

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 7

Acts 1-2

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Acts, Session 7, Acts 1-2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Acts 1-2 focuses on the **power of the Holy Spirit** in empowering the early church for **cross-cultural witness**. He examines the **promise of Pentecost**, emphasizing the importance of **prayer and dependence on God's power**, and traces the **spread of the Gospel**, from Jerusalem to Rome, as a fulfillment of prophecy. Keener connects the events of Pentecost to **Old Testament prophecies**, highlighting the themes of **prophetic empowerment, ethnic reconciliation, and the transformative power of the Spirit** in establishing the early Christian community. He also addresses differing interpretations of "baptism in the Holy Spirit," advocating for a holistic understanding encompassing both conversion and ongoing empowerment for mission.

2. 25 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Acts, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Acts).



Keener_Acts_Session
n07.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Acts 1-2:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Acts 1-2

Overall Theme: The lecture focuses on the theme of power for witness, particularly the empowerment by the Holy Spirit for cross-cultural mission, as introduced in Acts 1:8. These chapters set the stage for the rest of the book, highlighting the Spirit's role in continuing Jesus' ministry.

Key Points and Themes:

1. Acts 1:8 as a Thesis Statement:

- Keener identifies Acts 1:8 ("you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth") as a key thesis statement for the book. This verse outlines the geographical progression of the gospel and emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for witness.
- Quote: "In Acts chapter one and verse eight, you will be witnesses to the ends of the earth once the spirit comes on you."

1. The Importance of the Spirit for Mission:

- The lecture emphasizes that Jesus' mission of spreading the good news is carried out through the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples need to wait for the Spirit's empowerment, as their own efforts are insufficient for this task.
- Quote: "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."
- This is a theme that runs throughout Luke-Acts.

1. The "Already, Not Yet" Tension:

- The outpouring of the Spirit is a foretaste of the future kingdom, and the church is meant to display the life of the future age.
- Quote: "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."

- This points to the tension between the present reality and the future hope, characteristic of New Testament theology. The Holy Spirit is the first payment, or down payment (ahrebon), of this future inheritance.

1. **Power Evangelism:**

- The power associated with the Spirit is often linked to healing, driving out demons, and prophetic speech, echoing the role of the Spirit in the Old Testament with the prophets. The spirit empowers believers to be like the Old Testament prophets.
- Quote: "Jesus said you'll receive power when the spirit comes on you...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...God backs up his word with power."

1. **Witness to the Ends of the Earth:**

- The mission is not just for the original twelve disciples but for all believers, as evidenced in Acts 2:38-39. This mission will spread geographically from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, to "the ends of the earth." The mission reflects Isaiah 49.6, "the light to the ends of the earth."
- Quote: "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."
- Geographically, Luke-Acts moves from the temple in Jerusalem to Rome, the heart of the empire. This is a shift from heritage to mission. While Rome is the end of the narrative, it serves as a foreshadowing of the mission to the rest of the world, a proleptic vision.

1. **Preparation for Pentecost:**

- The disciples prepare for Pentecost through prayer, restoring leadership and building faith (symbolized by the election of Mathias to fill the void left by Judas.)
- Prayer is key before the coming of the Spirit, and this is a recurring theme in Luke-Acts.
- Quote: "The chief prerequisite, maybe not prerequisite, but the chief preparation we can give before the outpouring of the spirit is prayer."

1. **The Proofs of Pentecost (Acts 2):**

- The outpouring of the Spirit is evidenced by three key signs: the sound of a mighty rushing wind (theophany & resurrection life), fire (theophany & eschatological judgment), and speaking in tongues (cross-cultural witness). Tongues is most significant because it is repeated in later outpourings in Acts.
- Quote: "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."
- Tongues are a catalyst, attracting a crowd and showcasing the cross-cultural nature of the Gospel.

1. **The Prophecy of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21):**

- Peter's interpretation of Joel's prophecy underscores the prophetic empowerment of the Spirit. The Spirit transcends age and gender, empowering men and women, young and old to prophesy, have dreams, and visions.
- Quote: "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."

1. **Relevance to the Church:**

- Keener emphasizes that, like in the book of Acts, the church today needs the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill its mission. The church needs the Spirit, not human effort, to see fruit.
- He notes that early Pentecostals were correct in their emphasis on the necessity of the Spirit for mission, even if their understanding of missionary tongues was flawed. The emphasis was on empowerment for mission.

1. **The Peoples of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-13):**

- The gathering of diaspora Jews from every nation under heaven foreshadows the mission to all nations. The diversity of the crowd is a microcosm of the world. It is also a biblical illusion, contrasting the dividing of peoples at Babel with the unifying force of the Holy Spirit.
- Quote: "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."

- The historical context of early Pentecostalism and the Azusa Street revival highlights the importance of ethnic reconciliation, a theme in Acts 2.

1. The Preaching of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-40):

- Peter's sermon explains Joel's prophecy and connects it to Jesus, the risen Lord.
- Salvation is attained through repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus, which is a radical concept for Jewish people.
- Quote: "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."
- Repentance is not just a change of mind, but a turning to God with the desire to use everything for God's purposes.

1. The Purpose of Pentecost (Acts 2:41-47):

- The result of Pentecost is a transformed community marked by discipleship, shared possessions, fellowship, and prayer.
- The community valued people over possessions and used their resources for the kingdom.
- Quote: "They were willing to sacrifice for one another."
- The church grows as the fruit of both dramatic signs and the transformed lives of the believers.

Implications for Today:

- The church needs the power of the Spirit to fulfill the mission it has been given.
- Prayer is a vital preparation for the outpouring of the Spirit.
- The mission is to the ends of the earth, crossing cultural barriers.
- The Spirit empowers people for cross-cultural ministry, reflecting the nature of Pentecost.
- The outpouring of the Spirit results in both dramatic signs and a transformed community marked by love, unity, and generosity.
- There are many different expressions of the Spirit's work; we need all of them.
- The Bible is the measuring stick by which we measure our experience and faith.
- God is not finished speaking.

Conclusion:

Dr. Keener's lecture on Acts 1-2 provides a comprehensive overview of the foundation for the mission of the early church. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the empowering agent for cross-cultural witness is crucial for understanding the rest of the book of Acts and the continuing mission of the church today. He highlights the significance of Pentecost as a paradigm for the church and as an example of God's intention to unify the nations.

4. Acts Study Guide: Session 7, Acts 1-2 Acts 1-2 Study Guide

Quiz

1. What is the significance of Acts 1:8 in the book of Acts? Acts 1:8 serves as a thesis statement, outlining that the disciples will be witnesses to the ends of the earth, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This verse emphasizes the cross-cultural mission that drives the narrative of Acts, showing how the Gospel will spread geographically.
2. How does the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost relate to Old Testament prophecy? The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost fulfills the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32) about God pouring out his Spirit on all people, resulting in prophetic empowerment. Peter connects this to the idea that in the last days, God's people will receive the spirit and prophesy.
3. What are the three primary signs of the Spirit's outpouring in Acts 2? The three primary signs are the sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the ability to speak in other languages (tongues). These signs indicate God's presence, a foretaste of the end times, and the empowerment for cross-cultural mission.
4. How did the early church's practice of shared possessions demonstrate their faith and the impact of the Spirit? The early church's shared possessions showed their commitment to valuing people over material goods, demonstrating the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. Their willingness to sacrifice for one another reflected their covenant relationship and dedication to the Kingdom of God.
5. How does the narrative in Acts 1:9-11, Jesus' ascension, connect to the story of Elijah in the Old Testament? Like Elijah's ascension, Jesus' ascension leads to a transference of power (the Holy Spirit), to those who follow him. Just as Elisha was empowered to continue Elijah's mission, so too are the disciples empowered to continue Jesus' mission.
6. How does the concept of "already, not yet" relate to the work of the Spirit in Acts? The "already, not yet" concept highlights the tension between the present experience of the Spirit and the future consummation of the kingdom. The Spirit provides a foretaste of the future age, and while the Kingdom of God is coming, believers have already received the down payment.

7. How does the prayer of the disciples in Acts 1 before Pentecost exemplify the theme of prayer throughout Luke-Acts? The disciples' prayer in Acts 1 before the coming of the Spirit follows the theme of prayer being essential before the outpouring of the Spirit as found in Luke's gospel. This emphasis highlights the importance of seeking God's power to fulfill His mission.
8. What significant shift does Luke-Acts represent theologically, and how does Jerusalem and Rome represent this? Luke-Acts moves theologically from heritage to mission, transitioning from being rooted in the history of Israel to expanding the Gospel. Jerusalem represents the Jewish roots of Christianity, while Rome represents the mission to the ends of the earth.
9. How did early Pentecostals understand the concept of missionary tongues, and how did that concept evolve? Early Pentecostals believed missionary tongues were a gift that allowed them to speak other languages to spread the Gospel. However, they were disappointed when this didn't happen. This concept evolved into using tongues primarily for prayer, while still seeing tongues as evidence of empowerment for cross-cultural mission.
10. Why is the theme of cross-cultural ministry central to Luke's account of Pentecost? The gift of tongues enables believers to worship God in other people's languages, symbolizing the church's mission to cross cultural barriers. This ability highlights God's intention to bring about cross-cultural unity and witness.

Answer Key

1. Acts 1:8 serves as a thesis statement, outlining that the disciples will be witnesses to the ends of the earth, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This verse emphasizes the cross-cultural mission that drives the narrative of Acts, showing how the Gospel will spread geographically.
2. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost fulfills the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32) about God pouring out his Spirit on all people, resulting in prophetic empowerment. Peter connects this to the idea that in the last days, God's people will receive the spirit and prophesy.
3. The three primary signs are the sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the ability to speak in other languages (tongues). These signs indicate God's presence, a foretaste of the end times, and the empowerment for cross-cultural mission.

4. The early church's shared possessions showed their commitment to valuing people over material goods, demonstrating the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. Their willingness to sacrifice for one another reflected their covenant relationship and dedication to the Kingdom of God.
5. Like Elijah's ascension, Jesus' ascension leads to a transference of power (the Holy Spirit), to those who follow him. Just as Elisha was empowered to continue Elijah's mission, so too are the disciples empowered to continue Jesus' mission.
6. The "already, not yet" concept highlights the tension between the present experience of the Spirit and the future consummation of the kingdom. The Spirit provides a foretaste of the future age, and while the Kingdom of God is coming, believers have already received the down payment.
7. The disciples' prayer in Acts 1 before the coming of the Spirit follows the theme of prayer being essential before the outpouring of the Spirit as found in Luke's gospel. This emphasis highlights the importance of seeking God's power to fulfill His mission.
8. Luke-Acts moves theologically from heritage to mission, transitioning from being rooted in the history of Israel to expanding the Gospel. Jerusalem represents the Jewish roots of Christianity, while Rome represents the mission to the ends of the earth.
9. Early Pentecostals believed missionary tongues were a gift that allowed them to speak other languages to spread the Gospel. However, they were disappointed when this didn't happen. This concept evolved into using tongues primarily for prayer, while still seeing tongues as evidence of empowerment for cross-cultural mission.
10. The gift of tongues enables believers to worship God in other people's languages, symbolizing the church's mission to cross cultural barriers. This ability highlights God's intention to bring about cross-cultural unity and witness.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1-2, focusing on the themes of empowerment, prophecy, and the mission of the church. How does the Spirit's work in these chapters establish a pattern for the rest of the book?
2. Analyze the connection between Old Testament prophecy and the events of Pentecost in Acts 2. How does Peter use the prophecy of Joel to interpret and explain the outpouring of the Spirit, and what does this reveal about the continuity between the Old and New Testaments?
3. Compare and contrast the role of prayer and preparation in Acts 1 with the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2. How do these chapters highlight the importance of both human effort and divine action in the expansion of the Gospel, and what practical lessons can be drawn for today's church?
4. Explore the concept of "witness" in Acts 1-2. How does the text define what it means to be a witness, and how does the community described at the end of chapter 2 embody that witness? What are the implications of this for the mission of believers?
5. Discuss the implications of the cross-cultural nature of Pentecost as presented in Acts 2. How does this event foreshadow the global mission of the church, and what challenges does the narrative present to modern churches today in regard to ethnic reconciliation?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Christological:** Relating to the study of Jesus Christ, including his divinity and nature.
- **Diaspora:** The dispersion of Jews beyond Israel, especially as a result of the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BC.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the end times, including the last things and the final destiny of humanity.
- **Gezerah Shavah:** A Jewish method of biblical interpretation that links two texts together based on common key words.
- **Midrash:** A Jewish interpretive method that seeks to understand and explain the meaning of biblical texts.
- **Pentecost:** A Jewish festival celebrated 50 days after Passover. In Acts, it is when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the early church.
- **Proleptic:** Relating to something that happens before its proper time, as a foreshadowing.
- **Ruach:** The Hebrew word for "spirit," which can also mean "wind" or "breath."
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God's presence.
- **Witness:** One who has seen something, in the case of Acts, someone who proclaims the good news of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit.

5. FAQs on Keener, Acts, Session 7, Acts 1-2, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Acts 1-2

1. **What is the main focus of Acts 1-2 according to Dr. Keener?**
2. Acts chapters 1 and 2 emphasize the power for witness, specifically focusing on the empowerment for cross-cultural witness. This section highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling Jesus' followers to continue his mission of ministering grace and spreading the good news. Acts 1:8 serves as a central thesis statement, declaring that believers will be witnesses to the ends of the earth through the power of the Spirit.
3. **What is the significance of waiting for the Holy Spirit before beginning ministry, as highlighted in Acts 1?**
4. Jesus instructs the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, before embarking on their mission. This emphasizes that relying on the Spirit's power is crucial for success in carrying out Christ's mission. Trying to accomplish God's will in one's own strength is insufficient and ineffective. The power of the Spirit is necessary to do what God calls one to do.
5. **How is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit connected to the end-time restoration of Israel and the future age?**
6. The outpouring of the Spirit is associated with the end-time restoration of Israel as prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus' followers are meant to display a foretaste of the world to come, demonstrating what heaven will be like through their lives. This reflects the "already, not yet" reality of the kingdom, where the King has already come, but believers await His second coming and the full realization of the resurrection. The Spirit serves as a down payment, the beginning of the future inheritance.

7. What does Dr. Keener mean by “power evangelism” in the context of Acts 1-2?

“Power evangelism” refers to the idea that God supports His word with supernatural power, such as healings and the driving out of demons. This isn’t to say that this occurs all the time, everywhere, but that these signs and wonders draw people's attention to the message of the Gospel and the power of the Spirit. The Old Testament often associated the spirit with prophetic speech and prophetic actions. Thus, receiving the Spirit is like becoming prophets to the world, empowered like the prophets of the Old Testament.

1. How does the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1 relate to the work of the Spirit?

The ascension of Jesus mirrors Elijah's ascension, where Elijah left behind a double portion of his spirit for Elisha. Similarly, Jesus ascends to heaven and promises the Holy Spirit to his disciples. The Spirit who empowered Jesus is now given to empower the church to carry out His mission. Just as Elisha carried on Elijah's work, the church is meant to carry on Jesus’ mission.

1. What are the key events that signify the arrival of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, and what is their significance?

The key events include the sound of a mighty rushing wind, which evokes a theophany (God’s presence); the appearance of fire, associated with God's glory and eschatological judgment; and the disciples speaking in other languages (tongues). While wind and fire are not repeated in later outpourings of the Spirit, tongues are, and is a catalyst for the multicultural audience that gathers and hears the message, highlighting the Spirit's role in enabling cross-cultural communication and worship.

1. How does the experience of speaking in tongues relate to the purpose of Pentecost and the mission of the church?

Speaking in tongues is a visible sign of the Spirit's power to enable cross-cultural communication and is directly tied to the church's mission to reach "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It demonstrates that God is empowering his servants to worship Him in all languages. While some early Pentecostals sought missionary tongues for speaking to different cultures, their experiences did not always match their expectations, but the value of the gift remains that it highlights the cross cultural nature of the mission. The experience isn’t meant for personal entertainment, but to equip believers for missions and prophetic speech.

1. **What are the practical implications of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 for the church today?**
2. The outpouring of the Spirit is followed by conversions, discipleship, and a transformed community marked by shared possessions, fellowship, prayer, and continuing witness. This transformed community reflects a covenant relationship with God, where believers are called to value people more than possessions and devote their lives and resources to God's purposes. The gifts of the spirit are given in conjunction with the fruit of the spirit, and the spirit empowers not just for dramatic signs and wonders, but also to live a transformed life, to love one another, and to take the Gospel to all peoples across cultural divides. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is essential for completing the mission of the church.