acts chapters one and two teach us about the power for witness.

They introduce an emphasis and empowerment for cross-cultural witness that is highly significant for the rest of the book of Acts. Acts 1.8 is central in this. Not all ancient works had a thesis statement or something like that at the beginning, but sometimes they did.

And Acts is one of those works that does. In Acts chapter one and verse eight, you will be witnesses to the ends of the earth once the spirit comes on you. Now Acts one and two recapitulate Luke 24, the pivot between Luke and Acts.

So, this is a very strategic section and it shows us, and it highlights for us a major emphasis of Luke-Acts, namely the empowerment of the spirit, that Jesus' mission is to be carried on by his followers. Obviously, not his mission of dying for the world, to save the world, but his mission of ministering grace to the world and spreading the good news of what Jesus has done. We see that in Acts chapters one and two.

In chapter one, verses four through eight, we read about the promise of Pentecost. In 1:12-26, we read about preparation for Pentecost, including prayer and leadership. In 2.1-4, the proofs of Pentecost.

2:5-12, the peoples of Pentecost. 2:17-21, the prophecy of Pentecost. 2:22-40, the preaching of Pentecost.

And 2:41-47, the purpose of Pentecost. First of all, looking at the promise of Pentecost, I'll be doing this one in more detail than some of the others. The promise of Pentecost is so important that Jesus says, stay in Jerusalem, wait for what the Father has promised.

Waiting for the power of the spirit is more important than just getting out and trying to do it on our own because we can't succeed in Christ's mission without his power. In fact, usually whatever he calls us to do in many respects is something we can't do in our own strength. So, we learn to depend on his strength instead of our own.

The disciples ask the obvious question in verse six. Jesus has been talking about the kingdom. He's been talking about the spirit.

Well, the outpouring of the spirit was associated with the end-time restoration of Israel. You have that in Isaiah 44.3. You have it in Isaiah perhaps 61, perhaps 59. You have it in Ezekiel 36, 37, and 39.

You have it in Joel chapter two and so forth. So, Jesus is talking about the spirit. He's talking about the kingdom.

And the disciples ask the obvious question, is this the time that you're going to restore the kingdom to Israel? And Jesus answers by saying, well, it's not for you to know the times or the seasons yet. The consummation of the kingdom will come, verse seven. But the spirit is going to be given now, verse eight, to prepare the world beforehand, to prepare witnesses beforehand.

The spirit was associated with the end time. So, Jesus' followers must display the life of the future age. It would be like pointing to, saying to the disciples, you have a foretaste of the world to come.

And if the world around can't look at the church and see what heaven is going to be like, or see what the new world is going to be like, it's because the church is living short of the church's birthright. Because Jesus has given us the spirit, the foretaste of the age to come. And of course, we see that throughout the New Testament, that emphasis of the already, not yet.

The king who is yet to come has already come. So, we're looking for a second coming, but he's already come once. The resurrection of the dead, we're awaiting that.

But the disciples were able to preach in Jesus the resurrection from the dead, Acts 4:4, because Jesus had already been raised, the first fruits, 1 Corinthians 15 says, the firstborn from among the dead. We see the association with the spirit elsewhere. Hebrews chapter six says that we've received the spirit, we've tasted the spirit, and we've tasted the powers of the age to come.

Galatians 1.4, we've been delivered from this present evil age. Romans 12.2, don't be conformed to this age, but texts that actually mentioned the spirit directly in that connection. We have the first fruits of the spirit, Romans 8.23. We have the down payment.

It's a Greek word, *ahrebon*, it's used in business documents, meaning the actual first installment, the first payment. We have the beginning of our future inheritance. Ephesians 1, also 2 Corinthians 1, 2 Corinthians 5, we have the down payment of our future inheritance.

1 Corinthians chapter two, verses nine and 10, Paul says, eye is not seen, neither is ear heard, neither is it entered the human heart, but things that God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed them to us by his spirit. So, by the spirit, we have a foretaste of the world to come and the world should be able to look at us and see what the world to come is to be like, a sample of what the world to come is to be like. Jesus said you'll receive power when the spirit comes on you.

We talked about this earlier in the introduction that in Luke, in the gospel, and in the book of Acts, power is not exclusively, but is most often associated with healings and the driving out demons. So, this is ultimately what some have called power evangelism. That is, God backs up his word with power.

That's why we see signs and wonders in the book of Acts, drawing people's attention to this. Now you may have heard me continue to qualify at various points that we don't always see that happening, but if you're in a place where it's always happening, please don't complain. Just rejoice in it.

But the power is associated with the spirit. The Old Testament often associated the spirit with the prophets and with prophetic speech and sometimes other kinds of prophetic actions. Early Judaism especially made that association.

That was the one that they developed the most. Some of the other connections of the spirit do appear elsewhere. And especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jubilees, things connected probably with the Essenes.

Those sources associate the spirit a lot with purification, but they also mention prophetic empowerment. And other Jewish sources all over the place mention the spirit in association with prophetic empowerment. So, when Jesus says that you are going to receive power from the spirit, it's as if he's looking at the disciples and saying, you will be like Ezekiel.

You will be like Jeremiah. You'll be like Isaiah. You'll be like Huldah or Miriam or Deborah or Daniel.

We've been given different kinds of giftings. There were different kinds of prophets in the Old Testament, Elijah. But the same power that was given to the prophets of old is given to us to let the world know about Jesus.

Witnesses to the ends of the earth, Jesus says they'll be. The language reflects Isaiah. And it's not surprising that it would reflect scripture because Luke 24, when it gives this commission, talks about power from on high using language from earlier in the book of Isaiah.

It says that Jesus was teaching this based on scripture. So, he doesn't have to repeat that point saying it's based on scripture in Acts 1 for people to realize, yes, this is based on scripture. They would be witnesses for God.

Isaiah 43.10, Isaiah 44.8, witnesses for Yahweh. But here, whose witnesses are they? Jesus says you'll be my witnesses. It fits very clearly with the theme on Jesus being divine.

Of course, you have that introduced very early in Luke's gospel. Even when John the Baptist comes preaching, the quote is from Isaiah 40:3, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way for our God. Prepare the Lord, the Lord's way, referring to Yahweh's way.

And then it goes on to talk about all flesh, including the Gentiles. In other words, seeing the salvation of our God. Well, here, Acts 1:8, has a very clear Christological message, including that Jesus is divine.

And our mission is to carry on this mission that God's people were told about in the book of Isaiah. When they would receive the spirit, they would be witnesses. And the association is with the spirit also in that section of Isaiah.

And it would be to the ends of the earth, Jesus says here in Acts 1.8. Well, that can echo a number of passages, but especially it echoes Isaiah 49.6, which talks about the mission to the ends of the earth, the light to the ends of the earth. And that's actually quoted in Acts 13.47, where it's applied to Paul's own ministry. It's not just for the 12.

Now, Jesus is directly addressing the 12 here, rather the 11. Judas has died, but he's not just addressing the 11. If you look at the end of Luke chapter 24, it's the 11 and those who were with them.

So, it's a bit larger than that to begin with. Those who were directly called witnesses, especially are the ones who were with Jesus. The 11, the person who replaces Judas also becomes one of the 12.

They were witnesses of these things originally, but Paul was also called a witness in Acts. So is Stephen called a witness in Acts. Moreover, the spirit is given not only to the 12, but the spirit is going to be given to all believers to carry on this mission.

And you see that clearly in Acts chapter 2 verses 38 and 39, using the same language that we have here in this context, where you receive the gift of the spirit, you receive what has been promised, and so forth. Well, this introduces a major theme in Acts. The gospel spread and you see this through summary statements throughout the book of Acts.

The Lord added to the number daily, 247. The word of God spread, 67. The church grew in numbers, to 931.

1224, the word continued to increase, 1605. The churches grew daily in numbers, in 1920. The word spread and grew, 2831.

Without hindrance, he preached. These reflect the growth of the church in Jerusalem, across class boundaries, in Judea and Galilee, further in Judea, in Southern Asia Minor, in urban Ephesus, in Rome, and so forth. It's just showing how the good news goes forth.

An even more explicit outline we have in Acts chapter 1 and verse 8, but it's a very rough outline. It's not meant to be a detailed outline, but Acts chapter 1 and verse 8 give kind of a summary statement of where the gospel is going. Jerusalem, chapters 1 through 7, Judea and Samaria, chapters 8 and 9, and then to the ends of the earth, everywhere beyond there, beyond the Holy Land in chapters 10 through 28, where it's dominated especially by the Diaspora mission, where Paul is the most prominent figure.

Gentiles in chapters 10 and 11, already foreshadowed in chapter 8, Cyprus and Southern Turkey in 13 and 14, a theological center of the book, many consider chapter 15, Asia and Greece, 16 through 20, and then in route to Rome via Jerusalem and Caesarea in the final quarter, 21 through 28. Geographically, something very significant is that Luke's gospel begins and ends with the temple in Jerusalem. From Zechariah having the vision in the temple and the disciples praying in the temple in Jerusalem at the end in Luke 24.

But the book of Acts moves from Jerusalem, picking up where Luke's gospel left off, to Rome. And there's a theological reason for this. Theologically, we could say that Luke-Acts moves from heritage to mission.

It first makes sure that everything is very grounded in heritage so that you understand that where the gospel is going forth is what was predicted. It's what was already grounded in the history of Israel that had come before it. But this history of Israel, without discarding the history of Israel, without discarding the heritage, is also moving beyond there to mission.

Now, for Luke's audience being in the empire, getting to the heart of the empire was a significant climax for the book of Acts. But really the book of Acts is open-ended. It says the gospel goes to the ends of the earth.

Where are the ends of the earth? Well, there were different things that were labeled the ends of the earth back then. The Western ends of the earth were thought to be

Spain and the river ocean, which was thought to run around the whole earth. Although some people knew of things further west than Spain and even some things further west than what they considered the river ocean.

To the east, you had Parthia, you had India, you had China. There were trade connections with China. They knew of places like that.

So, the ends of the earth, they already had to know that it would include places like India and China. To the north, places like Scythia, which partly is where Russia is, Germany, Britain. To the south, they knew of Africa, south of Egypt.

There were trade ties as far south as Tanzania. They've actually found a bust of Caesar that far south. The Nubian kingdom of Meroe appears in chapter eight in verse 29, a very powerful kingdom south of Egypt that Rome knew of and Rome found itself unable to subdue and just had to make trade connections with and peace treaty with.

So, they knew of the ends of the earth beyond Rome. They didn't know of North and South and Central America. So, they didn't know of the hemisphere in which I live, but they did know that it went beyond Rome.

Rome is important for Luke's audience, but Rome is a proleptic foreshadowing of the ends of the earth. Just like the conversion of the African official in Acts chapter eight is a foreshadowing of the gospel reaching the southern ends of the earth. Just like in Acts chapter two, where you have Jewish people from every nation under heaven, that's a foreshadowing of the gospel going to the ends of the earth.

So, Luke keeps giving us reminders of the future promise. The mission is open-ended. It continues today.

The book of Acts is open-ended. It opens into the future. Even though Luke just has two volumes, we know that history has gone on.

Well, there's another biblical illusion in Acts chapter one, verses nine through 11. Jesus ascends to heaven. Well, the Greek said stories of people ascending to heaven, Romans did, and Jewish people did, but there's one in the Old Testament before Jewish people would have been exposed to these other things.

And this is the one with which Luke's audience would be most familiar because it's in their canon. It's in scripture. This is something they would have heard regularly.

Elijah ascended to heaven. And when he did that in Second Kings chapter two, what happened? He left for Elisha a double portion of his spirit. So, Jesus is ascending to heaven in chapter one, verses nine through 11, but he's just promised the disciples

the same spirit who empowered him, Acts 10:38, Luke 4:18, the same spirit who anointed Jesus is now the same spirit who's going to empower the church to carry out our mission.

And like Elisha was carrying on the mission of Elisha, we are to carry on the mission of Jesus. Again, not for dying for the sins of the world, but for the kinds of things that the spirit empowered Jesus to do in terms of bringing healing and well-being to people and preaching the good news of the kingdom. So also, we have a section about preparation for Pentecost.

I'm not going to spend as much time on this section, but they have to re-establish the leadership structure because they've had a scandal. One of the leaders has fallen away and ended up dying as well. They need to prepare in faith that God will use them.

Just like David wasn't allowed to build the temple, but he stored up material so that Solomon could build the temple. It's not time for them to go yet, but they do prepare in faith that God is going to bring about the promised restoration. They therefore make sure that a 12th disciple is appointed.

So, they come back up to the number that they need to be because Jesus said, you're going to sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. Also, they pray together in verse 14. You have both men and women praying together and they're praying before the outpouring of the spirit.

This is the theme, as we saw in our introduction, that runs throughout Luke X. Now I know that some of you probably didn't want the introduction. You wanted to get right into the text and so you skipped the introduction. That's all right if that's what you wanted to do.

But just briefly, this is a theme that comes over and over again in Luke X, but especially it's important in terms of prayer before the coming of the spirit. That's a frequent theme in Luke X. The spirit comes on Jesus when he's praying at his baptism. You also have them praying here and then the spirit is poured out in Acts chapter two.

In Acts chapter four, they're praying and they're filled with the spirit so that they can continue the mission. In Acts chapter eight, they prayed for the Samaritans to receive the spirit and the spirit came on the Samaritans. Prayer also precedes the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 9 and Acts 10, although the connection isn't made as explicit by Luke in these cases, but it's mentioned in both cases.

It's not to say that that's the only way God ever pours out his spirit. In fact, in Acts 10, Peter is rather surprised when it happens, even though he was praying before it

all happened, as well as Cornelius was praying before it happened, but they weren't praying specifically for the outpouring of the spirit. I believe that of all the things I found out in writing my 4,000 roughly page Acts commentary, as I worked through the book of Acts, perhaps the most important for the church today, or at least much of the church today, is this.

God poured out his spirit in the book of Acts. It's crystal clear the church needs the spirit to fulfill the mission that God has given us. We can't do this on our own.

It's God who multiplies it. It's God who makes it count. It's God who makes it fruitful.

The chief prerequisite, maybe not prerequisite, but the chief preparation we can give before the outpouring of the spirit is prayer. If we want to see God move, let's ask him for it because he promised us, Jesus promised us in Luke 11.13. In Matthew, if you ask for good gifts, your father will give you good gifts. But Luke focuses on a particularly good gift.

If you ask for bread, your father won't give you a stone. How much more, if you being evil not to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Let us ask him for the outpouring of the spirit upon us. Let us ask him for the outpouring of the spirit on his church around the world that he will send forth laborers into his harvest as he's instructed us to pray for that.

Many pilgrims gathered at the temple for the day of Pentecost. And so, this was a strategic time when many people would be gathered there. And in chapter two, verses two through four, we have that whole section before it framed kind of in prayer.

The disciples are praying early in that section. And chapter two and verse one, they're all together in one place and in one accord. What are they doing? Well, presumably they're still praying.

People may have been coming and going, but the prayer meeting is still going on. But in chapter two, verses two through four, we get the evidence of Pentecost as the Spirit is being poured out. In chapter two and verse two, you have the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and that evokes a theophany.

Often you have something like the sound of a wind when God reveals himself in the Old Testament. Also, it may be associated in Ezekiel 37 with resurrection life, end-time resurrection life. God sends his Ruach, his spirit, like a wind to revive the dry bones of his people and bring about the restoration of his people.

So, you have the wind. You also have fire in verse three of chapter two. The fire again evokes a theophany, often with God revealing his glory in the Old Testament comes like fire.

But also, fire is associated, like in Isaiah 66 and so on, fire seems to be associated with eschatological judgment, what would be understood as end-time judgment by interpreters in the first century. These are not repeated at later outpourings of the spirit in the book of Acts. They're important here because they show that God is showing up.

They also show a foretaste of the future, a foretaste of eschatology, but they aren't repeated at subsequent outpourings of the spirit in the book of Acts. That's not to say that they can never be repeated. They have been repeated at some outpourings of the spirit in the past.

The wind came and I believe even the fire perhaps at the outpouring of the spirit at the beginning of the Timor, West Timor revival in Indonesia. You had a fire also with the outpouring of the spirit at Pandita Ramabai's orphanage in India in the early first decade of the 20th century, around 1904 or so. But the third sign that is given in this case is that they begin praying in tongues.

They begin speaking in other languages and tongues is the most significant of these three for Luke because it's repeated at initial outpourings in chapter 10, verse 46 and chapter 19, verse 6. It's also clearly important because it provides the catalyst here for the multicultural audience. It gets people's attention and it gets people's attention cross-culturally in this case. Jewish people from all these different locations are part of a variety of cultures in a secondary way.

It also sets up Peter's message because it says, that when this sound was heard, people said, what does this mean? And Peter says, this is what Joel meant when he said, I'll pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Well, it relates to Acts theme in chapter one in verse eight.

You say, how is that? Peter interprets it in 2:17 and 2:18 is the spirit of prophecy about which Joel spoke. Acts chapter one in verse eight talks about the spirit empowering us for witness. How do these relate together? Remember what it says about witness in Acts chapter one in verse eight.

This is inspired speech inspired by the spirit. It's prophetic speech that fits 2:17 and 2:18, but it's also Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the utter most parts of the earth. It's cross-cultural speech.

What greater sign could God give his church that he was empowering them to cross all cultural barriers than to enable people on the day of Pentecost to begin

worshiping God in other people's languages? What greater way could he show them this is the purpose for which I am empowering you with the spirit of prophecy? Not so you can entertain yourselves, but I'm empowering you with the spirit of prophecy to send you to the ends of the earth. That's the purpose of the outpouring of the spirit. Now, if you look at the history of the past century or so of discussion about this, late 19th century radical evangelicals, were emphasizing holiness and missions and healing.

This was an interdenominational movement. A lot of it came from Methodism, but at this point, it was spread among Presbyterians. It was spread among many different churches.

Emphasis on holiness, missions, and healing. And many were seeking what they called baptism in the Holy Spirit. I didn't really go into that in Acts 1.4-5 what that means.

I don't know if I can deal with that briefly without going off into too many different things. Traditionally, Reformed churches have said that baptism in the Holy Spirit represents conversion. And that seems to be how it's used in 1 Corinthians 12.13, where one is baptized by the Spirit into Christ's body.

Traditionally, Wesleyan and holiness-oriented churches and Pentecostals have said it applies to something that happens after conversion. And they've pointed to people having experiences with the Spirit after conversion in the book of Acts. Remember that this goes back to what John the Baptist prophesied.

John the Baptist spoke of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire in both Matthew 3 and Luke 3. And in the context, you've got a contrast between that. Presumably, people are either going to be baptized in the Holy Spirit or they're going to be baptized in fire. I don't have time to go into all that.

But if you look at the context, the fire clearly is not baptism in holiness, although we all affirm the importance of holiness. But when it talks about being baptized in fire, just look at the context for yourself. When you have the opportunity, the context is talking about the fire of judgment.

In Matthew, actually, it's the verse right before and the verse right after both speak of judgment. Luke, it's a little bit more spread out, but it's still pretty clear there. The two verses talking about fire right around it are talking about judgment.

So, either you get the Holy Spirit or you get the fire. That might suggest it refers to conversion. At the same time, John the Baptist was also aware, like what the prophet Joel said, what Peter quotes here in Acts chapter 2, that when the Spirit's poured out, your sons and daughters will prophesy.

This was the Spirit who would empower God's people. So how do we put those things together? Well, Luke is going to emphasize one aspect of the Spirit's work. He's not denying the other aspects.

He's not denying conversion. He associates them actually in 2:38 and 2:39, I believe. But he's especially going to be talking about power for witness and this prophetic empowerment.

That's how Peter interprets it in this inaugural sermon in Acts. In Jesus' inaugural sermon in Luke's gospel, also has to do with empowerment for mission, although he takes a different text for that. So that's going to be Luke's emphasis, not to say he denies the other things, not to say he never talks about anything else.

People are filled with the Spirit in Acts 13 and they're filled with joy when they're filled with the Spirit. So, the Spirit can be associated with different things, but especially with empowerment for mission. Now that raised the question, does that always happen at conversion or can it sometimes happen after conversion? Well, theologically in principle, I believe it happens at conversion.

We receive access to the whole package of the Spirit's work. But in practice, well, in principle, according to Paul, we all became dead to sin at conversion. But in practice, some of us appropriate that more at different times.

I think when John the Baptist was talking about baptism in the Spirit, he's envisioning the whole sphere of the Spirit's work in the coming age. And different passages in the New Testament focus on different aspects of that. And you have different churches focusing on different aspects of that, focusing on different passages that focus on different aspects of that.

So, I don't see it as this church is right and that church is wrong. I see it as, well, we need the Spirit for conversion. We also need the Spirit for empowerment.

And I think all of us agree when we get past semantics because 1 Timothy clearly says we're not supposed to waste our time arguing about words. It may have some value in debating about words, but let's go for the heart of the matter. Virtually all of us agree that we receive the Spirit in some way at conversion and certainly access to the Spirit at conversion.

I think virtually all of us agree that subsequent conversion, we can have experiences with the Holy Spirit. In fact, in the book of Acts, we see people having multiple experiences with the Spirit. Peter is filled with the Spirit in Acts chapter two and verse four.

He's filled with the Spirit in Acts chapter four and verse eight. He's part of the group that's filled with the Spirit in Acts 4:31. Well, that's three times already. Paul in 9:17, filled with the Spirit.

In chapter 13, around verse nine, again, it says, Paul being filled with the Spirit speaks out. Maybe it's possible that instead of arguing about some of the details about this, all of us would do better to ask God more for the work of his Spirit in our lives. As we pointed out in Luke 11:13, he'll hear us if we cry out for the Spirit, if we recognize our thirst for God, if we recognize that we can't fulfill all this mission on our own, but the power of the Spirit is available to us.

Well, if we look at the history of the past century or so of discussion, late 19th-century radical evangelicals were emphasizing all these things. They were praying for the baptism in the Spirit. Whether you agree with their terminology or their nomenclature or not, don't worry about it.

They were praying for something good. They were praying for the outpouring of the Spirit. Many were also praying in that connection for what they called missionary tongues.

They said, look, we've got to evangelize the world. This is an impossible task. How can we do this? We need the power of the Spirit for this.

And why spend two years learning a language when God can give it to us miraculously? So, they were praying for missionary tongues. And some of the people who were praying for this became what we call the early Pentecostals. These were people who were seeking missionary tongues.

They were praying for the outpouring of the Spirit. They were praying for empowerment for mission by the Spirit. And they began praying in tongues and they were so excited.

They left for foreign countries and they tried out their missionary tongues. And in most cases, there were a few exceptions, in most cases, nobody understood what they were saying. And they were cruelly disappointed, especially since most of them had bought one-way tickets.

Well, the early Pentecostals kept tongues for prayer as in 1 Corinthians 14, but most of them abandoned the missionary tongues idea. But I think that they had actually recognized something genuine about the connection in Acts at the beginning. Luke emphasizes the power of the Spirit to speak for God across cultural barriers.

Therefore, tongues was not an arbitrary sign. What greater sign could God give than to enable his servants to worship God in other people's languages? So, Pentecostals

and others sometimes debate, well, are tongues evidence of this empowerment? And classical Pentecostals say yes, and most other people say no. But if we get past the question of whether they are evidence of this empowerment for every individual, many of us would say no.

Acts chapter eight, the tongues aren't mentioned, and so on, but that's debated either way. But it's all right. Whatever view you hold on that, whether we say it evidences it for every individual, and since I just told you that it's not for every individual, I don't think it entails it for every individual.

Let me just also, since I'm already in hot water, say for the other side, I do pray in tongues myself. And now going back to the other side, for those of you who are against that, don't think badly of me, because I didn't do it on purpose. It just happened to me two days after my conversion.

I hadn't heard of it. It just started in my life, and I've been doing it ever since. But I didn't know what it was when it first started.

God just did it for me. But my wife doesn't pray in tongues, for example. So, tongues is evidence of this empowerment.

I see it not as necessarily evidence of each individual who receives it, but as evidence of what the experience was about. Yes, it evidences the nature of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, that this is empowerment for cross-cultural ministry, and that God has empowered his church that all of us should be crossing cultural barriers. So what does that say about us, whether we pray in tongues or not, if we don't care about reaching other peoples if we can't be reconciled across ethnic or racial lines? Well, that's where Acts chapter 2 takes us next.

The peoples of Pentecost. Acts chapter 2 verses 5 to 13 speaks of diaspora Jews from every nation under heaven. It foreshadows the mission to the nations that was talked about in 1:8, just like the African court official in Acts 8, just like the mission that gets to Rome in Acts chapter 28.

And here, as elsewhere, we probably have another biblical illusion. There is a list of nations in Acts chapter 2 verses 9 through 11. Well, Jewish people who hear this, or people who knew the Bible who heard this, might think of the first list of nations, the list of nations in Genesis chapter 10.

And if you're really good with math, you know that the chapter that follows Genesis 10 immediately is Genesis 11, where God came down to scatter the languages. Well, here the spirit comes down and scatters the languages, but this time not to divide the peoples as at Babel, but this time the spirit comes down and scatters the languages to bring a new cross-cultural unity to the body of Christ. Now, going back

to what I was talking about earlier, about early Pentecostalism, it happened in the context of a lot of different revivals that were taking place.

The Welsh revival had a dramatic impact. Also, Pandita Ramabai's orphanage in India was a dramatic outpouring of the spirit. It was happening in different parts of the world independently at about the same time.

The Korean revival was shortly after this. So, God was doing different things among different groups of Christians at roughly the same time. There also had been a prayer in the Catholic church where they were praying that the next century would be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

So, we see it coming from a lot of different angles, but Azusa Street, the revival as it spread to Azusa Street, that's where the early Pentecostal revival really went international. People came from different nations and a lot of missionaries came there. In Los Angeles, there were a lot of different people groups.

The person who was heading it was William Seymour, who was an African-American who was born to parents who were born in slavery. Well, some of the people who were there said that the color line had been washed away by the blood. In the U.S., there was ethnic prejudice between whites and blacks.

Seymour had gotten this, his particular understanding about tongues and so on, he'd gotten it, especially from Charles Parham. Charles Parham was his white mentor, but Parham came from a different kind of church background than Seymour did. Seymour came from a background that was, they expressed their excitement to God in very loud ways.

Parham came from a different kind of church tradition where they were very quiet. When the Spirit came on you, you would be very quiet. And God can work both ways, right? But what happened was that Charles Parham came to the Azusa Street mission and he tried to take it over and Seymour wouldn't let him.

And Parham went out and complained about what was happening at Azusa Street. And one of the ways he complained about it, he said it was nothing but quote, a dark camp meeting. It was a very racist way of denouncing what was happening at Azusa Street.

And Seymour changed his emphasis. Seymour still believed in tongues as valuable. He still believed in a lot of the things he'd believed before, but now he added another emphasis that's really here in the Pentecost narrative, the Spirit and ethnic reconciliation.

Because he said, how can you really have the Spirit and not love your brother and sister across racial lines? When we really submit to the Spirit, the Spirit will take us beyond racial prejudice, beyond ethnic prejudice, beyond class prejudice, beyond caste prejudice. The Spirit will unite us so that we can speak for God and work for God together as partners in the mission to reach the world for Christ. We come then to the prophecy of Pentecost in chapter two, verses 17 through 21.

Well, Peter says what they spoke, what you've heard the disciples speaking in tongues, it fulfills Joel's prophecy about prophetic empowerment. He quotes from Joel, but he adapts the wording some, which was common in Jewish interpretation. You could adapt the wording to get across the point.

In Joel, it says afterward. It doesn't actually say in the last days, but Peter adapts the wording some because, in the context of Joel, you go on to Joel 3.1. It talks about when God restores the fortunes of his people Israel. So, it was in the context of the restoration of God's people.

So afterward meant in the last days. So, Peter says, in the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Well, that's what had just been happening.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy. It transcends gender barriers as well. God will empower both men and women to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

And then old men and young men, it transcends age barriers. They'll have dreams and visions. Well, who in the Old Testament had dreams and visions? Especially the prophets, not exclusively, but especially the prophets.

And then Peter adds in another line because it said, your sons and daughters will prophesy on male and female servants. I'll pour out my Spirit. And then he adds in the line, and they shall prophesy.

Well, Joel already mentioned prophecy, but Peter mentions it again. He wants to make sure you don't miss the point. This is the same spirit who empowered the prophets of old.

Now the same spirit is empowering us, God's people. And by the way, when he talks about male and female servants, the one other place that the word for female servant is used is for Mary in Luke chapter one, when the Spirit comes on her and she has the Spirit causing Jesus to be conceived inside of her. So, this is actually her second experience with the Spirit, but she is also called the handmaiden of the Lord.

So, she becomes in a sense, the model for the church on the day of Pentecost as God pours out his Spirit, submitting to God, willing to be used by God in whatever ways he wants to use us. And then he goes on to quote Joel speaking of signs in heaven

and on earth, but he adds in the word wonders. Well, why? Because he wants to emphasize the ones on earth.

Not everything has happened that Joel spoke of yet, but it is a time of fulfillment. That's why in verse 23, as soon as he's done quoting Joel, sorry, verse 22, as soon as he's done quoting Joel, he speaks of Jesus of Nazareth, a man appointed by God who performed miracles and wonders and signs among you. And of course, you had the signs of Jesus' death with the sun being turned to darkness and so on.

So, he goes on to quote what Joel says, whoever calls on the name of the Lord and in Joel, this is whoever calls in the name of Yahweh, whoever calls in the name of God will be saved. He breaks off the quote there, but he's not done thinking of Joel because later on in verse 39, he picks up again with part of where that sentence went on in Joel. Joel went on to say, to everyone that the Lord our God will call.

And Peter goes on at the end of his message to say, your sons and your daughters, all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call. So, he's still thinking of Joel. He's doing like a good Jewish interpreter with Midrash.

He's taking the last line he's quoted and he's going to explain it. What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord? Now is the era of salvation. Now is the era of the outpoured spirit.

Now is the era of prophetic empowerment. Well, therefore it's the era that whoever calls in the name of the Lord will be saved. This is the last days.

And of course, we know this is true for us today because if it was the last days then, it's not any earlier now. God didn't pour the spirit out then and poured the spirit back afterward. But what does it mean whoever calls in the name of the Lord will be saved? Well, we are empowered as end-time prophets for Christ.

You go through the book of Acts. It talks about the word of the Lord, which in the Old Testament could mean the Torah. It also could mean the prophetic message.

For us also in the book of Acts, as they're carrying forth the gospel and the power of the spirit, that is the word of the Lord. So, you do have people prophesying in the book of Acts. But even when we're sharing the gospel with people, and in fact, that's Luke's emphasis.

When we're sharing the gospel with people, we can trust that the spirit of God is speaking Christ to these people so that we can trust that if God touches their hearts, God touches their hearts through this gospel, God is using us in that way. And all believers can embrace that power and expect God to speak through us, to reach people with the good news of Christ. Well, in any case, in the speaks of all flesh,

probably that's the quote in Joel, but probably Peter doesn't even realize what implications that has because it takes him a while later to think about the Gentiles.

But the preaching of Pentecost, now he's going to go on to explain this passage. He breaks off Joel's quote from Joel 2.32, and then he picks up Joel's quote, the rest of 2.32 at the end of his sermon in verse 39. And between verses 21 and 39, he's explaining what he's just quoted in verse 21.

What is the Lord's name? What is Yahweh's name on which to call for salvation? Well, in good Jewish midrashic form, he links together some texts based on common key words. It's called Gezer HaShavah by later rabbis. He links together these texts based on common keywords.

He links together two texts from the Psalms. He says, okay, the Lord's at the Father's right hand. We're witnesses that Jesus is the risen one and he's been exalted.

Well, the risen one is at God's right hand, Psalm 16 says, and the one at God's right hand, Psalm 110 says, is the Lord. And so, therefore, what does it mean to call on the Lord's name? You can call on the name of the Lord who is at the right hand of the Lord. And the name of that one who's risen and exalted is Jesus.

So, here's how you call on the divine Lord's name. He says it in Acts 2.38, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. So, this was the first Christian sermon that already acknowledged that Jesus is divine, that Jesus is Yahweh.

Now here, Peter brings it home and Peter has been asked in 2.37, what shall we do to be saved? Peter says, repent and be baptized. Now this was a radical thing for Jewish people to be baptized. And they had their regular ceremonial illustrations, but it was quite a different thing when it was a once-for-all kind of turning.

Repent evokes the language of the Old Testament prophets. Sometimes people have said, well, it's just a change of mind, a change of the way you think about this. But it was really more than that.

You can't take a word and just split it into component parts and say, that's what it means. The word means the way it's used. And this word actually evokes the way it's used in the New Testament, especially evokes the language of the Old Testament prophets when they're talking about Israel, turning back to God.

So, he's calling them to turn. And when he's calling them to be baptized, when Gentiles were converting to Judaism, they would be immersed in water. Now that's not just reported in Jewish literature.

It's also reported by some Gentiles who knew about this from this period, that Jewish people expected Gentiles to be baptized in water. So, this isn't going to be too hard. They had immersion pools all over the temple because people regularly did ceremonial illustrations.

In fact, they normally did them in the nude. So, you'd have men going to one place and women going to another place and people would just dunk themselves in the water and then step out. But there was plenty of water in the temple mount.

No problem there. But when he calls them to be baptized, this isn't just a regular ceremonial cleansing before you go into the temple. This is conjoined with the kind of repentance, a turning to God.

This is a special kind of turning where you are going to turn your whole life over to God. He's treating them as he's inviting them to come to God. He's summoning them to come to God on the same terms as Gentiles, which is to say that none of us can simply depend on our ancestry.

I was not raised in a Christian home, but for people who were raised in Christian homes, we can't just depend on our parents' faith. We can't just depend on our grandparents' faith. It's good that they have that faith.

But the same way that on the day of Pentecost, they couldn't depend. We belong to the chosen people. All of us have to come to God with faith in Christ.

All of us have to trust in Christ. Now, when Peter says repent and be baptized, the way this repentance is expressed is very interesting because the question that they ask is, what shall we do to be saved? That's a question that gets asked elsewhere in Luke X. Remember the rich ruler in Luke chapter 18. He says, what must I do to have eternal life? Jesus says, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, which Jesus also said to his disciples in 12:33 and especially 14:33, talking about surrendering your resources for the good of the kingdom.

If you're really turning to God, then everything you have and everything you are, you'll want to use it for God's purposes. It doesn't mean everything everybody tells you is for God's purposes, but you want to devote your life to God's purposes. Here he says, repent and be baptized when they ask what they must do.

In Acts chapter 16, the Philippian jailer says, what must we do to be saved? Paul says, believe in the Lord Jesus and you'll be saved, you and your household. Now, in each case, the answer is somewhat different, but they're all linked together. Because if we really believe in Jesus, we really stake everything we are and have on Jesus.

Why would we want to keep anything for ourselves? Jesus saves our life. He doesn't just save us from the penalty for sin. He saves us from sin.

He saves us from our rebellion. He brings us into a relationship with himself. We go from being enemies to God, to being on God's side, to serving God.

We really want to serve him. We really want to please him. Now, again, even though in principle, we're dead to sin at conversion, not everybody experiences all that at once.

Sometimes it takes some time to grow in relation to the Holy Spirit, but ultimately that's what we want. And that's what the community was experiencing here. And it's expressed very clearly.

You have effective evangelism in 2:41. You have effective evangelism through the way the community lives in 2:47, as I mentioned earlier. And we see the transformation in the community by how they treat one another. They worship together.

They have meals together. They eat together from house to house. It's fellowship.

That was a way of expressing a covenant relationship. So, for example, in one Greek story, it talks about how two warriors from opposite sides were getting ready to make war with each other. They're getting ready to fight each other.

And then they discovered this one's father had hosted this one's father at a banquet years ago. Well, that meant that there was a covenant relationship between their fathers and therefore between them. Eating together meant sharing covenant.

That's why the Pharisees were so upset when Jesus was eating with sinners to bring them into the fold. But here the believers are eating together. It's a sign of covenant fellowship, maybe expressed sometimes in some different ways in different cultures, but unity together.

And praying together. They continue together in prayer together. And in the heart of this in verses 44 and 45, and we know this is important also because, at the next outpouring of the spirit in chapter four, this happens again.

But one of the results of the outpouring of the spirit was shared possessions, 244 and 45. They were willing to sacrifice for one another. And it doesn't mean that they immediately sold all their goods and moved on to the street.

But it means, as is clarified in chapter four, that whenever anybody was in need, people sold what they had to meet their needs. Not that possessions were bad, but

they valued people more than possessions. And if we have resources, instead of acquiring things that may lose their value over time, why not do as Jesus our Lord said and lay up our treasure in heaven, which means investing in people, investing in the things that matter to God, using our resources for the kingdom.

That's what the early church did. Sometimes we want to talk about the outpouring of the spirit in ways that are more self-centered, but the outpouring of the spirit in the book of Acts, especially when the spirit was poured out in the community, poured out on believers as a group, it meant that they reached out with the good news to others. And it also meant that they expressed this in love for one another.

There were a number of different ways the outpouring of the spirit was expressed. Sometimes one church will emphasize one, some one church will emphasize another. Let's go for all of what the Bible says about the outpouring of the spirit.

And so, we come to the purpose of Pentecost. We see conversions that are followed by discipleship. People participated in prayer and what we might call Bible study.

In the text, it's the teaching of the apostles, but we have that most available to us in Bible study. When we talk about what God has spoken, we're not saying that this is all that God has ever spoken. I mean, in 1 Kings chapter 18, Obadiah says he hid a hundred prophets in a cave.

We don't have their prophecies recorded. All these prophecies in the New Testament house churches, we don't have those prophecies recorded for us in the Bible. The Bible isn't all that God ever said to anybody.

God's spirit witnesses together with our spirit that we're children of God. We don't have every person whose name is in the Book of Life written by name individually in the Bible. It's not everything that God ever has spoken, but it's the canon.

It's the measuring stick by which we judge everything else. The message that God gave us has been tested through time, the message of prophets, many prophets in Jeremiah's day, but most of them proved to be false. Jeremiah's prophecy was tested by time.

His prophecy came true. So, we have the message of these holy apostles and prophets that's been given to us in the scriptures. And so, we can study that and that'll keep us on track in our own relationship with God.

So just as they did prayer and Bible study or prayer and apostolic teaching, we can get a lot of that apostolic teaching from studying the Bible. Also, you had the continuing witness with signs that are mentioned in Acts chapter two. And you get an example of that in Acts chapter three.

They're on the way to prayer and God does a sign. But it's not just the dramatic signs that we often think of. I mean, you do have these things.

We've been talking about them on the day of Pentecost, but you also have not just the Spirit's gifts, but you have the Spirit's fruit. People parted with their possessions because they valued one another more than they valued their property and the church kept growing. So, the fruit of the Spirit, our lives are transformed by the Spirit.

God empowers us with the Spirit to cross cultural barriers, to worship him, to form one new multicultural community of worshipers committed to Christ and to one another.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 7, Acts chapters one and two.