

# The Fire of the Lord

an introduction to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit

Sometimes spoken of as 'the forgotten Person' of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit exercises a hugely important ministry in the outworking of the purpose of God.

This series of 7 introductory studies is intended to deepen your understanding of what that ministry is, and transform your experience through the enjoyment of that ministry in your life.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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## 7. The 'fullness' of the Spirit

(Acts 4.<sup>1-37</sup>)

[w/b Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

*".. filled with the Spirit .."*

In the previous studies we've seen what it is that the Holy Spirit does in and through His people - He cultivates *in* us the character of Jesus (the fruit of the Spirit), and He exercises *through* us the on-going ministry of Jesus (the gifts of the Spirit). Paul's call to "*be filled with the Spirit*" is an exhortation to ensure the Spirit is given free rein to fulfill this work in and through our lives.

The chapter in Acts on which this chapter focuses shows those who are already 'full of the Spirit' (Acts 2.5) being 'filled with the Spirit' - a fact which underlines the importance for the Christian of both maintaining constantly a certain spiritual *state* (being 'full of the Spirit') and, as the situations demands it, receiving repeatedly a specific *strength* (being 'filled with the Spirit').

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*[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group - though this week it would certainly be good to **try** and cover them all! It will be helpful to ensure that in this study you at least cover questions 4, 6 & 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

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1. **Read Acts 4.1-37.** There is benefit, as always, in reading the passage in its entirety to begin with: it's a narrative showing God powerfully at work as His people face significant opposition.

What impressions did this passage leave on you as you read it through?

To what extent (if any) is this sort of narrative mirrored in the life of Christ's church in our land today?

**2. Read Acts 4.1-4.** Action was taken by the authorities to stop the 'open-air' preaching of Peter and John: but the message was getting out and large numbers were believing in Jesus.

In what ways are attempts made today to 'gag' those who are committed to the proclamation of the gospel?

Should we, too, be expecting large numbers of conversions - or is ours a rather different situation?

**3. Read Acts 4.5-7.** The authorities are out in full force as they haul Peter and John up for questioning: numerically, politically, and intellectually, the odds are stacked against the apostles!

What might be relevant parallels to this scenario in our own contemporary context?

Why was (and is) the Christian message viewed so negatively when its effect has been so positive?

4. **Read Acts 4.8-12.** Peter addresses the authorities with a higher 'authority': he was 'filled with the Holy Spirit', and given a special enabling for a specific challenge.

What would you say characterizes Peter's response to the question of the authorities?

Have there been times when you have been very conscious of being 'filled with the Holy Spirit'?

5. **Read Acts 4.13-22.** In the light of what had happened, and in the face of what Peter had said, the authorities resorted to threats and warned the apostles to stop preaching Jesus.

Read **Acts 1.8** again: in what ways is it clear that the Holy Spirit was empowering Peter and John to bear witness to Jesus here?

In what situations today might Christians have to take the line of Peter and John in vv.19-20?

**6. Read Acts 4.23-31.** The response which the body of believers made to this situation was to join in prayer - and to discern in prayer how God's Word had application to their predicament.

For what did the believers pray?

How do we best ensure that our perspective and our praying is informed by the Word of God?

What do you learn about being filled with the Holy Spirit from these verses?

**7. Read Acts 4.31-37.** The conclusion to the passage provides a cameo of the church's life, enabling us to see what a church filled with the Holy Spirit looks like.

How would you characterize the church in Jerusalem as depicted in these verses?

In the light of this whole passage what steps might we take in response to the command to "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph.5.18)?