



'Supernatural God'
By Neil Smith at King of Kings, Sunday 23 September 2018

INTRODUCTION - SUPERNATURAL

Today we are beginning a new series called 'Supernatural' which is going to be a journey through the book of Acts. I am really excited about this one! The book of Acts is such a dynamic book filled with a history of the supernatural works of the Holy Spirit and the early church. So I hope you are buckled in for a thrilling adventure as we get into God's Word to learn more about His Spirit and His Church.

In this series, you are going to be exposed to the God works... and as we journey together through the book of Acts, you're going to see that he is truly is a "Supernatural God"! There is nothing tame or plain about our God! We can't put him in a box... you can't work him out... because he is beyond anything we can understand! He is by definition "Supernatural..." and I'm sure that you know... that supernatural means "beyond scientific understanding or fitting to the laws of nature." God operates outside of our understanding! He is totally beyond anything we can use our worldly logic to explain. And so, introducing the book of Acts...

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts is often neglected as a history book – initially, the first few chapters around Peter and his ministry, and the latter, all about Paul and his ministry.

But put all together, and it really is a exiting book about how Jesus continued to work through the Holy Spirit and ordinary people like you and I to transform the world and spread God's Kingdom. Too often we think that the Gospels are the end of Jesus' story – we think it ended with the resurrection and ascension – and the next part only picks up when He returns. But if we think that, we miss out on so much!

The book of Acts is really the story of the Holy Spirit, mentioned all over, the story of the birth of the Church, and although it ends after 28 chapters, the idea really, is that we are meant to be living out Acts chapter 29 and on – until Jesus comes again!

The author of the book of Acts is Luke, a medical doctor by profession from Antioch Syria, and the only Gentile writer in the bible! He was a companion of Paul, who often travelled with him, and Dr Luke loved Jesus and researching the events surrounding the life of Jesus and the growth of the church.

So for the next few weeks... we want to work together through the book of Acts to see how God moves and works. We want to see how people change and transform through the power of God's Holy Spirit... we want to see what our supernatural God is like, what our supernatural God does! We want to learn what supernatural leadership and courage is all about... We want to understand more about being a supernatural church, a supernatural community, that are led to supernatural generosity and giving. We want to see how we each have a supernatural calling, to supernatural missions, supernatural power and healing. It's going to be awesome! The book of Acts is awesome!

So let's get right into it today – and my first point is that...

THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS PROMISED BY JESUS

(ACTS 1:1-5)

Acts 1 verse 1 begins as follows;

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

In these verses, Luke starts by explaining that he is writing to Theophilus... Who is Theophilus? Well, We actually don't know, Luke also references him in his other book the gospel of Luke as well. There are a bunch of theories, either he was a real person that was interested in the gospel, or it was a name used to describe the early believers, because the name “Theophilus” means God and Love – i.e. “Those who love God.” Either way, we don't know for sure.

Regardless, Luke says to whoever he is writing to, that he previously wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach in the gospel of Luke. Like I said, Luke loves Jesus, and is now going to connect for us the important relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Now I know that some more conservative Christians are a little bit nervous about the Holy Spirit. But by and large, most of us are very comfortable with Jesus, right?! Everyone here trusts Jesus!! Amen?!

But let me ask you a question... How do you think Jesus was able to live the life he lived on earth? How was he able to say no to sin? How was he able to walk on water, and do the other miracles he did? How could he forgive his enemies? How was he able to walk in such perfect obedience to his Father? How was he able to heal people, teach such powerful truth, and impact the world in such a significant way???

I'll tell you... by the power of the Holy Spirit! You see, while he was on earth, Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully human. The bible says that he chose not to use his divine power. He did this so that he could connect with us, and to be the perfect sacrifice for us.

At the baptism of Jesus, we get to see the close relationship though between the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit descended on him, and the Father declared him to be the son of God. We also know that from that point the Holy Spirit 'remained on' Jesus, continually lived with Jesus empowering his life and ministry.

In these opening verses of Acts, we see that Luke shows us how important the Holy Spirit was to Jesus - And so, Jesus gave them a command and a promise! He said;

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Friends, while I have the greatest respect for conservative believers who prefer to just keep the focus on Jesus, Jesus was very clear that he and the Holy Spirit were a team! His command was to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit! And he said in a few days, I am promising you, that you are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit!

The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus. The Holy Spirit and Jesus are a unit. You are not meant to have one without the other. You can't live the Christian life without the Spirit. You can't do church without the Spirit. It's a package deal. The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus. I encourage you to trust in the promise of Jesus, and that he knows what's best for you. Next point.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUES THE WORK OF JESUS

(ACTS 1:6-11)

Imagine a Olympic track relay race – and it’s the ultimate champion. God himself, participating - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father begins the race, and he hands the baton over to Jesus, who then hands the baton over to the Spirit for the final straight. The Holy Spirit continues the good work of Jesus. Let’s continue in our passage in verse 6 where the disciples ask him about this;

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But 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.”

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The time for Jesus to return to his place in heaven had come, and so in his final words to his disciples, he said; ***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.”***

What Jesus came to do had been accomplished. It was now time for him to leave, but He was not leaving us alone, and what the Trinity had begun was not at an end, a whole exciting new part of God’s plan was beginning. The point at which the Holy Spirit would empower believers to be witnesses all over the world.

You see church, as part of God’s plan - The Holy Spirit continues the work of Jesus – He is not finished!!!! God is still moving in a supernatural way. God is still at work. And either we will be a part of that, or we will sit on the side lines at one of the most exciting points in history. The Holy Spirit continues the work of Jesus. Next point.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE AND GUIDED THE EARLY BELIEVERS TO CHOOSE GODLY LEADERSHIP

(ACTS 1:12-26)

I find it very interesting that on the same Sunday that we are giving notice to our members to nominate leaders, that we have a verse that speaks about this. Join me in looking at verse 12 on;

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)

16 and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. 17 He was one of our number and shared in our ministry."

18 (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. 19 Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

20 "For," said Peter, "it is written in the Book of Psalms:

***"May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,"***
and,

"May another take his place of leadership."

Right, not exactly family friendly content here... but that's the bible for you. No sugar coating. It says it like it is. And here we see that...

The Holy Spirit spoke through David about Judas (vs 12-20)

Years before Judas was even on the scene, the Holy Spirit spoke through David about that his place would be deserted and someone else would take over his leadership.

The Holy Spirit was speaking even way back then, prophetically showing us that Judas was not the leader everyone thought he was. You know something church... We can learn a lot from Judas. We love to learn from the good people in scripture, the strong leaders who succeeded. But we tend to avoid the really bad guys, but the truth is, we can sometimes learn even more from them!

For instance, we tend to think that everyone would love Jesus if only he did more for them, spoke to them, did miracles in their lives, in front of their own eyes, then they would believe in him. Well, not necessarily. Judas shows us that.

Just think about it... For three years, Judas heard Jesus pray and preach, he saw the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit working through Jesus, he saw Jesus perform supernatural miracles. Judas even personally experienced Jesus' love first hand – he was perfectly and continually loved, served, and cared for by Jesus Christ. And in response, Judas betrayed Jesus, sold Him out for thirty pieces of silver.

There are some important lessons we can learn from the life of Judas:

1. *Sitting under good Bible teaching is not enough. You have to believe it, and you have to put it into practice. Judas spent three years learning directly from Jesus and believed none of it. Or, at very least, had good intentions, but made some terrible decisions that led his life in the wrong direction.*
2. *The church has wheat and weeds. In every church and ministry, there are believers and unbelievers, and it's nearly impossible to accurately figure out which is which, so you leave that job up to Jesus, and you keep on sharing the gospel – even in the church, because you never know.*
3. *Your heart follows your wallet. Long before Judas was railing against Jesus, he was robbing from Jesus. If you want to change your heart, it is a good idea to start with your wallet, since—as Jesus says—your heart will wind up wherever your treasure takes it. Is your heart following Jesus, or your wallet.*
4. *You cannot lose your salvation, but you can fake it. Judas sat in Bible studies, went on mission trips, and sang worship songs, but it was all merely fakery.*
5. *The most important day of your life is the last day. Right up until the end, Judas' life seemed to be “working”. Financially he was okay, physically he was healthy, spiritually he was in a great ministry, relationally he was with Jesus' disciples, and the overall external picture of life was good. Then it all went bad when his private life became public. It just goes to show that the most important day of your life is the last day, and you must be prepared for that day.*

(Mark Driscoll)

Which lesson from Judas' life is a helpful warning to you?

The Holy Spirit wants us to learn from Judas. But the Holy Spirit also guided the early believers to choose a new leader to replace Judas.

The Holy Spirit guided the early believers to choose Matthias (vs 21-26)

Verse 21;

²¹Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²²beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

²³So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." ²⁶Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

The Holy Spirit led them to choose Matthias as the leader to take over the ministry role Judas had, and he was added to the team of apostles. We trust that in the same way, although we don't cast lots, that the Holy Spirit knows our hearts as well, and as we pray for God to show us his will – he will guide us to choose the right leaders.

But lastly today...

THE HOLY SPIRIT FILLS AND EMPOWERS

(ACTS 2:1-13)

Acts chapter 2 verse 1;

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

This is the description of Pentecost... The word “Pentecost” simply means “50th”, which does not mean much to us, but for the Jew’s that was a very significant time. It represented the first harvest on their farming calendar. In other words, this was the “first outpouring,” or the “first-fruits” of the Holy Spirit in believer’s lives. Like the first flowers of spring.

In this passage we get to see the first filling and empowering of the Spirit that Jesus had promised would come, and it’s a reminder to us, that without the Holy Spirit, we are powerless. Have you ever wondered why there was fire when the believers received the Holy Spirit? Well, we all know how God used symbols throughout the history of the nation of Israel and in Scripture to teach us things, so why the symbol of fire when the believers received the Holy Spirit? Well...I will tell you why... Fire is powerful! Fire a symbol of transformation! Fire changes whatever it touches.

The Holy Spirit works to Transform us, He took a group of fisherman, former prostitutes, ex-religious leaders, tax collectors, and various members of Jesus’s family and the other disciples, and formed them into a united group...that we call the church. Before Pentecost, the disciples were scared, they lacked faith, and they did not fully understand God’s plan. After the Pentecostal fire fell however, they were united as never before. Nothing earlier had welded them into one united force, It took the fire of God’s Spirit to do this.

What makes the church work in our day? God’s Spirit. You know what I have learnt in the years I have been involved in ministry? There has never been a program that has dramatically transformed people’s lives. It takes a miracle to have brought people from all walks of life together, and to turn them into a united group that can actually accomplish something powerful. It takes God’s Spirit to do that. The Church was birthed in the power of the Holy Spirit, and you know what? This valley won’t be transformed until the Church is transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Over the next few Sundays we are going to look at this in more detail in different settings. But I would like to end with this question today before we respond in a worship song...

Do you think you would recognize if the Holy Spirit was not with you in your daily life? I like to think I would! You know, in my personal time with God, I would know if the Holy Spirit was not with me in my scripture reading, prayer, personal worship. But let me ask you another question...

Do you think you would recognize if the Holy Spirit was not with us in our church gatherings? Would you recognize if he was not here? It's a good question, isn't it? Because we fill our times with this that and the next thing, and I'm not convinced we make room for him like we should, or would even know if he was not present anymore.

My encouragement, and my challenge to myself, and to us as a church, is that we would aim to pursue the Holy Spirit more than ever before.

Finally, if you have any questions in this series that you would like us to answer about the Holy Spirit, please send through your questions to...

questions@kingofkings.org.za

Or drop a note off with one of the pastors and we will do our very best to speak into those during this series.

Let's pray together.