

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-6 A New Prophetic Community

Have you ever met someone whose life was dramatically changed through a powerful encounter with God? This is what happened to people in the book of Acts. They encountered Christ and their lives were forever changed.

You will remember from the last lesson how on the Day of Pentecost Peter preached with great power. As a result, 3,000 people repented and were added to the church. These new followers of Jesus were soon filled with the Spirit just like Peter and the original 120. As a result of these experiences with God, something wonderful happened. Their lives were changed, and a new prophetic community was born. It was a community of people who were filled with the Holy Spirit and their lives were directed by him.

This new community reflected the character and mission of Jesus. For example, they stopped thinking about their own needs. Instead, they devoted themselves to God and to one another. They would often come together to pray and to encourage each other. In their gatherings they encountered the power of the Holy Spirit, and they listened to the apostles teach from the Word of God. God worked signs and wonders among them, causing them to live with a sense of holy awe.

Their new prophetic community was one of peace and harmony. Everyone shared what they had, and if anyone had a need, others helped them out. They made it their habit to gather in the temple courts daily for a time of worship, and they opened their homes to share meals with one another. As a result, their lives were filled with joy and praise.

The people of Jerusalem took notice of how these followers of Jesus acted, and they were attracted to them. They wanted to be a part of this amazing community of believers. Because of these things, people were getting saved every day and the church continued to grow.

Jesus did not come to earth simply to teach people how to live better lives. He did do that—but he came for an even greater purpose. He came to establish his kingdom on the earth and in the lives of his followers. It would be a kingdom in which he reigned and his Spirit dwelt.

In the days following the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the church emerged as a new kind of community. It was a type of community that the world had never seen before. It was a community of Spirit-anointed prophets. Centuries before Moses had declared, “I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!” (Num 11:29).

This is exactly what occurred at Pentecost. Peter used the prophecy of Joel to explain to the crowd what had happened. Joel had said, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy” (Acts 2:17). In other words, at Pentecost God was creating a new community of Spirit-anointed prophets.

What an amazing thing! God's new prophetic people would live and speak by the Spirit. As we move through the book of Acts we will see them speaking words given to them by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes they will speak in tongues; at other times they will speak in the common language. We must note, however, that the main form of prophetic speech in Acts is Spirit-empowered proclamation of the gospel.

And yet, these new prophetic people will do more than speak by the Spirit, they will live by the Spirit. In doing this, they will live as Jesus had lived when he was with them. This new community is a good example of how God wants our churches to be today.

Our story reveals at least four characteristics of this new prophetic community:

First, our story reveals that this new prophetic community was a *transformed community*. The people in this new community had encountered the living Christ. And, as a result, their lives had been dramatically transformed. In Peter's Pentecost sermon, he had told them about Jesus' death and resurrection. Then, he called on them to repent and believe on Christ. They obeyed and were baptized in water. Their baptism indicated that they had died to their old lives and risen to new life in Christ. They had fully committed themselves to Christ's mission.

Second, our story reveals that this new prophetic community was a *Spirit-empowered community*. These people had not only been transformed by a personal encounter with Christ, they had been empowered through dynamic encounter with the Holy Spirit. In his sermon, Peter had urged them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, *and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). They received Peter's message, repented, and were baptized in water. They then received the gift of the Holy Spirit as Peter had promised.

Because of their experience with the Holy Spirit, these early Christians were equipped to fulfil the mission that Christ had given them. When they gathered for prayer and worship, the Spirit often manifested his presence in their midst. And "everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles" (Acts 2:43).

Third, our story reveals that this new prophetic community was a *devoted community*. They were devoted to God, and they were fully prepared to commit themselves and their possessions to those things they knew were most important to him. Because of this, they were devoted to the apostles' teaching, to prayer, and to one another. This shared devotion resulted in great generosity, unity, and gladness of heart.

Finally, our story reveals that this new prophetic community was a *witnessing community*. Jesus had promised, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Day by day these early disciples came to better understand what Jesus had meant. They realized that they would need to fulfill their ministries just as Jesus had fulfilled his, that is, in the power of the Holy Spirit. So, following Jesus' example, they witnessed in three ways: with their words, with their lives, and through mighty signs and wonders. Because of this three-fold witness "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

Our churches today should strive to be like this prophetic community that emerged after the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. While we surely witness with our words, we should never forget that our witness involves more than just words. It also involves being the community of Christ. As God's Spirit-filled prophetic people, our association with one another and the world must be marked by devotion to Christ, to one another, and to the word of God. Our gatherings should be filled with the presence of God and the joy of the Lord. Christ must be at the center of all we do, and his presence should be manifested by wonders and miraculous signs. Such a church will be a powerful witness to those outside and will draw people to the Lord and into the community.

This lesson is **important** because in it we have learned that God wants his church to be a Spirit-empowered prophetic community.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that, if we want to truly become such a prophetic community, we must be transformed by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We must further devote ourselves to God, to his mission, and to one another.

Let's now **review** some of the important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. What kind of church community emerged after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost?

A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "a Spirit-empowered prophetic community," you are correct.

2. What are four characteristics of this new prophetic community?

A. [PAUSE] If you said that it is a transformed community, a Spirit-empowered community, a devoted community, and a witnessing community, you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson several times until you can clearly explain to someone else the characteristics of the Spirit-empowered prophetic community that emerged after the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Then, you are to analyze your church and see how it compares to this New Testament prophetic community.