I. Empowerment for God’s Mission

A. The fundamental purpose of the Holy Spirit baptism is to empower God’s people for effective engagement in God’s mission.

1. After his resurrection Jesus spoke to his disciples concerning his mission for them to be witnesses to all nations concerning his life, death, and resurrection. However, before they were to embark, he ordered them to first receive God’s empowerment by the Holy Spirit for the task.

   a. Luke 24:46-49 (ESV) *(He) 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.”*

   b. Acts 1:4-5 (ESV) *(He) ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

   c. Acts 1:7-8 (ESV) *He said to them... “(Y)ou 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.”*

2. This is consistent with Jesus’ own experience, for the Holy Spirit came upon him at his baptism, after which he began his public ministry. (See *Systematic Theology II, Lesson 11: The Holy Spirit’s Work – I, Section V: Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Subsection C: Jesus’ empowerment by the Spirit.*)

B. The Holy Spirit’s empowerment is intended and available for all God’s people.

1. The Old Testament records numerous instances of individuals who were empowered by the Holy Spirit. However, such empowerment was limited in scope and was not apparently available to all of God’s people. (See *Systematic Theology II, Lesson 11: The Holy Spirit’s Work – I, Section IV: The Old Testament: Empowerment.*)

2. Nevertheless, God promised to pour out his Spirit in power upon all of his people. The prophet Joel spoke of this, which was later quoted by the apostle Peter to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

   a. Joel 2:28-29 (ESV) *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men*
shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit” (cf. Ezekiel 39:29; Isaiah 44:2-3).

3. Peter confirmed the availability of this empowerment for all of God’s people when he exhorted the crowd which had gathered in response to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples.

a. Acts 2:38–39 (ESV) And Peter said to 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. For 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.”

C. The Holy Spirit’s empowerment is permanently and repeatedly available to each believer.

1. After surveying the Old Testament record of God’s empowerment of select people by the Holy Spirit, theologian J.R. Williams concludes: “(T)his activity of the Spirit is shown generally to be temporary and occasional… In summary, the Spirit was able to ‘take possession’ but was not possessed; the Spirit could ‘clothe’ someone, but like clothing was not a permanent vestment. Thus the endowment was largely transitory: for an occasion, for a task, or for an utterance. It was not an abiding reality” (Renewal Theology, Volume Two; Zondervan, 1990, p. 160).

2. Because of the New Covenant instituted by Jesus through his sinless life, death, and resurrection, whereby he atoned for our sins, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is not only made available to all of God’s people, but is also permanently available to each of God’s people.

a. The apostle Paul, for example, exhorts the Ephesian church (and presumably other churches who were also recipients of this letter that scholars are convinced was carried from church to church in proximity of Ephesus): “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit…” (Ephesians 5:18 ESV).

i. The verbal tense of the original Greek for “be filled” indicates an ongoing action, as is pointed out by A. Skevington Wood in his commentary: “The theological implications of ‘be filled’ (plērousthe) are crucial for a biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The imperative makes it clear that this is a command for all Christians. The present tense rules out any once-for-all reception of the Spirit but points to a continuous replenishment (literally, ‘go on being filled’)” (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Zondervan, 1981, p. 72).
b. Acts provides examples of believers being “filled” or empowered on a repeated basis. The apostle Peter, for example, is identified as experiencing this in the following texts.

i. Acts 2 – Peter is filled on the Day of Pentecost and preaches to the gathered crowd.

ii. Acts 4:8 – Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke boldly to the Jewish religious leaders about Jesus.

iii. Acts 4:23-31 – Peter, it is contextually implied, is among the group of disciples who pray to God for boldness and signs and wonders, and are then filled with the Holy Spirit which results in them continuing to speak God’s message boldly.

c. The permanent availability to God’s people of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment is assumed by Paul in his communication to the churches to which he ministered. Two examples are given below.

i. In writing to the Corinthians regarding a disciplinary matter, he begins a specific instruction by saying, “So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present...” (1 Corinthians 5:4 NIV). His assumption of the Lord’s power being present indicates it was their normal experience as they gathered as a church. Furthermore, it is understood from the Book of Acts that “the power of our Lord Jesus” in the church is none other than that which is administered by the Holy Spirit.

ii. When writing to the Galatians Paul engages in a rhetorical argument regarding faith as opposed to law being the basis for God’s Spirit moving among them in power. He writes, “Does (God) who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith...” (Galatians 3:5 ESV). Again, his language implies the normal experience of the Spirit’s power by the Galatian believers.

II. Indwelling vs. Empowerment

A. Some have proposed that the Old Testament promises of the indwelling of God’s Spirit and the empowerment of God’s people for his mission should be considered synonomous, but both Scripture and global ministry experience suggest otherwise.


B. Jesus himself, the Son of God, was made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and is assumed to have been indwelled by the Spirit in his humanity from the moment of his conception. Yet the Spirit did not come “upon” him until he was about thirty years old and was about to begin his public ministry. It was only after the Holy Spirit came upon him that he began to preach with power and perform signs and wonders. (See Systematic Theology II, Lesson 11: The Holy Spirit’s Work – I, Section V: Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Subsection C: Jesus’ Empowerment by the Spirit.)

1. Note: The Scriptures do not provide an explicit statement declaring the indwelling of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, but this should be surmised given the overall witness of the Bible. It is theologically inconceivable that the incarnate Son of God from the moment of his conception was not indwelled by the Holy Spirit given that he was sinless. (For more on this matter, see Systematic Theology II, Lesson 11: The Holy Spirit’s Work – I, Section V: Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Subsection B: Jesus’ indwelling with the Spirit.)

C. In an act that echoes the Genesis account of the creation of Adam, Jesus breathed on his disciples on the first day of his resurrection and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22 ESV). Yet these disciples were later instructed to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment as recorded in Luke 24 and Acts 1. Although some commentators suggest that Jesus’ action and words recorded in John 20 were not fulfilled until the Day of Pentecost, it seems more likely that the disciples were immediately indwelled by the Spirit, given the significance of the first day of the resurrection and the echo of Genesis pointing to the re-creation of humanity, or what is termed by Paul as the new creation.

D. The conversion of the Samaritans also points to a distinction between the indwelling and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Luke in Acts 8:12 records the salvation of many Samaritans, who “believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,” and consequently “were baptized, both men and women” (ESV). From the rest of Scripture we understand that they were indwelled by the Spirit as a consequence of their faith; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:17, 19; John 14:15-17).

1. Yet according to Luke they had not yet “received” the Holy Spirit. Luke reports: “Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14–17 ESV).

2. As Gordon Fee points out: “For Luke, in Acts, the presence of the Spirit means power (1:8; 6:8; 10:38), which is usually manifested by some visible evidence. Therefore it is probably this powerful, visible manifestation of the Spirit’s presence that had not yet occurred in Samaria and that Luke equates

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with the ‘coming’ or ‘receiving’ of the Spirit” (Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth, 4th Ed.; Zondervan, 2014, p. 123).

3. Luke’s language of “receiving” the Spirit should not be misunderstood as to suggest that the Samaritan believers were not indwelled by the Spirit even though they had believed the Gospel and been baptized.

   a. Note: It is important to recognize that at times various biblical authors will use similar language with different emphases. For example, the term “righteousness” has a different emphasis in the wisdom of Proverbs as compared to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount or Paul’s sustained argument regarding justification in Romans.

E. Fundamentally, every person who repents and believes the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ receives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, they are one in Spirit with the Lord, and are able to develop a deep, intimate knowledge of the Lord. Afterall, Jesus as a twelve year old boy demonstrated the rich depth of his spiritual life as recorded in Luke 2:41-52. The Holy Spirit had not yet descended upon him with power for public ministry, yet he possessed a deep awareness of his relationship to God the Father and a profound understanding of the Scriptures. Anyone who is a Christian is fully capable of producing the fruit of the Spirit because of the Spirit’s indwelling, regardless of whether they have received the Spirit’s empowerment for God’s mission.

F. On the other hand, receiving the empowerment of the Holy Spirit makes possible a far more effective witness and ministry for the believer as they engage in God’s mission to make disciples of all nations. Jesus called this empowerment being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

III. Terminology

A. The primary source for studying the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the Book of Acts written by Luke. Luke uses a variety of terminology to describe the numerous experiences recorded by him of people receiving the empowerment of God’s Spirit. The following list is believed to be exhaustive.

   1. People were baptized in the Holy Spirit; cf. 1:5; 11:16.

      a. “Baptized” could also be translated “immersed,” while the preposition “in” could also be translated “with.”

   2. The Holy Spirit came on (or, upon) people; cf. 1:8; 19:6.

      a. “On” could also be translated “upon.”


      a. In some instances people were simply described as “full” of the Spirit.
4. The Holy Spirit was poured out on (or, upon) people; cf. 2:17; 2:18; 2:33; 10:45.

5. People received the Holy Spirit; cf. 2:38; 8:15; 8:17; 8:19; 10:47; 19:2.

6. The Holy Spirit was given to people; cf. 5:32; 8:18; 15:8.

7. The Holy Spirit fell on (or, upon) people; cf. 8:16; 10:44; 11:15.

8. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit; cf. 10:38.

B. Note: It is worth noting that the terminology is synonymous. The terminology of items #1-4 describe the same event on the Day of Pentecost. The terminology of items #5 and #7 are used to describe the event at Cornelius’ house, which Peter said was equivalent to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 10:47). The terminology of “giving” (#6) is correspondent to the terminology of “receiving” (#5), and furthermore is used to describe the event in Samaria, which is also described by the same terminology used to describe the event at Cornelius’ house (#5, #7). In the case of Jesus, the terminology of being “anointed” is correlated to being empowered, which is of course how Jesus characterized being “baptized” in the Holy Spirit.

1. The point is simply that any of the terminology used in Acts to describe the empowering of God’s people with or by the Holy Spirit is appropriate.

2. It is not uncommon among some Christians to use the phrase “baptism in the Holy Spirit” to refer exclusively to the initial filling and empowering of a person with God’s Spirit, and to use the phrase “filled with the Spirit” to describe someone who had such an initial experience. Scripture, however, speaks of repeated “fillings” of God’s people.

IV. Initial Empowerments of God’s People

A. There are five specific instances recorded in Acts which describe people being baptized in the Holy Spirit; i.e., initially being filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit. These five instances are as follows:

1. The disciples (including Mary and the apostles) on the Day of Pentecost
2. The new believers in Samaria who were evangelized by Phillip
3. Saul, the persecutor of the church, who became Paul, the apostle
4. Cornelius and his household who were visited by an angel and then Peter
5. The disciples at Ephesus whom the apostle Paul met

B. An analysis of these instances reveals some common elements which are instructive concerning the Holy Spirit baptism, both from a doctrinal as well as a ministerial perspective. Appendix A: Holy Spirit Baptisms In Acts consists of an analytical table which provides a quick guide to these common elements, which will be explained below. Awareness of these elements is helpful in identifying a general pattern for being baptized in the Holy Spirit.
C. **Jesus.** Jesus is identified by John in all four Gospels as the one who will baptize God’s people with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). In all five instances of Holy Spirit baptism the recipients were engaged by Jesus, either directly and immediately in person as in the days leading up to Pentecost, or indirectly through the preaching of the Gospel as in the other four instances. The Scripture references in the table confirm this assertion, as is the case with the other points made below.

D. **Faith and Repentance.** Belief in the Gospel and a corresponding turning of the heart toward God are prerequisites for being baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-39; 5:32). In all five instances evidence is given explicitly or implicitly that confirms that the people who were baptized in the Spirit had believed the Gospel and repented.

E. **Expectation.** Although not explicitly stated, a vicarious reading of the text suggests that in every instance the people who were baptized in the Spirit had most likely experienced a heightened expectation of encountering God.

   1. In the case of Pentecost, the disciples were ordered by the resurrected Jesus to wait for God’s promise, the baptism in the Spirit. In Samaria, the believers had already seen signs and wonders, but were to be prayed for by the apostles Peter and John who had been sent by the church in Jerusalem so that they might receive the Spirit. In Saul’s (Paul’s) case, Ananias told him that God had sent him to pray for him to be healed and to be filled with the Spirit. In Cornelius’ case, he and his household were expecting to encounter God through Peter’s message. In the case of the Ephesians disciples, Paul taught them about the Holy Spirit before praying for the Spirit to come upon them.

F. **Power.** Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “(M)y speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5 ESV). In four of the five instances, Luke records that the people who were initially baptized in the Spirit had experienced a recent prior demonstration of the power of God, which would have served to enhance their faith and expectation regarding receiving God’s empowerment by the Spirit.

   1. The apostles and disciples had seen the resurrected Jesus. Some saw him ascend to heaven. The Samaritan believers had seen demons cast out and paralytics walk, among other great miracles. Saul had seen a blinding light from heaven and heard the audible voice of Jesus, resulting in his temporary blindness. Cornelius had seen an angel. Only the Ephesians disciples have no record of such a prior power encounter with God.

G. **Prayer.** In four of the five instances Luke explicitly tells us that prayer was offered to God prior to people being baptized in the Spirit. Since Jesus is the baptizer we can safely assume that in the fifth instance Paul prayed prior to laying hands on the Ephesian disciples.
1. Prior to Pentecost the apostles and disciples continued in prayer for ten days. In Samaria, we know that Peter and John prayed for the believers to receive the Spirit. Saul prayed for three days after encountering Jesus before he was filled with the Spirit. Cornelius and his household prayed for four days from the time the angel visited him until Peter came and the Holy Spirit fell on them.

2. It is best to conclude that earnest prayer is a vital component to people being baptized in the Spirit, but that no particular length of time is to be considered a uniform standard.

H. **Method.** The Holy Spirit sovereignly fell upon people in two instances, but came upon people and filled them through the laying on of hands in the other three instances.

1. With the initial introduction of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to the Jews (Pentecost) and the Gentiles (Cornelius’ household) the Spirit sovereignly fell upon them and filled them. This may have been due to the fact that in both cases no one was available to pray for them; the former, because Jesus had returned to heaven, and the latter, because the Jewish church leaders had not overcome their religious and cultural prejudice toward Gentiles. In the other instances people laid hands upon the recipients who then were filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. Testimonies extant in the world today confirm that God continues to employ both methods for baptizing people in the Holy Spirit, although the laying on of hands is most prevalent.

I. **Ministers.** The Holy Spirit baptism was administered by a variety of people in the cases where hands were laid upon the recipients. It is helpful to observe that Ananias was not an apostle, which suggests that the administration of this blessing may come through any faithful believer.

J. **Manifestations (Tongues).** While physical phenomena, prophesying, and praising God are recorded as some of the manifestations which accompanied various people at different times being baptized in the Spirit, there is one manifestation that occurs repeatedly. Speaking in tongues was apparently a customary benefit bestowed upon all who were initially filled with the Holy Spirit. Although the Scriptures do not teach this didactically, the evidence points to this conclusion.

1. **Note:** A brief description. Based on Acts and 1 Corinthians speaking in tongues may be described as a Holy Spirit enabled, verbal utterance spoken by people. It originates from their own spirit and is usually directed to God. It is comprised of content that is intelligible to God and sometimes to humans. Speaking in tongues results in the edification of the speaker and the glorification of God. (More is taught on this subject in another lesson in this course.)
2. In the instances of the first Spirit baptisms of Jewish believers (Pentecost) and of Gentile believers (Cornelius’ household), the Scriptures indicate that every recipient spoke in tongues. In fact, the apostle Peter was persuaded specifically on the basis of Cornelius’ household speaking in tongues that they had been baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45-47). This is significant because Luke purposefully reports these occurrences in greater length than other initial fillings and empowerments, most likely because they are both seminal and paradigmatic; i.e., they demonstrate that God is baptizing both Jews and Gentiles in the same manner, and that what Luke reports is meant to be understood as a pattern that is repeated in other instances. This is significant since Luke’s wording suggests that every recipient spoke in tongues without exception.

3. The Ephesian disciples also spoke in tongues. Again, Luke’s wording suggests that every recipient spoke in tongues without exception.

4. In Saul’s case nothing is explicitly mentioned as Luke’s report is quite brief. However, we know from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians that he had received the ability to speak in tongues at some point, and that speaking in tongues had become a prolific part of his spiritual life (1 Corinthians 14:15, 18). It is quite likely that Paul received the ability to speak in tongues when he was first baptized in the Spirit.

5. In the case of the Samaritan believers, nothing is explicitly mentioned regarding speaking in tongues or any other manifestations of the Spirit’s empowerment. However, Luke records that a magician who had previously amazed the people of Samaria and had since been baptized, was so impressed by what he observed when people received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, that he offered to pay money to receive the same power. Many respected non-Pentecostal biblical scholars have suggested that most likely the Samaritans had also spoken in tongues; (see Appendix B: Did the Samaritans speak in tongues?).

6. Why were tongues not specifically mentioned in the cases of Saul and Samaria? It is not the primary intent of Acts to focus on tongues. Tongues are implied by the cases of Pentecost and Caesarea, wherein Luke has given detailed accounts of the initial reception of the Spirit by the Jews and the Gentiles. In a similar manner, there are many instances in Acts in which people are shown being saved, but there is no mention of water baptism. It is assumed, because the precedent was clearly illustrated and established earlier in Acts. It is most likely the same with the matter of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.

7. Hence, the overall biblical evidence supports the proposition that persons being baptized in the Holy Spirit should expect to receive the ability to speak in tongues. However, the biblical evidence does not permit the proposition that unless one speaks in tongues, it is evidence that they have not been
baptized in the Holy Spirit. This would be faulty logic. (The ministry application of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is addressed in another lesson in this course.)

K. Water Baptism. Water baptism took place almost immediately after people initially believed the Gospel and repented as recorded in Acts. Similarly, believers were baptized in the Spirit in relatively close proximity to their spiritual conversion. However, there is no consistent pattern as to whether someone was baptized in water before or after they were baptized in the Spirit.

1. At Pentecost, it is presumed that the apostles and disciples had already been baptized in water, since we know that Jesus’ disciples were already baptizing people prior to his crucifixion (John 4:1-2; cf. 3:22). The Samaritans were baptized in water before receiving the Spirit. Acts 9:17-18 suggests that Saul was filled with the Spirit first, then water baptized. The Spirit was clearly poured out on Cornelius’ household first, and then they were water baptized. The Ephesian disciples were water baptized first, and then the Holy Spirit came on them.

2. It is important to note the distinction between the event of water baptism and the event of Holy Spirit baptism. They are not synonomous, nor is water baptism a firm precondition or a channel for being baptized in the Spirit. If a general pattern were to be suggested as a guideline, it would be to confirm a person’s faith and repentance, then water baptize them, then pray for them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. But the latter two may in some cases be reversed in order.

L. Thirst. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit were spiritually “thirsty.” As Jesus said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38 ESV). John explains Jesus by writing, “Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37–39 ESV).

V. Talking Points

A. What are some of the inherent dangers to primarily associating Holy Spirit baptism with a personal spiritual experience instead of empowerment for God’s mission?

B. How does Jesus’ own experience with the Holy Spirit serve as a paradigm for Christians?

C. What are some of the differences between the indwelling of the Spirit and the baptism in the Spirit?

D. Based on the analysis of the five instances of initial Spirit baptism in Acts, what ministry practices might be helpful in seeing people get baptized in the Spirit?
E. What should be taught regarding tongues and Spirit baptism? What should not be taught regarding tongues and Spirit baptism?
Appendix A: Holy Spirit Baptisms in Acts: Initial Fillings and Empowerings of God’s People

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VII. Appendix B: Did the Samaritans speak in tongues?

Below are some examples of non-Pentecostal scholars who either are persuaded that the Samaritan believers spoke in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit, or suggest the likelihood or possibility that they did.


B. William Barclay concurs: “To understand just what Simon was getting at we have to understand something of the atmosphere and practice of the Early Church. In the Early Church the coming of the Spirit upon a man was connected with certain quite definite and visible phenomena. In particular it was connected with the gift of speaking in tongues...” (The Daily Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles; Saint Andrew Press, 1955, p. 67).

C. Richard Longenecker thinks the Samaritans likely spoke in tongues: “We are not told just how the coming of the Holy Spirit upon these new converts was expressed in their lives, but the context suggests that his presence was attended by such external signs as marked his coming on the earliest Christians at Pentecost—probably by some form of glossolalia” (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 9, edited by Frank Gaebelein; Zondervan, 1981, p. 359).

1. Note: Glossolalia is a term derived from the Greek New Testament meaning “tongues” or “languages,” and is used by scholars to specifically refer to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts and in 1 Corinthians.

D. Ajith Fernando suggests the same: “We are not told how Peter and John knew that the Holy Spirit had come on the Samaritans. There must have been some external manifestation, such as speaking in tongues, that gave unmistakable evidence” (The NIV Application Commentary: Acts; Zondervan, 1998, p. 273).

E. Kenneth Gangel agrees: “(W)e may assume that similar visible signs, possibly speaking in other languages, attended this event as they did previous events in Acts” (The Holman New Testament Commentary: Acts; Boadman & Holman, 1998, p. 123-124).

F. F.F. Bruce seems to suggest the same: “It is clearly implied that their reception of the Spirit was marked by external manifestations such as had marked his descent on the earliest disciples at Pentecost” (The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Acts, Revised; Eerdmans, 1988, p. 169).