

the
1:8 
promise
of Jesus

THE KEY TO WORLD HARVEST
denzil r. miller

the
1:8 
promise
of Jesus

THE KEY TO WORLD HARVEST

denzil r. miller

The 1:8 Promise of Jesus: The Key to World Harvest. © 2012, Denzil R. Miller. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of the copyright owner, except brief quotations used in connection with reviews in magazines or newspapers.

Unless otherwise noted Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Miller, Denzil R., 1946–
The 1:8 Promise of Jesus: The Key to World Harvest / Denzil R. Miller

ISBN: 978-0-7361-0470-9

1. Bible. 2. Theology. 3. Holy Spirit. 4. Missions.

Printed in the United States of America
PneumaLife Publications, Springfield, MO, USA
2012

Published with the assistance of
Life Publisher International
Springfield, MO, USA



the 1:8 promise:

“But you will receive power
When the Holy Spirit has come upon you,
And you will be my witnesses
In Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,
And to the end of the earth.”

— Jesus

contents

1. The Promise ~ 1
 2. Jesus' Not-So-Famous Last Words ~ 5
 3. What God Has Joined Together ~ 11
 4. The Defining Verse of Pentecostalism:
Part 1: The Contenders ~ 15
 5. The Defining Verse of Pentecostalism:
Part 2: The Winner ~ 25
 6. Unwrapping the Promise: Part 1 ~ 31
 7. Unwrapping the Promise: Part 2 ~ 39
 8. Appropriating the Promise ~ 47
 9. Turning the Key ~ 55
 10. Ephesus and Us ~ 63
-
- Endnotes ~ 71
- Other Books by the Author ~ 79



the promise

Take the message of Pentecost to Africa.

The message came as a faint, almost imperceptible, whisper in the back of my mind. No thunder; no lightning; and yet I unmistakably recognized it as the voice of the Spirit. A few weeks earlier I had set myself to a time of extended prayer and waiting on God. The hours that I had spent in God's presence had helped bring my spirit in tune with His Spirit.

In the days following, the message would come again and again, each time with more force and clarity: "Take the message of

Pentecost to Africa.” Pondering the meaning of these mysterious words, I asked myself, *Is God really calling me to resign my church in America and go to Africa?* I wondered further, *What is the meaning of this phrase, “the message of Pentecost?”*

At the time my wife, Sandy, and I had been serving the Lord as pastors for twenty-two rewarding years, five in Colorado and seventeen in Texas. During those years we had seen both churches grow and prosper. Now, God was calling us to leave the comfort of our middle-class American lives and journey to Africa.

The call, however, did not come, as they say, “out of the blue.” For many years God had dealt with me about becoming a missionary. During my preparatory years in Bible college in Texas, and then during my years as a pastor, I had experienced a growing conviction that God’s purpose for my life included foreign missionary service. However, with the passing of years, it appeared as if my desire to be a missionary would never become a reality.

Still, during my years as a pastor I had endeavored to lead my churches into active missions involvement. I had taught God’s people to pray for the nations and to give generously to the cause of world missions. I had often preached on Christ’s commission to take the gospel to the nations and rejoiced in the significant number of young people from our church who had committed themselves to full-time vocational ministry and missions.

During those years another conviction began to grow in my heart. The conviction rose primarily from my study of the New Testament book of Acts. As I read and reread the book, I was enthralled by the great spiritual power and remarkable missionary success of the early church, especially when compared to the seeming insipidness of the vast majority of churches with which I was acquainted.

This study, which continues to this day, led me to a deeply-held conviction that it is essential for the church today, just as it was for the first-century church, to be empowered by the Spirit. This is especially true if it is ever hopes to successfully fulfill its God-given mandate to take the gospel to all nations before Christ's soon return.¹ I further concluded that this fact was most clearly indicated in Jesus' final promise to His disciples just before His ascension into heaven found in Acts 1:8:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

I, as do most students of the New Testament, believe that this is the key verse of book of Acts. I further believe it to be the interpretive key to the entire book and the key to understanding its central message.² It is this message—the real message of Pentecost—that I am intent on spreading throughout Africa. And it

The Promise

is the message that I want to share with you in this book. In its pages we will take a journey together closely examining this amazing verse of Scripture. I am calling it the *1:8 Promise of Jesus*.

I am convinced that if we are going to fulfill Christ's Great Commission in this generation, the church—and every member of the church—must come to terms with the powerful truths revealed in Acts 1:8. A proper understanding and application of Jesus' potent promise in this verse is, I believe, critical to the church's ultimate success in missions.

So, I invite you to join me in a spiritual journey. Together, we will open our minds to the remarkable truths found in this final promise of Jesus. As we do, we will open our hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to drive home the verse's potent message. I know that once we have come to clearly understand what Jesus was teaching in Acts 1:8, and have fully committed ourselves to its demands, our lives will never be the same. For in it we will discover the key to world harvest.



Jesus' not-so-famous last words

I was saddened to hear of the death of Gogo Chakwera. (*Gogo* is the Malawian word for grandparent or respected elder.) And I was honored to be asked by the family to preach his funeral message. Gogo Chakwera was the elderly father of Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, my dear friend and President of the Malawi Assemblies of God. For many years Gogo Chakwera had been a lay minister in the Presbyterian church in Malawi, and a faithful follower of Jesus. In his eighties he had been able to fulfill his life-long dream

of getting a Bible school education when he graduated with a diploma from the Assemblies of God School of Theology in Lilongwe, Malawi, where I taught.

Soon after his graduation, Gogo Chakwera became very ill, and had to be hospitalized. Knowing that he would soon die, one-by-one, he called his children to his bedside and spoke solemn and prophetic words over each of them. Each sibling will surely remember those special words of their father. For, you see, last words are weighty words.

And so it was with the words of Jesus found in His 1:8 Promise. They are the last words He spoke to His church before returning to heaven. Let's be clear here. They were not *among* the last words He spoke; they were *precisely* His very last words. Out of the many important messages He could have left with them, Jesus chose to leave with His disciples these all-important words: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Sadly, most Christians today don't even remember, much less cherish, these final words of Jesus. Because of this, the church's primary work of fulfilling the Great Commission has been severely hampered. These momentous words have become, what I call, Jesus' "not-so-famous" last words.

Notwithstanding, the primary importance of these words of

Jesus is demonstrated by three compelling facts, the first being that *Jesus knew that they were His last words*. It is not as if He spoke these words, and then was felled by some unexpected blow. He knew full well that these would be His last words, and He choose them carefully.

Skilled communicators know that in constructing a sentence, if they want to emphasize a particular thought, they place it at the end of the sentence. Similarly, by placing this promise at the very end of His ministry, Jesus was emphasizing its great importance. Knowing this, He carefully planned what He would say, and how He would say it.

The importance of Christ's words in Acts 1:8 is also demonstrated by the fact that He knew that *the ultimate success of His work depended on the fulfillment of these words*. He was going away; the future of His redemptive work was to rest on the shoulders of the unpredictable—and often undependable—people who had become His followers. On the same occasion that Jesus gave His 1:8 Promise, He said to His disciples,

“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you

are endued with power from on high.”³

Note Jesus’ words, “Thus it is written, and *thus it was necessary*.” Having said this, He lists three necessary, or essential, elements to the successful execution of God’s redemptive plan:

- § The Christ had to suffer.
- § He had to rise from the dead on the third day.
- § The message of His death and resurrection had to be proclaimed in His name to all nations.

The first two works were completed by Jesus, the third He has left to His church. We are to be His “witnesses of these things.”⁴ Before the lost can call on the Lord’s name and be saved, they must first hear the message of the gospel.⁵ Therefore, if the gospel is not proclaimed, Christ’s death and resurrection become ineffectual—at least to those who have never heard it.

And yet, before Christ’s disciples were to even attempt the humanly-impossible task of proclaiming the gospel to all nations, they were to remain in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high,” that is, until they were cloaked in the power of the Holy Spirit. The success or failure of Christ’s mission depended on His disciples fully embracing, and obediently receiving, His 1:8 Promise.

Finally, these last words of Jesus are momentous because *they still apply today*. Jesus' Great Commission was not only for those early disciples to whom He first spoke it, it is for His church of every age until He returns.⁶ The same is true of His 1:8 Promise. Speaking of the promise of the Spirit, Peter declared, "The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."⁷

Because we have all been called and commissioned to take the gospel to the nations, we, too, must all earnestly seek and enthusiastically receive the 1:8 Promise of Jesus. Jesus' not-so-famous last words must become the passion of our lives, for in them we will find the key to world harvest.

Jesus Not So Famous Last Words



what God has joined together

The pastor’s words filled the sanctuary—and Sandy’s and my hearts: “I now pronounce you man and wife.” He continued, solemnly reciting the words of Jesus, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”⁸ With these words Sandy and I began a journey together that has lasted 43 wonderful years.

The Bible presents marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman. It is the permanent joining for life of two committed

people. In Acts 1:8 Jesus, in effect, performed a marriage ceremony. He indivisibly joined the power of the Spirit to the mission of God: “You will receive power . . . you will be my witnesses.”

In considering these words of Jesus, we must not overlook the fact that He preceded them with a command for His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit.⁹ In another telling of the same story—this time in the gospel of Luke—Jesus again joined His promise of power to His mission:

“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’”¹⁰

Tragically, in most churches today, including most Pentecostal churches, a great “divorce” has taken place—followed by an illegitimate remarriage—and few seem to have noticed. The power of the Spirit has been divorced from the mission of God and illegitimately re-wed to personal blessing. In too many churches, Jesus’ clarion call to be empowered by the Spirit and become His witnesses has been ignored. It has been supplanted by the

narcissistic mantra of “be filled and be blessed!” The empowering promise of Jesus has been muted in a clamor for personal self-gratification.

In some circles this quest for self gratification focuses the seekers attention on emotional, financial, and material blessing. In other, more “spiritual,” contexts its focus is on spiritual blessing. In either case, Jesus’ clear message of empowerment for mission is muted. Amazingly, all of this is taking place in spite of the fact that Scripture nowhere directly connects Spirit baptism with personal blessing.

This misguided and unscriptural emphasis has resulted in a sad state of affairs. Today, Pentecostal churches are filled with those who testify to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, and yet they have never won even one person to Christ. What’s worse, these same “Spirit-filled” believers seldom even attempt to share the message of Jesus with others. The early disciples would have been appalled by such a circumstance. They could never have imagined it.

Further, many of these same people live comfortably disengaged from the missions programs of their local churches. Inconceivably, they have never made the connection between their experience with the Spirit and their responsibility to win the lost to Christ.

As a result of this theological and functional disconnect

What God Has Joined Together

between Spirit baptism and mission, the experience of Spirit baptism has been devalued. For, if the experience is about personal blessing, it becomes optional, with many reasoning, *I'm blessed enough already; therefore, I choose not to seek God for the fullness of the Spirit*. If, however, Spirit baptism is about fulfilling Christ's mandate to preach the gospel to the nations, it is no longer optional; every follower of Christ is obliged to be filled with the Spirit. When Jesus commanded His disciples to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, He left no question concerning His opinion on the subject.¹¹ The experience is not optional because His command to take the gospel to all people is not optional. The two go hand in hand. Jesus in His final promise to the church, indivisibly wed the two injunctions. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder!



the defining verse of pentecostalism

PART 1: THE CONTENDERS

once put a question to a group of African seminary students.¹² I asked them, “If you were to chose just one biblical verse that best describes authentic Pentecostalism as you perceive it, what would that verse be?” After some spirited give and take, we narrowed our discussion down to four “contenders”: Zechariah 4:6, Hebrews 13:8; Acts 2:4; and Acts 1:8. We ultimately decided

that, while each of these verses does indeed speak to an essential quality of the movement, only one can be rightly viewed as its “defining verse.” Let me see if I can recreate the class discussion for you.

Contender 1: Zechariah 4:6

The first verse we discussed was Zechariah 4:6, which reads,

“So he [the angel] said to me, ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

In their discussion, the students noted how this verse has been a perennial favorite of Pentecostals, often being quoted in Pentecostal pulpits and publications. For years the verse has adorned the masthead of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, the weekly magazine of the Assemblies of God, USA. Pentecostals have frequently called on this verse to remind themselves that theirs is a work, not of man, but of the Spirit of God.

After discussion, the class concluded that Zechariah 4:6 is, indeed, a verse that Pentecostals should continue to embrace. Nevertheless, while this verse accurately describes the movement’s ethos and orientation, it does little to give it clear purpose or direction. Therefore, we decided, if we were to choose just one verse to define authentic Pentecostalism, we must look further.

Contender 2: Hebrews 13:8

Another student suggested Hebrews 13:8 as a possible contender for the defining verse of true Pentecostalism. This verse affirms that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” In our discussion we talked about how this verse has long been a mainstay for Pentecostal preachers, and is often cited to undergird the Pentecostal expectation of modern-day miracles. One of the older students noted with dismay, that, while in years past he often heard this verse cited in Pentecostal pulpits, he seldom hears it today. This, he said, seems to be indicative of the present state of the movement.

Eventually, however, the class decided that, while Pentecostals must hold tight to the truth revealed in this verse, it does not rise to the level of being the defining verse of the movement. While it helps to provide inspiration and theological validation to the Pentecostal belief in the present-day supernatural work of God, it, like the verse in Zechariah, does not adequately spell out the movement’s core mission and ethos.

Contender 3: Acts 2:4

Some students argued that a third verse, Acts 2:4, should be chosen as the defining verse of true Pentecostalism, since, from its inception, the Pentecostal movement has leaned heavily on this verse to help clarify its understanding of Spirit baptism. The verse

compellingly describes the disciples' first reception of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

From this verse—coupled with other select verses in Acts¹³—Pentecostals derive their distinctive doctrine of initial evidence.¹⁴ To a lesser degree the same is true of the Charismatic movement. Though many Charismatics have interpreted initial physical evidence somewhat differently from Classical Pentecostals, speaking in tongues remains a key emphasis of the movement.

The class discussed how the traditional Pentecostal emphasis on Acts 2:4 has been both a boon and bane to the movement. On the positive side, the classical formulation of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience for all believers, subsequent to salvation, and evidenced by speaking in tongues has served as a magnet, inspiring millions to seek for the full experience of the baptism in the Spirit. It has encouraged their faith as they sought for a more intimate relationship with God. It has inspired them to keep seeking until they experienced Spirit baptism as a powerful present-tense, life-enriching experience. And, once their experience has been confirmed by the same miraculous sign as was given to first-century believers, great confidence has come into their hearts that they have truly received the promise.

In mind-boggling numbers those who have been filled with the

Holy Spirit, accompanied by speaking in tongues, have become zealous followers of and enthusiastic witnesses for Christ. They almost universally testify to an increased love for God and a greater desire to serve Him and do His will. A wonderful release has come into their lives resulting in greater liberty in prayer, worship, and witness. During the last century, those movements that have emphasized the experience of Spirit baptism as being an experience separate from salvation and accompanied by speaking in tongues have outstripped all other movements in missionary zeal and success.¹⁵ We as a class agreed that those wanting to abandon or alter this historic doctrinal formulation should think long and hard concerning the missional and experiential ramifications of such an action.¹⁶

The class then turned to certain perils related to the popular application of the doctrine of evidential tongues in the contemporary Pentecostal church. These parallel pitfalls are the danger of under-emphasizing and the, equally perilous, danger of overemphasizing the doctrine. We first discussed the danger of under emphasis. It was noted that, if, in the contemporary confusion concerning the experience of Spirit baptism—as well as the mounting disillusionment with the actions of many who claim to have received the experience—we begin to deemphasize the necessity of speaking in tongues, a number of adverse consequences are likely to occur.

For instance, if we fail to properly emphasize Spirit-inspired speech as the expected sign of Spirit baptism, many who are seeking the experience will be tempted to stop short, having never fully received the biblical experience. When it comes to seeking spiritual experience, like water running down the side of a hill, human nature is prone to take the path of least resistance. Thus, when believers are encouraged to “receive the Spirit by faith” without expecting any outward confirmation, most will fail to press in and receive the experience, as Jesus so clearly instructed.¹⁷

Eventually, and inevitably, seekers will be encouraged to repeat a “prayer of faith” and stop there, never having actually received the full experience of the Spirit. Many will claim to have received who, in fact, have not received. In our Pentecostal churches the percentage of believers who have received the experience, confirmed by speaking in tongues, will become progressively smaller. In time, these believers will become the eccentric fringe in the church. And, for all practical purposes, the experience, as portrayed in the book of Acts, will be lost.

This loss will ultimately result in the loss of spiritual dynamic in the church—a trend already prevalent in many Classical Pentecostal churches worldwide. Additionally, the manifestation of spiritual gifts will disappear, and worship will lose its divine touch, degenerating into choreographed, entertainment-oriented

performances rather than true worship in Spirit and in truth.¹⁸

Worse, as Pentecostal churches lose their spiritual dynamic, the commitment level of the members will diminish and the work of missions will be attenuated.

The virus will inevitably spread to our sister Pentecostal churches around the world. Missionaries, being a reflection of their sending churches, will become increasingly ambivalent about Spirit-baptism and less inclined to emphasize the experience in the places to which they are sent to minister. Subtly, and often imperceptibly, they will transfer their doubts to believers and churches in their host countries.

One African Pentecostal leader (a friend of mine), speaking on this very subject, pleaded with American missions administrators: “Please don’t export your doubts to Africa, we don’t need them. We need missionaries who know what they believe.” With these things in mind, we as a class concluded that the church must hold fast to the Classical Pentecostal doctrine of evidential tongues.

Class discussion then turned to the second danger involving speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. While there exists a danger of underemphasizing tongues in relation to Spirit baptism, there also exists a danger of overemphasizing the practice. One student noted that, when we overemphasize speaking in tongues to the point that we deemphasize, or even ignore, the real purpose of the experience of

Spirit baptism—that is, empowerment for missional witness¹⁹—a number of adverse consequences follow.

For instance, we run the risk of having a church full of people who speak in tongues yet seldom, if ever, witness for Christ. The emphasis of the experience subtly changes from fulfilling the mission of God to spiritual self-gratification. An experience divinely intended to be missionally empowering becomes self-indulgent and narcissistic.

The class discussed the tragic fallout of such a misguided emphasis in many contemporary Pentecostal churches. In these churches, because speaking in tongues is too often presented as the end-all of Spirit baptism, many have become disillusioned with the experience. Much is made of tongues as a prayer language, but little is said about Spirit-empowered witness. Messages in tongues are often spoken in public worship, yet there is little to no involvement in world missions. This circumstance has resulted in the experience being devalued. As has already been stated, if the experience is about personal blessing, then it is optional. However, if, as Jesus taught, it is about empowerment to reach the ends of the earth, it is essential.

One student wondered aloud, “Could it be that, as a result of our unbiblical overemphasis on tongues as a means of personal blessing, in practice fewer are actually speaking in tongues?” It has become an optional blessing rather than an essential equipping

for mission. Thinking of it as merely an added offering on God's buffet table of blessing, many have simply chosen to pass it by. However, had they properly understood that it is a required equipping for effective mission, they would have diligently sought and received the gift.

We ended our discussion of Acts 2:4 with a conclusion. The verse is an essential verse in any discussion of the meaning of true Pentecostalism. Classical Pentecostals must hold tight to their insistence that those who are fully baptized in the Holy Spirit will prophetically speak in tongues as the Spirit enables. To abandon this core Pentecostal belief would result in irreparable damage to the spirit and missional dynamic of the church. They would abandon the doctrine and practice at their own peril. This being said, the movement cannot, and must not, ultimately define itself by the truth found in Acts 2:4; it must look further. And this we did, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

The Defining Verse of Pentecostalism: Part 1: The Contenders



the defining verse of pentecostalism

PART 2: THE WINNER

Having discussed our three contenders for the defining verse of authentic Pentecostalism, the class turned its attention to the fourth and final verse—Acts 1:8. After much give and take, we concluded that, more than any other verse, this verse should stand as the defining verse of the movement. Let me share with you some of our discussion. To refresh our

memories, let's look again at this final promise of Jesus:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

This verse helps to clarify and focus the meaning of the three verses discussed in the last chapter. For instance, Acts 1:8 identifies for us the implied “it” of Zechariah 4:6, offering contemporary meaning and purpose to the precept, “[*It is*] not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” Thus interpreted and applied in the light of Jesus’ final words in Acts 1:8, the “it” of Zechariah 4:6 is the fulfillment of God’s mission in the earth. For Zechariah that meant the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem; for us today it means the completion of the Great Commission of Christ. We are to be His witnesses “*to the end of the earth.*” This mission, however, will not be accomplished through any human instrumentality, such as military, economic, or political might, but by the power of the Spirit of God.

In like manner, Acts 1:8 gives purpose and fuller meaning to the eternal principle expressed in Hebrews 13:8: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever.*” It answers for us the pressing question, “How is Jesus the same?” Jesus’ final words in

Acts 1:8 remind us that, if He is, indeed, the same yesterday, today, and forever, then His mission is the same. And, if His mission is the same, then His power to accomplish that mission is the same. It is the promised power of God's Spirit.

More than anything else, however, Acts 1:8 helps us to properly understand and apply Acts 2:4. When we try to understand 2:4 apart from 1:8, we miss the true import of the experience Luke vividly describes in Acts 2. This is especially true concerning the speaking in tongues that accompanied the disciples being filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Interpreted apart from 1:8, the experience of 2:4 loses much of its meaning and significance. When we try define Spirit baptism primarily in terms of 2:4, to the exclusion of the promise of 1:8, believers are filled with the Spirit with no clear understanding of the primary purpose of the experience. Speaking in tongues becomes an end in itself rather than the sign of a greater end. However, when 1:8 becomes the context for interpreting 2:4, the experience of Spirit baptism, accompanied by speaking in tongues, takes on fuller meaning and significance.

When we connect these two verses—as I believe Luke, the author of Acts, clearly intended for His readers to do—powerful theological and missional insights present themselves. Interpreting 2:4 in the light of 1:8 suggests that being filled with the Spirit is about Spirit-inspired speech, that is, Spirit-anointed witness.

Tongues become more than simply the initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism, they become the prophetic confirmation and missional sign of the Spirit's empowering, pointing to the greater meaning of the experience.

Such a reading of 2:4 reminds us that the purpose of Spirit baptism is to empower us to speak as the Spirit enables. On the Day of Pentecost this Spirit-inspired (that is, prophetic²⁰) speech occurred both in tongues and in the vernacular. First, the disciples miraculously spoke in the languages of the surrounding Gentile nations. Next, Peter—and no doubt the other 120—spoke Spirit-empowered words in the common language. In accordance with Jesus' promise: "*You will be my witnesses,*" Peter spoke about Christ,²¹ resulting in 3,000 souls being saved and added to the church. The first speaking (tongues) was the Spirit-inspired sign of Spirit baptism; the second speaking (Peter's message) was the Spirit-empowered result and purpose of the experience as foretold by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

Further, when interpreted in light of 1:8, the 120's speaking in Gentile tongues²² in 2:4 further signifies that the purpose of Spirit baptism is to empower Christ's disciples to speak—that is to proclaim the gospel—"*to the end of the earth*"²³ and to people from "*every nation under heaven.*"²⁴

Luke thus presents speaking in tongues as an evidence, a sign, and a prophetic release. At Spirit-baptism the receivers' tongues

are released and empowered to speak *as the Spirit gives them the ability*. When understood in this way, that is, in the light of Acts 1:8, the implication is clear; the same Spirit who anoints and empowers us to speak “*the wonderful works of God*” in a language we do not know, will also anoint and empower us to proclaim the marvelous work of Christ in a language we do know!

During Sandy’s and my two decades in Africa, we have seen this truth affirmed again and again. We have been amazed as evangelism and church planting movements have literally been birthed before our eyes through repeated outpourings of the Spirit occurring in strong missional contexts, where there is a permeant emphasis on fulfilling the *missio Dei*.²⁵

It has been my privilege to minister and conduct Holy Spirit conferences in twenty-five African countries.²⁶ Again and again I have observed that, when believers receive the Spirit in a missional context, evidenced by speaking in tongues, great spiritual power is released. In some instances, spontaneous church-planting movements have been birthed. We have discovered that when those who receive the Spirit clearly understand the meaning and purpose of the experience, and when they are fully committed to fulfilling Christ’s commission to reach the unreached with the gospel, something amazing and powerful takes place.

On Pentecost Sunday, 2010,²⁷ the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance (AAGA) launched the most aggressive evangelistic and

missionary initiative in its one hundred year history, called the Decade of Pentecost.²⁸ During the decade from 2010-2020 the fifty AAGA-related national churches have set a collective, continent-wide goal of seeing 10 million new believers baptized in the Holy Spirit as described in Acts 1:8 and 2:4. They will then endeavor to mobilize these 10 million disciples as Spirit-empowered witnesses, pastors, evangelists, church planters, and missionaries.

As a result, the movement anticipates planting tens of thousands of new Spirit-empowered missionary churches during the decade. They are also targeting the more than 900 remaining unreached people groups of Africa and the Indian Ocean Basin for missionary outreach. As I write, many national churches have already set their goals and have begun mobilizing to achieve them.

This continent-wide initiative will test the validity of the premise of this book, that is, when believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, accompanied by Spirit-inspired tongues, and in an overtly missional context, a powerful spiritual synergy occurs resulting in remarkably-enhanced and highly-effective evangelistic and missionary outreach. It will be instructive to track the progress of this initiative.



unwrapping the promise

PART 1

The wedding was over, the reception had ended, and the new couple had, with great fanfare, been whisked away in their rented limousine to begin their new life together.

Exhausted, I walked into the church's reception hall to see what "damage" had been done to the room, and to see what needed to be done to put it back into shape for the coming Sunday's activities. That's when I spied it on the white, lace-lined table, a large exquisitely-wrapped gift. Gazing at the solitary package, I thought to myself, *It's a sad thing to see such a beautiful gift left*

unopened and unappreciated. It was meant to bring joy to the hearts' of the young couple. How the giver must have imagined the recipient's "oohs" and "aahs" as they opened the package. But there it lay, unclaimed, unopened, and unfulfilled.

That's how it can be with the 1:8 Promise of Jesus. It is His gift of power and provision to God's missionary people. How He must delight in His children "unwrapping" the gift and claiming its benefits for themselves and for His mission. But all too often we rush away to our tasks without ever unwrapping the gift. In this chapter and the next we are going to do our best to unwrap Jesus' 1:8 Promise. In doing this, we hope to come to a better understanding of the value of the gift, and of how we can each personally receive it.

The Giver of the Promise

To fully appreciate a gift the recipient must know the giver. If the receiver does not know the giver, the gift loses much of its meaning and "specialness." The same is true with the gift of the Spirit. To fully appreciate God's gift, we must clearly understand who it is who has given us the gift.

Jesus is the giver of the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was He who gave the 1:8 Promise to His disciples. Following the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter told the crowd that it was Jesus himself who had "poured out what you now see and hear."²⁹

That's why we're calling it the 1:8 Promise of *Jesus*.

It is important, however, that we understand that Jesus is not alone in giving to us the promise of divine enablement. He is joined by the Father and Spirit. Here's how it works: the Father instituted the promise, the Son mediates and delivers it, and the Holy Spirit executes it. Consider with me how each member of the Godhead participates in giving to us the power of the Spirit.

The Father

The Heavenly Father initiated the promise. Jesus called it “the promise of the Father.”³⁰ In His teaching on prayer Jesus taught us to begin our prayers by saying, “Father.”³¹ He went on to say, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”³² It was God the Father who first conceived the idea of giving to His people the power they needed to serve Him and to share His love with others.

In his Pentecost message Peter quoted the prophecy of the Hebrew prophet, Joel,³³ but he added the phrase, “God says.”³⁴ He possibly did this to emphasize to his Jewish audience the fact that the promise of the Spirit came from God the Father. And, because the experience is indeed the promise of the Father, when we ask for the Spirit's power, we can be assured that we are praying according to the Father's perfect will. And, if we know that we are

praying in the Father's will, we can be assured that God will answer our prayer.³⁵

How encouraging it is to know that this promise of power comes from our heavenly Father. When Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," He was, at least in part, instructing us to pray to be filled with the Spirit.³⁶

The Son

While the Father initiated the promise, it is Jesus, the Son, who mediates and delivers it to us. He described it as "the promise . . . which . . . you heard from me."³⁷ Had Jesus not told us, we would never have known that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who would ask,³⁸ nor would we know that this promise comes as a clothing of power from heaven.³⁹ It was Jesus who commanded us to "wait for the promise of the Father."⁴⁰ And it was He who revealed to us the primary purpose the gift—power for witness to the ends of the earth. Much of what we know about the promise of the Spirit, we learn directly from the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus spoke often about the work of the Spirit. He taught about the Spirit's sovereign will and His ceaseless activity.⁴¹ He taught about the work of the Spirit in the hearts and lives of God's people.⁴² He revealed how He himself ministered in the power of

the Spirit,⁴³ and how we, too, can be empowered by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴ Then, just before He returned to heaven, He commanded His disciples to wait for and receive the Spirit in order that they might be His witnesses to the nations.⁴⁵

Following the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter explained to the people what had happened:

“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”⁴⁶

The same Spirit and power that moved and anointed Jesus in His life’s work is now available to anyone who is prepared to obey Christ and preach His gospel to the lost.⁴⁷

The Holy Spirit

While the Father initiated the promise, and Jesus, the Son, mediates it, the Holy Spirit executes it. It is He who comes to us and applies the 1:8 Promise to our lives. We will discuss this powerful work of the Spirit more in the following pages.

Thus, each member of the Godhead is active in fulfilling the 1:8 Promise. Understanding this profound truth helps us to better appreciate the gift. It helps us to understand the great importance that God places on every believer receiving the gift.

The Nature of the Promise

Further, to fully appreciate the 1:8 Promise of Jesus, one must understand its nature. The essential nature of the gift can be summed up in two words: *priority* and *power*. The priority of the promise is emphasized by the fact that it is part of Jesus' final "marching orders" to His church just before He returned to heaven. His disciples were to receive power and be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

This 1:8 Promise of Jesus is, therefore, not principally a promise of blessing, or purity, or new life. It is rather a promise of power. This is not to deny that the Spirit does, indeed, impart each of the above benefits into the life of the believer, it is simply to say that the 1:8 Promise of Jesus that was initially fulfilled on the Day Pentecost, is not primarily about these issues. It is specifically a promise of power to proclaim Christ "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

In the opening chapters of Acts this experience with the Spirit is presented in two ways. First, the Spirit *comes upon* the disciples; then, He *fills* them. Jesus promised, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has *come upon* you."⁴⁸ As we look more deeply into Scripture, we discover that this coming of the Spirit is not to be misconceived as some mild or gentle coming. It is rather to be understood as a powerful, life-changing coming. Contrary to the way He is characterized in some popular Christian

songs, in Scripture the Holy Spirit is never described as being sweet or gentle. He is, rather, described as being purposeful and powerful.⁴⁹

Jesus described the Spirit's coming upon us as a clothing of "power from on high."⁵⁰ The image evoked is of a "power jacket" that, when donned, gives supernatural ability to its wearer. The prophets and leaders of ancient Israel often experienced this coming of the Spirit,⁵¹ as did the apostles and other disciples in the book of Acts.⁵² The Spirit's coming can be described as nothing less than a divine invasion from heaven.

At Pentecost, not only did the Spirit come upon the disciples, He also entered into them and *filled* them. Jesus had promised them, "He is with you but he will be in you."⁵³ Their filling with the Spirit was, thus, a total permeation. Just as water fills every cell of a sponge, so the Spirit filled every part of their being—spirit, soul, and body. They were transformed from the inside out. Like Saul of old, they were each turned into "another man."⁵⁴

The Recipients of the Promise

When in Acts 1:8 Jesus promised, "You will receive power," to whom was He speaking? The context reveals that He was speaking to His disciples—those whom He had cleansed,⁵⁵ called,⁵⁶ and commissioned;⁵⁷ those who had left all to follow Him,⁵⁸ and had totally committed themselves to obeying His

command to take the gospel to all nations; those upon whom, on the night of His resurrection, He had breathed and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁹ And yet, for all of this, Jesus still commanded them to wait in Jerusalem to be empowered by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ These disciples serve as representatives of all believers of all ages until Jesus comes again.

Some would want to limit the “you” of Acts 1:8 to the specific group of people to whom Jesus first spoke, that is, to the twelve apostles.⁶¹ This seems to me to be an unwarranted and narrow-sighted approach to the text, since, immediately after the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter universalized the promise to include “everyone whom the Lord our God shall call,”⁶² indicating that it is for everyone who truly repents and is baptized,⁶³ that is, for every true follower of Jesus. Earlier, in the gospel of Luke, Jesus had personalized the promise when He said, “Ask, and it will be given to you” and “everyone who asks receives.”⁶⁴

The promise of the Spirit’s power is, therefore, for every one of God’s children, including you and me. Any follower of Christ who wants to be more fully used by Him to spread the message of God’s love to their neighbors next door, or to the multitudes around the world, can be empowered by the Spirit.⁶⁵



unwrapping the promise

PART 2

In Chapter 4 we began unwrapping the 1:8 Promise of Jesus. We learned that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the giver of the promise. We further learned that this promise of divine power is given to accomplish the will of the Father and that it is for “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”⁶⁶

In this chapter we will continue to unwrap Jesus’ 1:8 Promise.

In doing this we will discuss the time, the purpose, and the scope of the promise as revealed in Acts 1:8.

The Time of the Promise

Jesus has promised us power, but when does this power come? Jesus said that we receive this power “when the Holy Spirit comes on [us].” For those first disciples the reception of this power from on high was a dramatic, clearly discernible event. The Spirit did not come silently, nor did He come secretly. He came upon them with great power and affect. The Bible describes the Spirit’s coming upon them like this:

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”⁶⁷

Note the sequence of events at Pentecost:

- First, there came from heaven “a sound like a mighty rushing wind,” indicating that the Spirit had come to move among men and women in new and powerful ways.
- This was followed by “what seemed to be tongues of fire

that separated and came to rest on each of them,” indicating, among other things, that the experience was both corporate and personal. As Jesus had promised seven days prior,⁶⁸ the Spirit “came upon” each one of them.

- The Spirit, then, entered into them and “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” As a result of this powerful infilling, “they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”
- Finally, and importantly, the newly-Spirit-baptized disciples immediately began to witness with great power and effectiveness, just as Jesus has promised. This witness resulted in an ongoing harvest of souls.⁶⁹

This pattern established at Pentecost was an indication of how the Spirit would come upon believers until Jesus returned.⁷⁰

After Pentecost, never again do we hear the sound from heaven, nor do we see the tongues of fire. However, three primary elements of Pentecost are repeated again and again throughout the book of Acts:

1. The Holy Spirit comes (or falls) upon disciples.⁷¹
2. The Holy Spirit fills and empowers disciples.⁷²
3. The disciples speak prophetically as the Spirit enables.⁷³

Because the 1:8 Promise is still in effect today, we, like the disciples throughout the book of Acts, can still expect the Spirit to come upon us, fill us, and enable us to speak for God. This prophetic speech will be in both Spirit-inspired tongues and Spirit-anointed witness. This is the privilege and responsibility of every true follower of Jesus.

The Purpose of the Promise

The purpose of the promise is clear; Jesus' words were explicit: "You will receive power ... you will be my witnesses." And yet, inconceivably, millions have failed to fully grasp this unambiguous purpose of Pentecost. The non-Pentecostal has equated Spirit baptism with the new birth, or conversion-initiation; holiness evangelicals have confused it with crisis sanctification; and many Pentecostals have claimed it as a means of personal self gratification. Rather than an empowering for missional service, Spirit-baptism has all-too-often been presented as the gateway to personal spiritual and emotional blessing.

In this context, Spirit baptism is sometimes associated with, and often accompanied by, weird physical manifestations, such as uncontrollable shaking, screaming, sobbing, passing out, and falling down. Never mind that nowhere in Scripture are any of these manifestations ever connected with the experience!

Unfortunately, as a result of such antics—to paraphrase the

words of the apostle Paul—onlookers have said of Pentecostals, “They are out of their minds!”⁷⁴ Even more tragic, the true purpose of Spirit baptism has been abandoned, and, as a result, the experience has been devalued.

Nevertheless, according to Jesus, the clear purpose of the 1:8 Promise is power for missional witness. This purpose is repeatedly emphasized throughout the book of Acts. Each time the Holy Spirit came upon believers, He came with purpose. Without exception, His coming *always* resulted in powerful Spirit-anointed missional witness.

In Acts, Luke presents seven key outpourings of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ In each the invariable result of the Spirit’s coming upon and filling disciples is Spirit-empowered witness to the gospel.⁷⁶ I can think of no greater need in the church today than to reclaim the true purpose of Spirit baptism. Only then can the experience be correctly understood and effectually received. Only then will the church be fully equipped to complete the task of taking the gospel to the yet-to-be-reached peoples of the world.

The Scope of the Promise

The 1:8 Promise of Jesus is truly the key to world harvest. When He gave the promise, Jesus had in view both “the end of the earth”⁷⁷ and the “end of the age.”⁷⁸ The promise represents His last giving of the Great Commission before ascending into heaven. We

must not, however, think of the Great Commission as a belated afterthought that Jesus off-handedly tacked on to the end of His earthly ministry. It was, rather, a carefully-considered reemphasis of what God has always intended for His people to do, that is, to proclaim His glory to all peoples and nations.

From beginning to end the Bible presents God as being a missionary God. His purpose has always been to call unto himself a people out of every nation, people, tongue, and tribe.⁷⁹ Jesus' 1:8 Promise reminds us that God has, in this Age of the Spirit, provided His people the supernatural enablement they need to effectively participate in His mission.

The geographical progression that Jesus presented in His 1:8 Promise is instructive. He said that we would be His witnesses in, "Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." In other words, we must begin where we are, and not relent until we reach "the remotest parts of the remotest part of the earth,"⁸⁰

It is important to note that, in delineating the scope of the promise, Jesus three times used the coordinating conjunction, *and*, rather than the sequential conjunction, *then*. He told His disciples that they would be His witnesses "in Jerusalem *and* in all Judea *and* Samaria *and* to the end of the earth." He did not say that they would be His witnesses "in Jerusalem *then* in all Judea *then* Samaria *then* to the end of the earth."

This is a significant distinction because it highlights the fact that we are to fulfill the Acts 1:8 mandate *simultaneously*, rather than *sequentially*. In other words, we are not to wait until we have reached our Jerusalem before we begin to reach out to our Judea. And we are not to wait until we reach our Jerusalem and Judea before we begin to reach out to our Samaria and to the ends of the earth. We are to reach them all at the same time. And, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to continue reaching out until we arrive at the end of the age. Only then will the mission end. Only then will we have no need for the Spirit's empowering presence.

Unwrapping the Promise: Part 2



appropriating the promise

We now come to what is possibly the most important issue of our study, that is, the issue of appropriating the 1:8 Promise of Jesus as our own. For, what is the value of our accurately understanding the meaning and importance of the experience, if we do not continue on to personally experience it? Understanding and experience must go together. For, just as it is inadequate to receive the experience without properly understanding its nature and purpose, it is folly to understand the experience without receiving it. A dying world awaits the church that will do both. A proper understanding *and* a

personal receiving the 1:8 Promise are, together, the key to world harvest.

Christ has called every Christian to be an active witnesses to His life and redemptive mission.⁸¹ His promise of divine empowering is thus for all who have savingly called upon His name.⁸² Therefore, one may properly ask, “Exactly how does one go about appropriating the promise?” In this chapter I will seek to answer that question.

For almost twenty years it has been my privilege to travel throughout Africa and pray with thousands of believers to receive God’s Spirit as an empowering presence in their lives. In twenty-five sub-Saharan countries I have ministered in churches, Bible schools, pastors’ seminars, and in Acts 1:8 Conferences. The ministry I lead, called the Acts in Africa Initiative,⁸³ has seen thousands baptized in the Holy Spirit, accompanied by Spirit-inspired tongues as on the Day of Pentecost. We have discovered that, when we tell people of Jesus’ gracious promise to give the Spirit to anyone who will simply ask in faith, God’s people enthusiastically welcome and promptly receive the Spirit. And, when they are correspondingly taught the purpose of the experience, they become zealous and effective witnesses for Christ.

Jesus has given clear instructions on how to receive the promise:⁸⁴

“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”⁸⁵

To the question, “How can one receive the promise of the Spirit?” Jesus answers, you receive by simply asking in faith. God will freely give the Holy Spirit to those who sincerely and believingly ask.⁸⁶

In instructing believers on how to receive the Spirit, I have discovered that it is often helpful to break the process down into three simple “faith steps”: asking in faith, receiving by faith, and speaking in faith.⁸⁷ Let’s look more closely at each of these three steps:

Ask in Faith

Simply and sincerely present your request to God,⁸⁸ believing that He will hear and answer your prayer.⁸⁹ Remember, God is more anxious to give you the gift of the Spirit than you are to

receive it. With this in mind, sincerely and confidently pray this prayer:

Lord, I believe your promise. I believe that if I ask for the Spirit, you will give me the Spirit. So, right now, in Jesus' name, I ask you, Give me the Holy Spirit, and empower me as your witness.

As you pray, believe that God is hearing and answering your prayer. Believe that, at this very moment, He is filling you with His Spirit. Be aware of what God is doing for you and in you. You will begin to sense the Spirit's presence as He comes upon you, just as Jesus promised.⁹⁰

Receive by Faith

Receiving the Spirit is a bold, present-tense step of faith. It occurs at the moment the promise is fully believed and boldly acted upon. Jesus promised, "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."⁹¹ This act of faith can be compared to Peter's step of faith when he, at the command of Jesus, stepped from the boat and began to walk on water. His bold step of faith resulted in a miracle!⁹² Once you have sensed the Spirit's presence within, pray and truly believe this simple prayer: "I am now full of the Holy Spirit." Consciously sense His presence inside.

Speak in Faith

Now, speak as the Spirit enables. Allow the Holy Spirit to gush forth from deep inside, from your “innermost being.”⁹³ As He does, cooperate with what He is doing. Yield to Him your vocal organs and lips. You will begin to speak words in a language you have never learned. When this happens, don’t be afraid. God is empowering you to be His Spirit-anointed witness. *Jesus is graciously fulfilling His 1:8 Promise in your life!* Now, yield yourself more and more to the Spirit. Let the words flow. Continue to speak, believing God with all of your heart, holding nothing back, fully trusting God to do His part.⁹⁴ Praise the Lord! You have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and you have been filled and empowered as Christ’s Spirit-inspired spokesperson.

Once you have been filled with the Spirit, and you have spoken in tongues as the Spirit has enabled, you can expect God to begin to speak through you in another way, that is, *in your own language!* The same Spirit who came upon you and enabled you to speak in a language you did not know will now come upon you again and again. On occasions, while in worship or in personal prayer, you will speak in tongues. On other occasions, while out in the world, you will speak in your own language and tell people about Jesus. Either way, it will be the Spirit who anoints and enables your speech.

Speaking in Tongues

It may be helpful to say a bit more about speaking in tongues, since this is often a new and seemingly strange phenomenon to those who have never before experienced it. It is important to understand that, when you speak in tongues, the words you speak will not come from your mind, as in natural speech. They will come from deep inside, from your spirit. Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart [or belly, or innermost being] will flow rivers of living water.’”⁹⁵ The Bible says that the “one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in [or by] his spirit he speaks mysteries.”⁹⁶ Paul testified, “For if I pray in a language I don't understand, my spirit is praying, but I don't know what I am saying.”⁹⁷

Your speaking will not be forced. It will be a natural flow of supernatural words. You should simply allow it to happen, and cooperate fully with the Spirit by boldly speaking out in faith. As you do, you will begin to speak words you do not understand, words that are coming from your spirit, inspired by the Spirit of God. When this happens, don't be afraid. Just let the words flow!

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a powerful life-changing experience. When you are filled with the Spirit, you can expect many wonderful changes to come into your life, such as,

- an overflowing fullness of the Spirit,⁹⁸
- a deepened reverence for God,⁹⁹
- a greater consecration to God and His work,¹⁰⁰
- a more active love for Christ, His word, and lost people.¹⁰¹

Although many such blessings come from one's being baptized in the Holy Spirit, we must not forget that the primary purpose of the experience is empowerment for witness, as Jesus clearly stated in His 1:8 Promise. Once you have been filled with the Spirit, you should immediately begin witnessing for Christ.

A warning is in order here. You should not think that, once you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, you have somehow "arrived," and that there is nothing more you need to do to maintain the experience. Spirit baptism does, indeed, bring one into a new and deeper relationship with the Lord. Nevertheless, no matter how powerful your initial infilling may be, your new relationship must be continually renewed. Your life in the Spirit can be maintained by living a life of sincere devotion, disciplined prayer, holiness, and committed witness for Christ.

Appropriating The Promise



turning the key

In the junk drawer in my kitchen are several stray keys. I have long forgotten which locks they fit. Nevertheless, I am reluctant to throw any of them away because, I tell myself, I may someday discover the lock that one of them opens. So there they lie in my drawer unused and unfulfilled. A key is a useless thing unless it is used to open a lock.

What is true for physical keys is also true for Jesus' 1:8 Promise, the key to world harvest. Unless it is used as He intended, it becomes, for the most part, useless and unfulfilled. In this chapter I will suggest some ways that we may use Jesus'

Promise to help open the door to effective evangelism.

Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

Jesus said that we were to be His Spirit-empowered witnesses “in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Since this promise was given centuries ago in a distant land, how does it apply to us today? A thoughtful examination of the text reveals several pertinent applications.

Jerusalem. When Jesus said that once a person is empowered by the Spirit, that person should be His witness in Jerusalem, what did He mean? Did He mean that that, once a person is filled with the Spirit, he or she should embark upon a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to begin their witness for Jesus there? Of course not. What Jesus did mean, however, is that the one who is empowered by the Spirit should immediately begin witnessing in the place where he or she lives. The disciples first received the Spirit in Jerusalem, and they immediately became powerful Spirit-anointed witnesses to the residents of the city.¹⁰²

That is precisely what God intends for us to do when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Once baptized, we have received the key to effective witness in our communities. Now we must insert it into the lock and turn it. We must begin to move in confident obedience to the Great Commission and to the inner promptings of the Spirit and start telling our friends, neighbors, and workmates

about Jesus. If we will do this, we, too, can expect God to supernaturally anoint our witness. This will result in a harvest of souls, very much like it happened in the book of Acts.¹⁰³

Judea. Jesus also said that His disciples would be His witnesses in Judea. By this He meant that their witness would not end at the Jerusalem city limits. It would extend into the surrounding region. To us this promise means that our witness should not be limited to the city or neighborhood in which we live but should extend into the surrounding areas.

The church that takes this injunction of Jesus seriously will begin to reach out to start home cell groups and eventually plant new churches in neighboring villages, towns, and cities. During our years in Africa Sandy and I have observed this strategy bear much fruit. As believers were filled with the Spirit, and taught clearly about God's intention for the church to reach the lost, they became burdened for those in nearby towns and villages who did not have a local Spirit-filled church. Moved by the Spirit, they began sending delegations to these villages to plant churches. Across Africa tens of thousands of churches have been planted in this way by Spirit-filled believers.

We too, whether we live in Africa, America, or anywhere else in the world, must be open to the promptings of the Spirit to take the gospel to those who live in locales near us who do not have a vibrant, Spirit-filled church.

While at the Assemblies of God School of Theology in Lilongwe, Malawi, I served for several years as the school's academic dean. In that role, one of my responsibilities was to receive applications from those wanting to enroll as pastoral students. Every applicant was asked to complete part of their application in their own handwriting. In this section of the application, the applicant was asked to share their personal testimony, telling us four things: how they had become a Christian, how they had been filled with the Spirit, how God had called them into ministry, and how they were presently serving God in their local church.

One day an application crossed my desk from a man named Smith Muwaba who lived in Rhumpi, a town in northern Malawi. I relate to you part of Smith's testimony in His own words, as best I can remember them:

“As a faithful elder in my church for many years, I did my best to be faithful to God.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, I was largely ineffective as a Christian. Then, one Sunday a missionary came to our church from the Bible school. He preached a simple message on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He told us how, if we would just ask, God would give us the Holy Spirit. He also told us that we would receive power to be Christ's witnesses. When the missionary gave the altar call, I went forward with others to receive this power. Soon I was filled

with the Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit enabled me.

“From that moment on, my life was changed. Inside I began to sense a deep burden for the people in a small village near Rhumpi where I lived. I asked my pastor if I could take a team of church members to that village to plant a new church. He agreed, and we went there to preach the gospel and establish the church. The church has now grown to about thirty members, and I am serving as its pastor. I feel my need to know more about the word of God, so I am asking if I will be allowed to come to the Bible school.”

Needless to say, Smith was enthusiastically welcomed into the school. A few years later, after his graduation, he became national college ministries director for the Malawi Assemblies of God. He now pastors a church in Malawi.

During our years in Malawi we saw Smith’s story repeated many times. As a result of a powerful Pentecostal revival that came to the church in Malawi, within a ten-year period more than 1,000 new churches were spontaneously birthed across the nation. The church grew from about 200 to more than 1,200 local congregations.¹⁰⁵ As I pondered this phenomenon, I came to realize that this was nothing less than a present-day fulfillment of Jesus’ 1:8 Promise: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit

comes upon you . . . and you will be my witnesses.”

Samaria. In His 1:8 Promise, Jesus also told His disciples that they were to be His witnesses in Samaria. These early Jewish disciples viewed the Samaritans as half-breeds and turncoats. The Samaritans were the descendants of Jews who centuries earlier had intermingled with their Babylonian invaders. In doing this, they had compromised and perverted the Jewish religion by mixing it with paganism. As a result the Jews despised them. They were the outcasts and marginalized of their day.¹⁰⁶

Today, our “Samaritans” are those people in our societies who have been neglected and marginalized because of their race, religion, life styles, or cultural distinctives. However, once we have been filled with the Spirit, we should allow Him to work in our hearts, just as He worked in the hearts of the first disciples.¹⁰⁷ We should allow Him to soften our hearts and give us a burden to reach these disenfranchised people. Further, we should allow the Spirit to move us into action to take the love of Christ to these neglected people.

End of the earth. Finally, Jesus told His disciples that, once they had been filled with the Spirit, they would be His witnesses to the end of the earth, or, as the NASB translates this phrase, “the remotest parts of the earth,”¹⁰⁸ to preach the gospel and plant the church of Jesus Christ.

As I shared in Chapter 1, before becoming missionaries to

Africa, Sandy and I pastored for twenty-two years in America—five years in Colorado and seventeen in Texas. During that time we sought to lead our churches into strong missions involvement through personal witness, consistent prayer, and generous missionary giving. My strategy for increasing missions giving in the church was straightforward. First, I made sure that my people were exposed to missionaries. I wanted them to hear directly from the missionaries that we as a church supported.

So, about ten times a year I would invite missionaries to the church to share their hearts and stories with the congregation. I deliberately chose not to limit the missionaries to short five- or ten-minute presentations, but gave them the full preaching time in the service. I did this so that my people could receive a fuller exposure to the missionary's message, burden, and work. I can honestly say that, during those many years of having missionary guests in my churches, I never once had a missionary that did not bless my church. Their very presence reminded the church of why it existed.

Additionally, I would preach often on the work of the Spirit in empowering and inspiring the church to reach the lost at home and around the world. I would then pray with my people to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result, a large percentage of our members were filled with the Spirit as we have described in this book. I did this because I knew Him to be the Spirit of Mission,

Turning the Key

and given the opportunity, He would move in their hearts inspiring them to pray, go, and give to missions. My strategy worked, for, throughout the years, we saw our missions involvement and giving increase many times over.

The 1:8 Promise is indeed the key to world harvest. As committed disciples are filled and refilled with the Spirit in an openly missional context, the work of the kingdom prospers. Believers are challenged by the word and inspired and directed by the Spirit to commit themselves and their treasures to reaching the lost at home and abroad.

The twenty-first century church can—and must—recapture these powerful spiritual truths, truths that propelled the first-century church to the ends of the then-known world. These same truths carried the modern Pentecostal movement from its humble beginnings at Azusa Street to the ends of the earth in less than a century.¹⁰⁹

It is now crucial that today's church rediscover and reapply the powerful missionary message of Acts 1:8. And, as the churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America emerge as a last-days missions force, it is essential that they, too, come to terms with Jesus' 1:8 Promise. Then they, hand-in-hand with the historic missionary-sending churches of the West, can work to complete the Great Commission of Christ in this generation.¹¹⁰



ephesus and us

We conclude our study of Jesus' 1:8 Promise with a probing question: Having looked in depth at this Promise of Jesus, what now must we do? Jesus' directions to the backslidden church in Ephesus in Revelation 2 can serve as a guide in answering this important question.¹¹¹ Forty years earlier this church had experienced a powerful Pentecostal revival. This revival had come as a result of an outpouring of the Spirit that occurred during Paul's ministry in the city during his third missionary journey.¹¹²

According to Luke's record in Acts, this outpouring prepared

the church for dramatic charismatic ministry in Ephesus¹¹³ and effective missionary outreach into all of Asia Minor during the next two years.¹¹⁴ Now, in one short generation the church had abandoned its first love and initial zeal for Christ and His work. In this context Jesus instructs the Ephesian believers to do three things: “Remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works”¹¹⁵ This centuries-old exhortation of Jesus has direct relevance to the twenty-first century Pentecostal church. Let’s take a moment and look at several ways this is true.

Remember

First, Jesus called on the Ephesian church to remember. Jesus’ words speak poignantly to today’s Pentecostal church. As the movement enters into its second century, we who identify ourselves with it would do well to ponder our shared history and to consider the possibility that we, in significant ways, have departed from the movement’s original vision. We as a people must recapture the movement’s early passion for Pentecostal experience and its historic commitment to reach the lost at home and around the world. As it did for our Pentecostal forefathers, Jesus’ 1:8 Promise can give us needed direction.

Early Pentecostals believed that God was pouring out His Spirit in the last days of time to empower His church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth before the soon return of Christ.

They were convinced that God was restoring to His church its primal power, and that He was calling it back to its original purpose. They advocated a radical new missions strategy, one that they believed would rapidly propel the church to the ends of the earth in the power of the Holy Spirit. They boldly contended that the proclamation of the gospel should be empowered by the Holy Spirit and accompanied by the same supernatural signs that followed the ministries of Jesus and the apostles. As we ponder the present state of the movement, we would do well to take heed to Jesus' provocative words: "Remember from where you have fallen."

Now, I am well aware that this idea of calling on the contemporary Pentecostal church to remember its early twentieth-century origins is not a popular idea in some circles. In fact, there are those among us who would be pleased if we discarded the term "Pentecostal" altogether, along with what they believe to be several other embarrassing remnants of the past. They wince at the very thought that anyone from a past generation could teach today's emergent church anything. How can those stodgy-looking guys in stained black-and-white photographs have anything to say to us? How can those pale-faced women in their faded print dresses and their hair up in buns teach us anything of value? After all, we are the ____ (insert your own letter) Generation! We're the ones sporting cool backpacks filled with the latest hand-held

electronic devices; the ones who sing those edgy, visually-enhanced worship songs complete with multicolored mood lighting. How can those unsophisticated bumpkins teach *us* anything?

And yet, could it really be that those “ancient” Pentecostals had really encountered the living God. In spite of their seeming lack of sophistication, could they have really rediscovered previously disregarded biblical truth? The evidence seems to bear this out.

The truths that these same Pentecostal forbearers found “hidden in plain sight” in the book of Acts launched a worldwide missionary movement the likes of which had never before been seen, or even contemplated, in the history of the church. In its single century of existence, the modern Pentecostal movement has girded the globe. It has become the fastest growing, non-militaristic religious movement in the history of the world.

We are thus forced to ask ourselves, in comparison to their profound impact on the world, what are we—even with our latest leadership techniques and avant-garde communication technologies—really accomplishing? We would do well to once again, as they did, allow the final words of Jesus to penetrate our hearts and revolutionize our thinking. Maybe, just maybe, the time has come for us to remember from where we have fallen.

Repent

Next, like the Ephesian believers, we must repent. In Acts the call to repentance was frequently on the lips of the apostles, and it was often issued in the context of receiving the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁶ When on the Day of Pentecost the crowd cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter’s first instruction to them was, “Repent!” Only then could they receive the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷ In other words, they were to stop what they were presently doing, and do what they knew to be right. True repentance thus involves both an admission of wrongdoing and a turning *from* wrongdoing *to* “right doing.” In other words, repentance involves both “turning from” and “turning to.”

Jesus’ 1:8 Promise counsels us to turn *from* our neglect of the vital experience of Spirit baptism as an essential empowering for missional witness. It further urges us to turn *to* a renewed commitment to emphasize the experience in our churches and in our own personal lives and ministries. It inspires us to turn *from* our self-serving programs and agendas *to* fulfilling Christ’s agenda of proclaiming the gospel at home and to the ends of the earth.

If the twenty-first century Pentecostal church is to regain its relevance—not so much to contemporary society, but to God and His mission—we must resolve our debilitating ambivalence about Spirit baptism, and we must once again begin to boldly proclaim Jesus as both the Savior of the World *and* the Baptizer in the Holy

Spirit and power. Repentance is thus a necessary and inescapable step in our preparing ourselves to fulfill Christ's commission to disciple all nations before He comes again.¹¹⁸

Renew

Finally, Jesus enjoined the church of Ephesus to “do the works you did at first.” This magisterial injunction of Jesus, like the first two, applies to the contemporary Pentecostal church. It is a call to spiritual renewal. We, like those late first-century believers in Ephesus, must experience genuine spiritual renewal. To do this we will need to return to the “kitchen drawer” where the key to world harvest—that is, Jesus’ 1:8 Promise—has been tossed and left forgotten and unused. We must, then, resolutely take it in hand and use it to call the movement back to its original vision of evangelizing the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I truly believe that today’s Pentecostal church stands at a crossroads. It finds itself in a similar circumstance as the church of Ephesus in John’s day. Two pathways stretch out before it: it can continue to aimlessly drift on its present path of spiritual ambivalence, or it can humbly heed the call of Jesus: “Remember . . . repent . . . do the works you did at first.”

Like the Ephesian church, the modern Pentecostal church was birthed by a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This global outpouring has resulted in millions being baptized in the Holy

Spirit, accompanied by the same biblical sign as the first-century disciples. Those receiving the Spirit in this manner have often testified to an intense passion for God and His mission. In short order, thousands of zealous Pentecostal missionaries were deployed to take the message of Christ to the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, with the passage of time Pentecostalism's early zeal has gradually waned. This diminishing of fervor is most clearly evidenced in the West. The Classical Pentecostal church has, to a large degree, become institutionalized. What was once a rowdy movement, characterized by primal energy, intense passion, and grass-roots initiative, has become "denominationalized," all-too-often characterized by hierarchal structure and lock-step regimentation.

Most telling of all is the fact that, by-in-large, the movement's passion for the lost has been preempted by structures and programs designed to cater to the reached rather than to rescue the perishing. Sadly, the contemporary Pentecostal church has, in the words of Jesus, lost its first love. The pressing question of today is, "What can the movement do to recapture its first love and zeal?" Jesus' final instructions to His church speak as forcefully to us today as they did to His first disciples. They offer us an authoritative answer to the question and a clear pathway to authentic Pentecostal experience and practice. Just as the 1:8

Ephesus and Us

Promise provided primary direction for the church in the book Acts, it can do the same for us today. The time has come for the Pentecostal movement to revisit, and to fully embrace this final mandate of Jesus. For, in doing this Pentecostalism will rediscover its missionary soul.

endnotes

- ¹ Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20.
- ² I deal with this topic extensively in my book *Empowered for Global Mission: A Missionary Look at the Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers), 2005.
- ³ Luke 24:46-49, New King James Version.
- ⁴ Luke 24:48.
- ⁵ Rom. 10:13-15.
- ⁶ Matt. 24:14; 28:20.
- ⁷ Acts 2:39.
- ⁸ Mark 10:9, King James Version.
- ⁹ Acts 1:4-5.
- ¹⁰ Luke 24:45-49.
- ¹¹ Acts 1:4-8; reference Luke 24:49.
- ¹² This discussion took place at the Pan Africa Theological Seminary (PATHS) in Lomé, Togo.
- ¹³ Including Acts 8:17-18; 9:17 with 1 Cor. 14:18; 10:46; and 19:6.
- ¹⁴ The doctrine of initial physical evidence is the teaching that everyone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit will speak in tongues as did the 120 disciples on the Day of Pentecost. The Assemblies of God, USA, codified the doctrine when they adopted their “Sixteen Fundamental Truths” during the movement’s third General Council meeting in 1916 under the heading “The Initial Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Its filial churches around the world have adopted similar, if not identical, statements. The World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) has done the same. A shortened version of the statement appears in the *Pentecostal Evangel*. It reads, “We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4.”

- ¹⁵ Synan, Vinson, “The Role of Tongues as Initial Evidence,” in *Conference Papers on the Theme ‘To the Ends of the Earth’ Presented at the Twenty-third Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, November 11-13, 1993, quoted by Denzil R. Miller in *Empowered for Global Mission* (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers International, 2005), 330-335.
- ¹⁶ John V. York, in his book, *Missions in the Age of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2000) addresses this issue. In chapter 11, “Holy Spirit Baptism” (181-187), he discusses the missional ramifications of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues.
- ¹⁷ Luke 11:5-10.
- ¹⁸ John 4:23.
- ¹⁹ Acts 1:8.
- ²⁰ Compare Num. 11:29; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17-18.
- ²¹ Acts 2:21-36.
- ²² See Acts 2:7-11.
- ²³ Acts 1:8.
- ²⁴ Acts 2:5.
- ²⁵ *Missio Dei* is Latin for “mission of God.” It is a term used by Bible scholars to refer to God’s plan to redeem all nations through the work of Christ on the cross and the advancement of His kingdom to the ends of the earth (reference Matt. 24:14; Rev. 5:9; 7:9).
- ²⁶ In my role as director of the Acts in Africa Initiative I have lead teams to conduct Acts 1:8 Conferences and other Holy Spirit emphases in Liberia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland. During these conferences, leaders and pastors from across the country gather to pray, learn, experience the Spirit, and strategize for evangelistic,

church planting, and missionary outreach. More information concerning the Acts in Africa Initiative can be found at www.ActsinAfrica.org.

- ²⁷ Pentecost Sunday is celebrated on the seventh Sunday following Easter of each year. In 2010 Pentecost occurred on May 23.
- ²⁸ The Decade of Pentecost website can be accessed on the Internet at www.DecadeofPentecost.org. AAGA is a cooperative organization of fifty filially-related national churches in forty-two countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean Basin, comprising about sixteen million adherents meeting in 65,000 local congregations across the continent (2010 statistics).
- ²⁹ Acts 2:33.
- ³⁰ Acts 1:4; see also Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33, 39; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13.
- ³¹ Luke 11:2.
- ³² Luke 11:13.
- ³³ Joel 2:28-29.
- ³⁴ Acts 2:17.
- ³⁵ See 1 John 5:14-15.
- ³⁶ Note the connection between Luke 11:3 and verses 5-13.
- ³⁷ Acts 1:4.
- ³⁸ Luke 11:9-13.
- ³⁹ Luke 24:49.
- ⁴⁰ Acts 1:4.
- ⁴¹ John 3:8.
- ⁴² John 3:5-7; 4:13-14; 7:37-39; 16:13-15; Luke 12:12.
- ⁴³ Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:18-19.
- ⁴⁴ Luke 11:9-13; Acts 1:8.
- ⁴⁵ Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:4-5.
- ⁴⁶ Acts 2:32-33.
- ⁴⁷ Acts 5:32. Note how the obedience called for in this passage is

obedience in proclaiming Christ in the presence of opposition and persecution (Acts 5:28-29).

⁴⁸ Acts 1:8.

⁴⁹ Acts 1:8; John 3:8.

⁵⁰ Luke 24:49.

⁵¹ Gen. 41:38; Exod. 31:3; Num. 11:25-29; 27:18; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 14:6; 1 Sam. 10:10.

⁵² Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 5:32; 6:10; 7:55; 10:44; 13:9; 19:6.

⁵³ John 14:17.

⁵⁴ 1 Sam. 10:6.

⁵⁵ John 15:3.

⁵⁶ Mark 3:13-19.

⁵⁷ Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 20:21-22.

⁵⁸ Luke 18:28.

⁵⁹ John 20:22.

⁶⁰ Acts 1:4-5.

⁶¹ Acts 1:2.

⁶² Acts 2:39.

⁶³ Acts 2:38.

⁶⁴ Luke 11:9-10.

⁶⁵ Acts 5:32; compare with v. 29.

⁶⁶ Acts 2:39.

⁶⁷ Acts 2:1-4.

⁶⁸ Note: The time from Jesus' giving of the Promise (that occurred on the day of His ascension) to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was seven days. Pentecost occurred 50 days after Passover, the day of Jesus' crucifixion. Three days later He was raised from the dead and forty days later He ascended into heaven. This leaves one week between His ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (3+40+7=50).

⁶⁹ Acts 2:47.

- ⁷⁰ Acts 3:19-20.
- ⁷¹ Acts 1:8; 2:3, 17-18; 10:44; 11:15; 19:6.
- ⁷² Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 8:17; 9:17-18; 13:9, 52.
- ⁷³ Acts 1:8, 16; 2:4; 2:17-18; 4:25, 31; 6:10; 9:20; 10:46; 11:28; 13:2, 4-5; 13:10; 18:25; 19:6; 21:4, 11.
- ⁷⁴ See 1 Cor. 14:23.
- ⁷⁵ The First Jerusalem Outpouring/Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), the Second Jerusalem Outpouring (4:31), the Samaritan Outpouring (8:14-17), the Damascene Outpouring (9:17-18), the Caesarean Outpouring (10:44-46), the Antiochian Outpouring (13:1-4), and the Ephesian Outpouring (19:1-7).
- ⁷⁶ In my book, *Empowered for Global Mission*, I call this pattern Jesus' *empowerment-witness motif*. There, I present a detailed analysis of each of these seven key outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Acts.
- ⁷⁷ Acts 1:8.
- ⁷⁸ Matt. 28:20; reference Acts 3:20-21.
- ⁷⁹ Gen. 12:3; Rev 5:9; 7:9.
- ⁸⁰ New American Standard Bible.
- ⁸¹ Matt. 24:14; Luke 24:48; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39; 10:42.
- ⁸² Acts 1:8; 2:38-39.
- ⁸³ You can find out more about the Acts in Africa Initiative by visiting our website at www.ActsinAfrica.org.
- ⁸⁴ I understand that the Scriptures teach that in one importance sense, every believer receives the Spirit when they accept Christ as their Savior, as is clearly taught by Jesus (John 3:3-7) and Paul (Rom. 8:9). There is, nevertheless another sense, as taught by Luke, that the Spirit is received as an empowering presence (Acts 1:8). It is this sense of receiving the Spirit that we are calling the 1:8 Promise of Jesus.
- ⁸⁵ Luke 11:9-13.
- ⁸⁶ John 7:37; see also Gal. 3:5, 14.
- ⁸⁷ These instructions for receiving the Spirit are adapted from the author's booklet, *You Can Experience God's Power: 4 Things You*

- Need to Know.* The booklet is available from the Acts in Africa Initiative, www.ActsinAfrica.org.
- 88 See also Phil. 4:4.
- 89 1 John 5:14-15.
- 90 Acts 1:8; 10:44.
- 91 Mark 11:24. The English Standard Version margin reads “believe that you are receiving.”
- 92 Matt. 14:29.
- 93 John 7:37-39, New American Standard Bible.
- 94 Psalm 103.1.
- 95 John 7:38.
- 96 1 Cor. 14:2.
- 97 1 Cor. 14:14, Living Bible.
- 98 John 7:37-39.
- 99 Acts 2:43; Heb. 12:28.
- 100 Acts 2:42.
- 101 Mark 16:20.
- 102 For example, see Acts 2:14-40; 4:31-22.
- 103 Acts 2:47.
- 104 An elder in the Malawian church is about the equivalent of a deacon in the American church.
- 105 Today (2012) the Malawi Assemblies of God reports more than 2,000 local congregations. They intend to plant 2,000 more in just one year through their “Vision 1-1-1-1” initiative. In this initiative every *one* church is expected to plant at least *one* more church in *one* year and to help sponsor at least *one* student to Bible school.
- 106 John 4:9, reference Luke 9:52-53.
- 107 Peter is a prime example of how the Spirit moved in people’s lives to challenge their racial and cultural prejudices (Acts 11:4-18).
- 108 Acts 1:8, New American Standard Bible.

- ¹⁰⁹ I have written about the Azusa Street outpouring and how it impacted Africa in my book *From Azusa to Africa to the Nations*.
¹¹⁰ Matt. 24:14.
¹¹¹ Rev. 2:1-7.
¹¹² You can read about this outpouring and Paul's subsequent ministry in Ephesus in Acts 19:1-41.
¹¹³ Acts 19:11-20; 20:7-12.
¹¹⁴ Acts 19:10.
¹¹⁵ Rev. 2:5.
¹¹⁶ For example, see Acts 2:38; 3:19; and 8:22.
¹¹⁷ Acts 2:38.
¹¹⁸ Matt. 24:14 with 28:18-20.

other books by denzil r. miller

Power Ministry: How to Minister in the Spirit's Power (2004)
(also available in French, Portuguese, Malagasy,
Kinyarwanda, and Chichewa)

*Empowered for Global Mission: A Missionary Look at
the Book of Acts* (2005)

From Azusa to Africa to the Nations (2005)
(also available in French, Spanish, and Portuguese)

Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission (2007)

In Step with the Spirit: Studies in the Spirit-filled Walk (2008)

*The Kingdom and the Power: The Kingdom of God:
A Pentecostal Interpretation* (2009)

*Experiencing the Spirit: A Study of the Work of the Spirit
in the Life of the Believer* (2009)

Teaching in the Spirit (2009)

*Power Encounter: Ministering in the Power and
Anointing of the Holy Spirit: Revised* (2009)
(also available in Kiswahili)

*You Can Minister in God's Power: A Guide for
Spirit-filled Disciples* (2009)

*The Spirit of God in Mission: A Vocational Commentary
on the Book of Acts* (2011)

*Proclaiming Pentecost: 100 Sermon Outlines on the Power of
the Holy Spirit* (2011) (Soon to be available in French, Spanish,
Portuguese, and Swahili) (Associate editor with Mark Turney, editor)

Globalizing Pentecostal Missions in Africa (2011)
(Editor, with Enson Lwesya)

All of the above books are available from

AIA Publications
1640 N. Boonville Drive
Springfield, MO, 65803, USA
E-mail: ActsInAfrica@agmd.org

A current price list may be obtained by contacting one
of the above addresses or by visiting the Acts in Africa website:
<http://www.ActsInAfrica.org/bookstore>

© Denzil R. Miller – January 2012



The 1:8 Promise of Jesus: The Key to World Harvest

Printed in the United States of America

PneumaLifePublications.org – 2012

© 2012, Denzil R. Miller

the 1:8 promise of Jesus

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”

THE KEY TO WORLD HARVEST

“I am convinced that, if we are going to effectively carry out Christ’s mandate to take the gospel to all nations, the church—and every member of the church—must come to terms with the message Acts 1:8. A proper understanding and application of Jesus’ potent promise in this verse is, I believe, the key to world harvest.”

— The Author



Denzil R. Miller is director of the Acts in Africa Initiative, a ministry aimed at bringing Pentecostal and missional renewal to the African church. He travels extensively throughout Africa teaching and preaching in pastors and leadership conferences. He holds a doctor of ministry degree from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, MO, and has authored several books on the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer and in the work of missions.

PneumaLifePublications.com
Springfield, MO, USA

