

Acts of the Apostles – Acts of the Holy Spirit

New Testament Survey – Lesson 14 (Part 4) Supplement

NOTE: Last week we were able to get through only 60 percent of the written lesson. This material should be considered a supplement to that class.

In a visit with Neil Herman this week, he reminded me of something I said in class last Sunday. I had mentioned that in Hebrew and Greek, the words for “(S)pirit” and “wind” were the same. Neil told me he had to work hard to suppress his urge to shout out, “Did they call the wind Mariah?”

Since *Paint Your Wagon* was a favorite of my father, I not only laughed, but I got the song stuck in my head. It has been there for days. Thank you, Neil.

They did not call the wind Mariah. In Hebrew they called it *ruach* (רוח). In Greek it is *pneuma* (πνεῦμα). We read the Hebrew word *ruach* translated Upper Case “Spirit” in our Old Testament in passages like:

- **Gen. 1:2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the

Spirit (*ruach* - רוח) of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

We find it as lower case “spirit” in passages like:

- **Gen. 41:8** So in the morning his [Pharaoh’s] spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men.

We read *ruach* translated as “wind” in passages like:

- **Ex. 10:13** So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east *wind* (*ruach* - רוח) upon the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east *wind* (*ruach* - רוח) had brought the locusts.

We also read the word translated as “breath” frequently, including passages like:

- **Gen. 7:15** They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the *breath* (*ruach* - רוח) of life.

Not surprisingly, Hebrew dictionaries routinely define *ruach* – רוח as “breath of mouth...wind... spirit.”¹

¹ “רוח,” Brown, Francis, Driver, S. R., and Briggs, Charles, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Oxford 1952).

The Greek word is translated similarly. We read translations of *pneuma* - πνεῦμα as Upper Case “Spirit” in passages like:

- **Matt. 4:1** Then Jesus was led up by the *Spirit* (*pneuma* - πνεῦμα) into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

It is found translated as lower case “spirit” in places like:

- **Matt. 5:3** Blessed are the poor in *spirit* (*pneuma* - πνεῦμα), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We find *pneuma* - πνεῦμα as “wind” in passages like:

- **John 3:8** The *wind* (*pneuma* - πνεῦμα) blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

In this John 3:8 passage, you will note that the word “Spirit” is also there. Both times, the Greek word is *pneuma* - πνεῦμα. We should note that the more common Greek word for “wind” is *anemos* (ἄνεμος), which we find over and over (Mt. 11:7; 14:24, 30, 32, Mk. 4:39, 41; Lk. 7:24; Jn. 6:18, etc.). John used the Greek *pneuma* in 3:8 as an effective pun demonstrating the word play in Jesus’ example (*i.e.*, you don’t control the wind; neither do you

control the Spirit). This same pun usage is found in Acts 2 when the “Spirit” (*pneuma* - πνεῦμα) descends like a “mighty rushing wind” (*pnoe*, from the same root as *pneuma* - πνεῦμα).

Passages like 2 Thess. 2:8 translate *pneuma* - πνεῦμα as “breath”:

- **2Thess. 2:8** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the *breath* (*pneuma* - πνεῦμα) of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

It is not surprising to read dictionary definitions of the Greek *pneuma* - πνεῦμα as “air in movement” as well as “spirit” or “breath.”²

In our focus on the Holy Spirit, we have taken verses from Jesus’ teaching in John 14-16 and used them to form a checklist of promises Jesus made to his apostles about the Holy Spirit. We have then taken that checklist and begun comparing it to the historical record and references to the Spirit in the book of Acts. The John passages are below. The checklist is to the right.

² “πνεῦμα,” Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (U. of Chi. 1979), 2d Ed.

THE PASSAGES

John 14:16-17 “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 15:26-27 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

John 16:7-11 “If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

John 16:12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

THE CHECKLIST FROM JOHN 14-16

- 1. The Father will give (future tense) the Holy Spirit (14:16).
- 2. The Spirit will be a Helper like Christ (14:16).
- 3. The Spirit will not be temporary, but will stay permanently (14:16)
- 4. He is the Spirit of truth (14:17).
- 5. He is unique to the believer (14:17).
- 6. The world neither sees nor knows him (14:17).
- 7. He was with them (in Christ), but would (future tense) indwell them (14:17).
- 8. The Father will send the Spirit because of, or on behalf of, Jesus (“in the name of Jesus”) (14:26).
- 9. The Holy Spirit will teach the apostles (14:26).
- 10. The Spirit will remind the apostles of Jesus’ teaching and other important events (14:26).
- 11. The Spirit will bear witness about Jesus (15:26).
- 12. The Spirit will use the apostles to witness to the truth about Jesus (15:27).
- 13. The Spirit’s work requires Jesus first to die and ascend to the Father before coming (16:7).
- 14. Jesus will also send the Spirit (16:7).
- 15. The Spirit will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8).
- 16. The Spirit will “guide” the apostles into truth (16:13).
- 17. The Spirit is speaking the message of God (16:13).
- 18. The Spirit will glorify Christ (16:14).

The last lesson examined each passage of the Holy Spirit through Acts 15. Our continued examination begins in Acts 16 where we have three references to the Holy Spirit.

After the Jerusalem conference, Paul went back out into the mission field. We read of his return to the region in modern southern Turkey, in the ancient towns of Derbe and Lystra. There Paul recruited Timothy for the mission field and the group went on into Galatia. On this mission trip, the Holy Spirit was directing where they would go to witness to Jesus. He forbade the team to go into Asia and north-central Turkey (ancient Bithynia), instead directing them into Macedonia. This direction of the mission effort bore great fruit as Paul and his team went into Philippi where the church got off to a marvelous start, even though Paul and Silas were jailed in the process!

Paul and Silas continued their efforts through Macedonia and into Greece. Paul's journey continues as recorded in Acts 17 and 18, but without explicit reference to the Holy Spirit. In Acts 19, we find Paul in Ephesus. There we find an interesting set of events. Paul met a group that had some view of the "Way," but the view was very incomplete and inadequate. Paul sensed something wrong and asked the "disciples" if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed (Acts 19:2). The people's response confirmed Paul's doubts,



“No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” (Acts 19:2).

On further examination, Paul learned they had been baptized, but into John's baptism, not into Christ. Paul then baptized them into Christ, laid hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came on them. The men spoke in tongues and prophesied, joining Paul in a mission outreach that over the next two years put the word of God into the

hearing of the entire area. Paul was again driven by the Spirit to continue his travels for the ministry of Christ.³

Some time later, having been gone from Ephesus some time, Paul was readying his return to Jerusalem. He was in Miletus when he called the Ephesian elders to come and meet him. In their tearful farewell, Paul explained the role of the Holy Spirit in what was to come:

...the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:23-24).

³ Scholars disagree whether Acts 19:21 is referencing Paul's spirit or the Holy Spirit. The ESV interprets it as the Holy Spirit, and hence capitalizes Spirit: "Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." (So also the RSV, NAS, KJV, and more.) The NIV interprets it as Paul's spirit and translates it simply "Paul decided to go to Jerusalem" leaving the "Spirit" in a footnote as an alternate reading. The reason most translations use "Spirit" is because the language tracks closely the language Luke used in Acts 20:22-23 where Paul is "compelled by the Spirit" to go to Jerusalem.

This is a marvelous example of the lesson Jesus taught about the Spirit's role as guide as well as witness. For Paul, the Holy Spirit's guidance toward Jerusalem and the coming affliction was the natural course of his personal testimony and witness to the gospel of the grace of God, the redemption in Jesus Christ. Before Paul ended his visit with the elders, he reminded them that they received their charge and position by the choice of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:28). They were not simply leaders of a club or group, they were handpicked and charged with the mission of the Holy Spirit – teaching, protecting their charge, evangelizing and more.

Paul was working to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, and the travel winds made his sailing efficient and fast (Acts 20:16). So they were able to stop in Tyre and visit with the church while there. Again in Tyre, the Spirit spoke through disciples at the church confirming the affliction awaiting Paul in Jerusalem. Paul continued on with his group and reached Caesarea, a seaport 75 miles northwest of Jerusalem. There again, the Spirit spoke through a prophet Agabus that the Jews would bind Paul in Jerusalem and deliver him to the Gentiles. There were two reactions to this prophetic word. The people reacted with tears, urging Paul not to go. Paul saw this confirming the Spirit's earlier directive and he was determined to follow through, gladly willing to die for the sake of Christ.

Luke finished his narrative detailing Paul's arrest, his trials and appeal to Caesar, and his harrowing journey to Rome. The story unfolded just as the Spirit had detailed (the "Spirit of truth!"). In the midst of all the events, Paul was able to minister and testify to Christ before many different groups.

Acts ends with Paul in Rome, still under arrest, but able to speak about Christ and teach the Jews living there. It is there, in Acts 28:25, that we have our final direct reference to the Holy Spirit. Those who would not listen to Paul as he taught were spurning the message of God, just as the "Holy Spirit" had prophesied through Isaiah the prophet centuries earlier.

CONCLUSION

If we take the checklist of Jesus' promises about the Holy Spirit, and we take the passages that documented his work in the early church, we find the precision of Jesus' teaching. The Holy Spirit indeed came, just as Jesus assured his apostles. He not only came, but he fulfilled the ministry and purposes Jesus set out. To walk through the checklist is like watching a preview of "Coming Attractions." The plot gets filled out in the book of Acts, but the events occur directly in line with the Spirit.

In this history of the church, there have been many disputes over the Holy Spirit and how he works. In truth, the thrust of Scripture is never over *how* the Spirit works. The thrust of Scripture is *what* the Spirit does! In a way, that makes sense, for we always want to put things into systems we can understand and follow. But the problem arises when that "system" serves to put God into a box where we dictate how he does things. God does not belong in any box! The place for God is simply where God chooses to be, no more, and no less. He is "the Decider;" we are his disciples. The sheep do not tell the shepherd how to do his job. They rejoice over his care and provision, and learn *his* voice.