VCBC SLG 2022 Fall Term
The Book of Acts
Session #3: The Kerygma—Chapters 2-6

I. Introduction

(1) The continuation of the Gospel of Luke

Last Sunday, Pastor Brian was kind enough to substitute for me as I had to preach at the 33rd Anniversary Sunday Service at Richmond Chinese Baptist Church. He has covered the very introductory Prologue to the entire Book of Acts which really picks up from the end of the Gospel of Luke and expands on His last words in the Gospel.

Luke 24	Acts 1
Jesus taught disciples before ascension 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."	In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven…He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God…He gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised,… 8 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' Ascension 50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God	9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight…suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

(2) The Legitimacy of the Christian Faith

Apart from the various, important purposes that has been served by the Book of Acts, I wish to add one more observation in this respect, and that is the "Legitimacy of the Christian Faith."

As you know, in the book of Acts, Luke did not address Theophilus as "the most excellent Theophilus", a title accorded Governor Felix and his successor Festus (Acts 23:26; 26:25) which appears to show that Theophilus was not more a seeker, but a believer by then. Why Luke would care to write to him, again to detail the development of the 1st Christian Church, unless Theophilus did retain a rather important influential—political influence in particular, at the time of the writing when persecution of Christians appeared to increase beyond that inflicted by the Jews.

(a) The Last Word: Many see the "Last Word" in the Book of Acts as significant in this respect in that Luke says, "For two whole years, Paul stayed there (in Rome) in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. *Boldly and without hindrance* he preached the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 28:30-31)

In the original Greek, the italics (mine) are in fact the last words in the sentence that end that entire Book of Acts. Theophilus and for that matter, any rulers who had turned to Christ, could use this historical document to show that even the government of Rome permitted the preaching and teaching of the Christian Gospel and Christians are not troublemakers as some made them out to be.

(b) This is further reinforced by the words of the Proconsul of Achaia, Gallio in Acts 18:15 when the people of Corinth dragged Paul to court, accusing him of breaking the law: "But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law (not Roman law)—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things."

(c) The same opinion was expressed by Fetus when he told King Agrippa in Acts 25:18-19: "When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion…"

(d) In fact, King Agrippa concluded that, "This man could have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar." (Acts 26:32)

Indeed, Theophilus could use these precedents to convince other rulers at the time that Christians were law-abiding citizens who would do no harm to the government. This, in fact, serves as the model for churches down the centuries in that as Christian continue to suffer for their faith, they remain model citizens to the cities and nations where they reside. Although, it would take several centuries since the Book of Acts to see persecution cease in the Roman Empire upon the conversion of Constantine, this Book of Acts has served as a positive introduction to the followers of Jesus refuting the false charges laid against them whether by the Jews or anyone who sought to discredit their testimonies.

II. The Kerygma

Today, we come to one of the most pivotal chapters in the entire Bible, which signifies the coming of the Promised Holy Spirit and the birth of Church of Jesus Christ, it has also a historical significance as the birth of the Kerygma (model of gospel proclamation) for the 1st centuries of Christianity. Let's go through 1st first part (from vv. 1-41) and see and feel the excitement of this pivotal event prophesied long ago by the prophets.

2: 1-4 The Coming of the Promised Holy Spirit

"**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest**

on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

The Timing:
This event happened on the Day of Pentecost which is the festival that celebrated on the 50th (the Hebrew meaning of the word, Pentecost) Day after the offering of Frist Fruits of the year which includes

- An offering of new grain and drink as an aroma pleasing to the Lord,
- A wave-offering of two loaves of bread baked with (yeast) plus
- A burnt-offering of seven one-year old lambs, one young bull and two rams and
- The observance of a sacred assembly and the abstinence from regular work.

The timing of the event may not directly have anything to do with the festival of Pentecost, except perhaps the spiritual fulfillment of the First Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

[For those who are interested in chronology, this Jewish festival is celebrated on the 50th day after Passover and thus would be roughly 10 days after Jesus' Ascension to heaven].

Those filled with the Holy Spirit:
As this event followed the prayer at the Upper Room where about 120 believers gathered together). Now that the Holy Spirit filled the whole house where they were sitting…All of them were filled with Holy Spirit", it is safe to assume that all 120 believers were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Promised Holy Spirit (I)
Before His death, the Lord has already promised to gift of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16ff:
"**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you**."

This promise has first been fulfilled after Jesus' resurrection and before His Ascension in John 20: 22
"**And with that He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit."**

This gift of the Holy Spirit ushers each believer unto salvation. Ephesians 1:13 is among the many passages that speaks to this truth:
"**And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."**

And so affirmed by the words of Peter in his first public proclamation of the gospel:
"**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**." (Acts 2:23)

The Promised Holy Spirit (II)

However, after the Apostles received the Holy Spirit in John 20 (after His resurrection), He made another promise shortly before His Ascension in Luke:
"**49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high**."

This is being reiterated in Acts 1
"**Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit…8 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 2nd promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is now fulfilled at Pentecost, and the terms being used for such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit include:

- The "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 1
- The being "filled with the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2

We shall talk about a bit more about the Holy Spirit" in a coming session, for now let's distinguish the gift of the Holy Spirit at the time of one's repentance, and the gift of the Holy Spirit as a manifestation of the power of God.

2: 5-13 Speaking in Tongues

"5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"
13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

However, a word about the words used for "tongue" within the context of this incident at Pentecost. If you read some commentaries, they like to highlight the difference between the two Greek words for "tongue": one is *dielekto* (S1258) and one is *glossa* (S1100). Right away, you will associate the former with dialect and the latter with glossary in English, and you are correct. However, within the event describe by Luke at Pentecost, the two words are both used and appear to be interchangeable.

What we can be sure is that the "*glossa*" (vv. 4, 11) these people heard the Apostles spoke was their own "*dielekto"* (vv.6, 8) which required no interpretation.

The Manifestation of the Power of the Holy Spirit:

- The sound like a violent wind from heaven

- "It: filled the house: likely not just a sound, but like a wind as well
- The appearance is like "tongues of fire" (being "distributed")
- "It" rested (or sat) on each one of them
- They spoke in "other tongues"
    - Dialects that included Parthians (Northeastern Iran), Medes (Northern Iran), Elamites (West, Southwestern Iran), Mesopotamia (Northwestern Iran) Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus (Northern Turkey), Asia (Asia Minor), Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and Lybia (in Cyrene), Arabs etc.
    - Important to note that, like the Elamite dialect, while the people were located in modern-day Iran, their language is "as distant from Akkadian as Chinese is from English"—meaning, there is absolutely no way that these Galileans (or even the most learned of the time) could speak these languages—it must be very stunning!
    - They spoke "the wonderful works of God" (v.11)—likely referring the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection.

The only way that some would make fun of them is because they were the local Jews not the visitors who flooded the city during important festivals. Since they could not understand a word being spoken, they found it only funny!

2: 14-41 Peter's 1st Public Proclamation of the Gospel (the Kerygma)

(1) The Prophesied Last Days have arrived or been inaugurated:

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 *No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Since we are all so familiar with the contents of the Gospel, we need hear Peter's message with fresh ears, i.e. as if we were these visiting Jews who were born and raised in a different culture and language, but sought to maintain our Jewish root by taking a long journey back to Jerusalem, and Peter, likely spoke not in Aramaic, but Greek that all of them would understand—kind of like me teaching and preaching in English among you, as English would be understood by all of you, though you are mostly, if not all, Chinese.

They would have heard of the ministry and claim of Jesus. They would also know that the religious leaders, through the hands of the Romans, have killed Jesus, but somehow, the body is missing, and they heard "rumors" that Jesus had risen just as He claimed He would be. But most, if not all

of them were skeptical and likely thought this would be the end of just another self-proclaimed Messiah!

Now, they saw and experienced first-hand a group of perhaps, 120 people (not just the Apostles) all spoke in their own dialect (likely fluently) about this Jesus. Frankly, they were not prepared mentally to digest if it were true, nor to face the fact that they did live to see this long-awaited "restoration" of the nation of Israel!

So, Peter using what they now witnessed, the miraculous speaking on their own dialects of the disciples, to prove to them that, indeed, the "Last Days of the Lord" have indeed arrived or inaugurated, quoting from Joel 2: 28-32 (from the Septuagint, which is quite in line with the Hebraic text).

Note: Peter did not say that what they saw was a complete fulfillment of Joel's passage, but he was using thee prophesying of the 120 to prove that the Day of the Lord has indeed been inaugurated with is the result of God's promise that "**I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.**" (v.18).

It is not necessary to tie the darkening of the sun to the moment of Jesus' death, as many of these signs foretold even by Jesus Himself will come to pass at the time before His Second Coming as detailed in Revelation (at the opening of the 5th seal and the sounding of the 4th trumpet—see Rev. 6:12, 8:12)

(2) Death of Jesus—part of God's Plan of Salvation

"**22 Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross**."

It is important to understand that to the Jews, the death of Jesus on the cross was a clear sign that he was accursed by God (Deut. 21:23) and that proved that Jesus was a phony, beyond a doubt.

But Peter reminded them of the undisputed facts that Jesus did perform many miracles (even Josephus acknowledged this in his *Antiquities*.) Many who had been healed still lived in the land (therefore, "**as yourselves know**").

So, the death of Jesus, was indeed, by "**God's deliberate plan and knowledge**".

(3) Resurrection of Jesus was clearly prophesied by David (in Ps. 16: 8-11)

"24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. 25 David said about him:
'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope,

27 *because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay.*28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'"

Again, Peter was quoting from the Septuagint, and the key verse is: "***because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay".***

But wasn't David talking about himself "**you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead** (or grave)", although David switched to talk about your Holy One, and not to see decay certainly refers to the physical body!

(4) Proof that David was talking about Christ

"**29 "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,**
"'The Lord said to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand
35 until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet."

- David was not talking about himself, because he died, and his body saw decay—his tomb was not empty!
- David understood (as the Jews did too), God would place one of David's descendants on his throne—and this one is the resurrect Messiah that God has raise to life, even Jesus!
- Now Jesus being raised by God and exalted to His right hand
    - Proof?
    - The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us is proof!
    - **We are 1st-hand eyewitnesses** of His death and resurrection!

(5) Confronting them with their sin

"**36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah (Christ)."**

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise

is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

- Peter ended his gospel message clearly pointing out their sin—as much as most of them were overseas Jews who came to Jerusalem as pilgrims, their religious leaders were only their representatives—they all were guilty of crucifying Jesus.
- Although Luke did not say they were convicted by the Holy Spirit, but we know that anytime people are convicted "**of guilt in regard to sin, and righteousness and judgment in regard to sin…**" it is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16: 8)
- Peter's reply is a vey important one that forms the basis of true repentance down the centuries: "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**."
- Peter's call is followed by an implied invitation for them to carry the gospel back to their own adopted home-country: **"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."**

As the gospel began to spread beyond Jerusalem and into the other parts of the Roman Empire, many false gospel writings and documents surfaced in the next several centuries, and some even purported to be written by Peter, and yet they, in essence, were precaching another Gospel. Writings purported to be in the name of Peter included: "*The Preaching or Doctrine of Peter*", "*the Preaching of Paul or of Paul and Peter*", "*Judicum Petri*", "*Revelation of Peter*" etc. with the latter said to be read by some churches in Palestine once a year. They were mainly circulated in the first two centuries (source: *Theological Encyclopedia*).

With the growing prevalent circulation of these and other spurious writings, the early church saw the need to settle once-and-for-all what the central message of the Gospel is, and had gradually developed with is known as the "Kerygma" based mainly on the messages preached by Peter in his first public proclamation of the Gospel in Acts 2 which "is the model upon which the apologetic discourses of the primitive Christians were generally constructed." (Theological Encyclopedia, **Pete**r, p. 7). In the 4th century, the kerygma was formally incorporated into the Nicene Creed.

Based on Peter's speeches in Acts, Dodd summarizes the ancient Kerygma as follows:

- The Age of Fulfillment has dawned, the "latter days" foretold by the prophets.
- This has taken place through the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God as Messianic head of the new Israel.
- The Holy Spirit in the church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory.
- The Messianic Age will reach its consummation in the return of Christ.
- An appeal is made for repentance with the offer of forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and salvation.