

# OPENING THE FLOODGATES

The book of Acts records the story of the early church and the remarkable spread of the gospel, through the testimony of a small group of very ordinary people.

*"[Jesus] said to them ..'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you: and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'" [Acts 1.8]*

The story is one of the floodgates of heaven being opened, and a great river of grace flowing across a dry and thirsty humanity – fulfilling in a wonderful way the Lord's words through Isaiah –

*"I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams." [Is.44.3f]*

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The aim of our studies over these weeks is to learn together how those floodgates may be opened again in our own context; for our land today is similarly parched, and as thirsty as ever for the Lord Himself. We'll hope to get, and then share, feedback from the different Community Groups, so that together we can hear what the Spirit is saying to us as a fellowship through His Word.

Perhaps the prayer which should be on all our hearts through these studies, therefore, is best expressed in the words of the following song, first penned some 30 years ago –

*Lord, we long for You to move in power  
There's a hunger deep within our hearts  
To see healing in our nation: send Your Spirit to revive us*

*Heal our nation, Heal our nation, Heal our nation  
Pour out Your Spirit on this land*

*Lord we hear Your Spirit, coming closer  
A mighty wave to break upon our land  
Bringing justice, and forgiveness: God we cry to You, 'Revive us'*

*Heal our nation, Heal our nation, Heal our nation  
Pour out Your Spirit on this land*

# 1.

*“..when the Holy Spirit comes on you”*

Acts 2.1-47

We'll start at the beginning! This chapter in the book of Acts records for us the day when the risen Jesus began to exercise His ministry through His people: as His Spirit was poured out on them, He thereby came to dwell in them and work through them.

Some aspects of the day of Pentecost, of course, were unique: but there are lessons in this account for Christ's church in every generation, along with great encouragements and challenges.

1. **Read through the whole chapter** and get some sense of the drama of the whole narrative.

What strikes you most forcibly about the passage?

2. **Read v.1.** The opening sentence highlights the fact that the disciples were *“..all together in one place [or at one] ..”*; and the chapter ends on a remarkably similar note (see vv.44 & 46). Look up the following passages –

- **Genesis 11.6** (*“If as one people..”*),
- **Psalms 133** (*“.. live together in unity ..”*)
- **Ephesians 2.15** (*“.. to create in Himself one new man ..”*)
- **Philippians 2.1-5** (*“.. one in spirit and purpose ..”*)

and consider *why* our being ‘at one’ is so important in terms of our experience of the Spirit of God.

What might being ‘in one place’ involve for ourselves, both spiritually and relationally, as well as ‘geographically’?

What hints does **Acts 1.12-26** provide in suggesting how this very diverse group of believers came to be *“in one place/at one”*? Think through what those disciples were

doing – and why: and consider what challenges there may be for ourselves in their actions.

**3. Read vv.1-13.** We've adopted the acronym ACTS to describe what we're about as a fellowship of God's people: **A**ttracting, **C**onsolidating, **T**raining, **S**ending. These opening verses are thus instructive for us because they narrate a crowd being *attracted*.

In this great outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem, what drew such a large crowd together; and what might be parallels for ourselves today?

**4. Read vv.14-21.** Compare vv.17-18 here with the original in Joel 2.28-29 ... and spot the difference! [*Clue – Peter has 'added' a line, in the way a preacher may repeat something for emphasis*]

If the church is a 'prophetic' people, what does this suggest should be our primary task(s) as Christ's church?

**5. Read vv.22-37.** The thrust of Peter's message can be stated in three short words, 'This is that' – 'This (*the 'miracle' in the lives of these ordinary people*) is that (*the message about the risen Lord Jesus Christ*)'.

To what extent is the message *expounded* at Gilcomston also *seen* and *experienced*, by those who come among us, in the miracle of our changed lives?

Have a look at **1 Pet.3.15** where Peter points to just this sort of pattern – the Lordship of Christ in your life prompting questions and the chance to share the gospel. Can you think of situations in your own experience where this has happened?

What might be the hallmarks of our *worship* (see e.g. 1 Cor.14.24f), our *discipleship* (see e.g. Mark 10.35-45), and our *relationships* (see e.g. Jn.13.35 or Eph.4.22-5.2), which are explicable only by the work of the risen Jesus?

**6. Read vv.38-41.** Most of Peter's application of the message here runs counter to prevailing political correctness! Despite that, he gently and respectfully (see 1 Pet.3.15!) drives the truth of the gospel home: check out the verbs to see how he does it.

Are we good at listening to the questions people are actually asking ("*Peter replied ..*")?

When and how should we be warning those around us ("*.. he warned them..*")?

Does the note of genuine compassion sound through all we say and do ("*.. he pleaded with them ..*")? How is such compassion cultivated in our hearts?

**7. Read vv.42-47.** These verses paint a picture of the very first Christian fellowship, a church which was large from the start!

What were the priorities and characteristics of this infant church?

Recognising that the remarkable numerical growth they experienced was clearly the Lord's doing (see vv.41 & 47), from this sketch of their communal life what do you think was so attractive about their life? What would have attracted *you*?

V.46 highlights a balance between their 'gathered' life ("*.. they continued to meet together in the temple courts ..*") and their 'scattered' life ("*.. in their homes ..*"): how do best develop that sort of balance in our life as a fellowship here?

What lessons for ourselves as a fellowship here in Aberdeen do you come away with after this study?