

Luke and John: Spirit Extended Salvation to the Gentiles

The Messiah Who brings eschatological salvation was expected to be endowed with the Spirit (Isa. 11:1–2; 42:1; 61:1–2).¹ Likewise the Kingdom was to be initiated by the Spirit being poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28–32 [in MT 3:1–5]; Zech. 6:1–8), which of course includes Israel (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:27; 39:29).

The conversion of the Gentiles is not usually developed in the Biblical expectations for Kingdom, but as a *leit motif* it is present. For example, Zechariah 14:16 anticipates “the remnant of all nations.”² Second Temple Judaism expects that Gentiles would be converted, destroyed or subjugated (Isa. 60:10–14; Dan. 2:44–45; 7:14).³ Among these, the righteous Gentiles were to rise and join Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the eschatological banquet.⁴ Isaiah and Jesus predicted the Temple to include a benefit for Gentiles in prayer (Isa. 56:7; quoted in Mk. 11:17).⁵ This pattern of Gentiles joining into the Jewish benefit is realized momentarily in John’s gospel where certain Greeks worshipping at the Temple during Passover ask Phillip if they could see Jesus (Jn. 12:20–23). This request of Gentile inclusion identifies for Jesus that His hour of death and ascension is at hand; “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (Jn. 12:23). This sets up Jesus for a reflective moment in which He knows that He is now to be glorified, but that this glorification in John’s gospel includes His death (Jn. 12:20–27). Jesus prays, “Father glorify Thy name” (Jn. 12:28). A voice from heaven (the *bath qol*)⁶ responded, “I have glorified it and will glorify it again,” though some observed this voice to be merely thunder (Jn. 12:28–30). Jesus pointed out that the divine voice was for the sake of those around Him. Thus marking off that it is the time for judgment, because the ruler of this world is cast out and that Jesus would be lifted up in glory to draw all men to Himself (Jn. 12:31–34).

Isaiah predicts that the Messianic King would emerge from and be a great light within the Gentile dominated Galilee region (Isa. 9:1). Furthermore, the Isaianic Servant Songs identify that the outgrowth of the Servant’s proclamation is that God will make His Servant “a light to the nations so that salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

¹ *Ps. of Sol.* 17.37; 18.7; *Test. Levi* 18; *Eth. I En.* 49.3; 62.2.

² Joining this text are: Isa. 66:15–21; Amos 9:12; *I En.* 90.19–33; *Sib. Or.* 3.357–731; *IQM* 12.7–14; *Ps. Sol.* 17.21–31.

³ *Sir.* 36.1–9; *Jub.* 24.29; *I En.* 90.19; *Ps. Sol.* 17.24, 31; *T. Mos.* 10.7; *IQM*; *CD* 14.6; *Sib. Or.* 3; *Philo, Rewards* 93–97, 164.

⁴ *4 Macc.* 7.19; 13.17; 16.25; *T. Benj.* 10.6, 11; *T. Jud.* 25.3–5; *T. Ash.* 7.2–3.

⁵ Jesus quotes of the Temple being a house of prayer in Mt. 21:13 and Lk. 19:46 leave out mentioning the Gentile purpose of the Temple.

⁶ On the concept and instance of *bath qol*: Dan. 4:31; *Jos. Ant.* 13.282–83; *Song Rab.* 8.9.3; *b. 'Abot* 6.2; *B. Bat.* 73b; 85b; *Mak.* 23b; *'Erub.* 54b; *Šabb.* 33b; 88a; *Soṭa* 33a; *p. Soṭa* 7.5.5; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 11.16; 15.5; *Lev. Rab.* 19.5–6; *Deut. Rab.* 11.10; *Lam. Rab. Proem* 2, 23; *Lam. Rab.* 1.16.50; *Ruth Rab.* 6.4; *Qoh. Rab.* 7.12.1; *Sib. Or.* 1.127, 267, 275; Artapanus in Euseb. *P.E.* 9.27.36; *Dion. Hal.* 1.56.3; 5.16.2–3; 8.56.2–3; *Arrian Alex.* 3.3.5; *Lucian C.W.* 1.569–70; *Plutarch Isis* 12; *Mor.* 355E; *Mart. Pol.* 9. The *bath qol* was present in Israel before the spirit of prophecy departed (*b. Pesah.* 94a; *Ḥag.* 13a; *Sanh.* 39b) and a few sources give it future ramifications as well (*Lev. Rab.* 27.2; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 17.5).

The Spirit in the Synoptics

The concept of spirit (πνεῦμα) in the gospels especially emphasizes the conflict Christ has with demons. For example, Mark includes 56% of the instances of πνεῦμα as demons (Mk. 1:23-27; 3:11, 30; 5:2, 8, 13; 6:7; 7:25; 9:17-25). Luke has the dominant share of πνεῦμα references, retaining 28% as demons. The conflict between the Holy Spirit and demons expands these figures a bit more, raising instances within Matthew up to 50% of his use (Mt. 10:1, 20; 12:18, 28-32, 43-45; Mk. 3:11, 29-30; Lk. 11:13, 24-26; 12:10; Acts 5:3, 9; 7:51; 10:38). This part of this theme supports Christ healing ministry exercising demons to bring in the Kingdom.

The synoptic gospels as a whole tend to have the rest of the Holy Spirit references identified with three particular limited enablements for ministry, specifically: revelation, baptizing and leading. First, the Holy Spirit sources revelation of the Biblical text (Mt 22:43; Mk. 12:36; 13:11; Acts 1:16; 10:19; 15:28; 28:25). This divinely fostered foundation provides Biblical guidance to which Jesus and believer appeal.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus in His baptism, anointed Him for ministry (Mt. 3:11, 16; Mk. 1:8, 10; Lk. 3:16-22; Jn. 1:32-33). John the Baptist hinted that this ministry would not be limited to Jews only, since John admitted that God could raise up children for Abraham even from stones (Mt. 3:8-10; Lk. 3:7-9). This baptism identified Jesus as the One who will baptize others with fire and the Spirit (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk 3:16).

In the same way that Jesus' baptism is a reception of the Spirit so also for the believer as well. This baptism by Jesus identifies His own within the benefits of the Spirit (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:9). However, this same baptism diminishes unbelievers in the judgment of destroying fire (Mt. 3:10-12 πυρί is used in the context for judgment; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:9 πῦρ is used in the context for judgment, 16-17; Acts 1:5; 11:16).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Mt. 4:1; Mk. 1:12; Lk. 4:1). Especially in Matthew's version, Satan's offer of the kingdoms of the world serves as a climax to the temptations (Mt. 4:8-9). Jesus resists this temptation as a counterfeit way that excluded God and thus did not lead to Kingdom. The leading of Jesus by the Spirit is not developed in the synoptics as extended to believers, rather Jesus instructs His disciples to pray *to the Father* to "not lead us into temptation" (Mt. 6:13; Lk. 11:4).

Luke-Acts has a unique emphasis on developing the Holy Spirit as empowerment for ministry. Of the instances of πνεῦμα in the gospel of Luke, 31% identify enabling of ministry and in Acts these instances expand to 51%. A major block of this enablement is in the Spirit fostered proclamation (Lk. 1:15, 17, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-27; 12:12; Jn. 3:34; Acts 1:8; 2:4, 17-18, 33, 38; 4:8, 31; 7:55; 8:29, 39; 9:17, 31; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 13:9; 20:23; 21:4, 11). This enablement is especially empowering believers (instead of Christ), so that it concentrates in the gospel of Luke toward the beginning where the anticipated baby Jesus has no speaking part. When Jesus instructs the disciples on how to respond to Jewish persecution, the Holy Spirit becomes the critical enabler.

When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what

you should say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say (Lk. 12:11–12).

Much of the ministry of the Spirit enablement to proclaim Christ throughout Acts can be seen as realizing this very help promised by Christ. The mention of “rulers” in this text hints that there will be trials before Gentile rulers as Jesus’ Olivet discourse indicates, with Jesus’ promise to provide what His disciples were to say (Lk. 21:12–14). The rest of these Acts enablements are to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus’ witnesses; “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).⁷ Each of the promises to enable proclamation indicate that the message will be heard by a Gentile audience.

The Holy Spirit also fosters character development in Acts, which serves to equip some for particular ministries (Acts 6:3, 5, 10; 11:24; 13:52). The conjoining of a virtue with the Spirit to describe the fullness of a person’s character indicates that this virtue (whether it is wisdom or faith or whatever) is fostered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s fostering of these virtues begins in a Jewish setting but it extends with the believers as they travel into Gentile areas. Acts develops that the reception of the Holy Spirit conveys authentic Kingdom salvation on to Gentiles as well.

Synoptic Gospels: Israel Emphasis With Occasional Gentile Events

Jesus primarily restricted His ministry (e.g., Mt. 15:24; Mk. 7:27) and the ministry of His twelve disciples to Israel (Mt. 10:6), though Jesus occasionally ministered beyond the bounds of Israel, near Tyre, and in the Decapolis region. He even had a great multitude follow Him from beyond the Jordan, in the Decapolis region (Mt. 4:25). Additionally, when Jesus was heading away from Jerusalem He had significant impact on the conversion of Sychar in Samaria (Jn. 4:1–42). The Samaritans acclaimed Jesus as “the Christ, the Savior of the world” (Jn. 4:42). Speaking to Jewish lawyers, Jesus even used a Samaritan to be the hero of a parable (Lk. 10:30–37). Whereas, when Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem, Samaria spurned Him (Lk. 9:52).

Matthew, Luke and John begin their gospels with a reminder that salvation is for the world. John indicates that the Word coming into the world is the One Who enlightens every man (Jn. 1:9). In Luke, when Jesus’ purification is taking place, devout Simeon comes up to baby Jesus, and expresses Jewish aspirations for Him (Lk. 2:25–38). The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon as he looked for the consolation of Israel that is the Kingdom.⁸ The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen

⁷ Bestowal of Spirit also indicates succession of ministry, so the disciples with the Spirit continue where Jesus has left off (2 Kgs. 2:9; Acts 1:8; *Mek. Pisha* 1.150–3; *’Abot R. Nat.* 1 A; 1.2B; *Pesiq Rab.* 51.2; *Sir.* 46.1; 48.12; *T. Mos.* 1.7; 10.15; sometimes with diminution of authority [*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24.18]).

⁸ The Abrahamic Covenant promised an abundant land as Israel’s possession (Gen. 15:13–21) which was embraced within the Mosaic Covenant promise for peace and blessing of renewal in the land (e.g., Deut. 28:1–14; 30:1–30). The Davidic Covenant added the element of Kingship into this hope (developed in the chapter on “Messianic King”). The prophets develop this Kingdom era with the wonderful transforming benefits that will accrue especially to Israel (Jer. 31:27–33:26). For example, in a context of Gentile domination, Isaiah 9 speaks of the birth of a king that will enlighten a new Kingdom era for Israel, bringing peace to the world. Second Temple Judaism hungers and longs for this hope.

the Lord's Christ. Simon took Jesus into his arms and blessed the sovereign God for letting him see the salvation personified by Jesus, Who will bring Kingdom glory to Israel and extend such light of revelation even to Gentiles (Lk. 2:29–32). Matthew presents the beginning of this salvation light to Gentile wise men⁹ arriving from the East having followed a sign star that came to rest over the place where Jesus was born (Mt. 2:11). Jesus begins His ministry of teaching in the synagogues by identifying that the Spirit has empowered Him to proclaim and effect Jubilee freedom as evident in healing (Lk. 4:14–30). Jesus is aware that He is God's anointed Savior at the center of eschatological events to bring an expression of God's Kingdom to earth. To present this point, Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1–2 and inserts Isaiah 58:6d from the LXX as a way of continuing His Kingdom theme in the quote.¹⁰ According to the quote, Jesus' ministry is to bring major benefits from a Jubilee Kingdom into the present, namely to:

1. Proclaim good news to the poor.
2. Proclaim release of captives.

This description of Jubilee is not limited to the Jews. In fact, announcing this ministry in Nazareth provides Him with the opportunity to identify that a prophet is not welcome in his home town (Lk. 4:24). Jesus then illustrated this Jewish rejection by mentioning how Gentiles have been more responsive to prophets in the past, namely: the Sidon widow Zarephath cared for Elijah, and Naaman the Syrian who came for healing when many Jewish lepers did not. Jesus reputation for healing spread throughout Gentile regions of Decapolis and Syria (Mt. 4:24–25). It is in this vein that elsewhere in the synoptics, Gentiles mostly appear as recipients of Jesus' miracles.

Jesus resists healing Gentiles, though they show the greatest faith of any throughout the gospels. For example, the Syro-Phoenician woman finds resistance from Jesus (Mt. 15:21–28; Mk. 7:24–30). This Canaanite woman persistently called after Jesus saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demonized” (δαίμονιζέται). Jesus did not answer her but the disciples wished to send her away. Jesus replied¹¹ that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 15:24). However, she fell at His feet and kept asking Him to send the unclean spirit away. Jesus responded, “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the small pet dogs” (κυνάρίους).¹² She accepts her

⁹ The wise men are largely undescribed in Matthew, though the *Gospel of the Nazarene*, fragment 28 describes their dress in great detail evidencing wealth and dark complexion. Many consider that they are of the best wisdom from Gentiles (Ps. 72:10–11; e.g., Balaam, Num. 22–24; cf. the Persian king arrived in Rome to honor Nero as prompted by Mithras and astrology: Dio Cassius 63.1–7; Pliny, *H.N.* 30.16–17; Suetonius, *Nero* 13), or parallel to Egyptian sorceress in the Mosaic account, but there are some of this category elsewhere who are Jews (Acts 8:9–24, Simon; 13:6–11, Elymas; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.142, Atomus).

¹⁰ The substitution of Isaiah 58:6d for a line in Isaiah 61:2 may not be apparent in the English text but it is readily recognizable by comparing the LXX with the Greek text of Luke 4:18, which follows the LXX of Isaiah 61:1–2 until this line. Luke could have paraphrased the Hebrew text on this line but it is likely that he followed the LXX on this line like he did in the rest of the quote. Furthermore, the parts of the pericope of Isaiah 61:1–3 which Jesus does not quote includes divine vengeance upon Israel's enemies, and an enabled replanting of Israel in the land of Zion. Such a strong Jewish emphasis of Jesus' Kingdom task works against Luke's purposes of Gentile inclusion into salvation in Luke-Acts.

¹¹ Jesus did not consider it beneath Him to talk with a woman, unlike the Jewish tradition (*m. 'Aboth* 1.5).

¹² Both Jesus and the woman refer to κυνάρια, which is the diminutive pet dog of the root word for dog (κύων). Jesus opens the door with a more familiar image (pet dog).

secondary status and replied, “Yes, Lord, but even the small house dogs (κυνάρια) feed on the children’s crumbs which fall from the master’s table.” Jesus answered her, “Your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.” Her daughter was healed at once and the demon departed. Returning home she found her daughter healed on her bed. Such long distance miracles were especially counted as miraculous.¹³

In similar vein, it is possible that Matthew’s presentation of the healing of the Centurion’s servant (Mt. 8:5–13; Lk. 7:1–10), is also met with similar resistance in Jesus’ statement, “Should I coming heal him?” (Mt. 8:7). Luke shows no such resistance, perhaps because earlier than in Matthew, the Centurion indicates his unworthiness, and the Jews who make the appeal to Jesus show him to be worthy to be granted this miracle (Lk. 7:2–10), or because Luke has a more intentional extension of ministry to Gentiles than does Matthew. Of course, all descriptions of the Centurion’s faith are also among the highest praise Jesus gives to anyone in the gospels in every respect: 1) the Centurion’s confidence that Jesus can heal his servant, 2) that it can be done with such effectiveness as that of merely delegating the task accomplishes it, and 3) that the healing could be accomplished at such a distance.¹⁴ Jesus responds that “I have not found such great faith with anyone in all of Israel” (Mt. 8:10; Lk. 7:9). Jesus concludes this healing with teaching on Gentile inclusion in Kingdom and Jewish exclusion in rebellion:

I tell you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:11–12).

This same statement Jesus repeats as the Lukan close to the Parables of the Kingdom (Lk. 13:28–30). These few Gentiles included starkly show off the Jewish rejection to be unreasonable, and certain to be condemned.

In the same pattern Jesus shows in recognizing Gentile healing faith, Jesus also appreciates the gratitude of Gentiles He heals, when compared to Jews who don’t turn back and express their faith. For example, at the border between Samaria and Galilee ten leprous men are healed and the only one who turns back with gratitude is the Samaritan (Lk. 17:11–19). The others merely headed off to show themselves to the priests as Jews should and Jesus commanded. However, the Samaritan showed more gratitude than the others. Jesus was surprised that the others did not join this one in expressing gratitude, “were none found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?” (Lk. 17:18). Jesus also acknowledges that it is his faith that has made him well (Lk. 17:19).

Arriving at the East side of the Sea of Galilee in the Gadarenes¹⁵ region, two demonized (δαιμονιζόμενοι) men came out of the tombs to confront Jesus as the Son of the Most High God, and He cast the demons out of them (Mt. 8:28–34; Mk. 5:1–20; Lk.

¹³ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. translated by J. Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 225; *b. Ber.* 34b; Lucian, *Philops.* 16; Diogenes Laertius 8.67.

¹⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, p. 225; *b. Ber.* 34b; Lucian, *Philops.* 16; Diogenes Laertius 8.67.

¹⁵ Mark 5:1 “Gerasenes” is a larger and more powerful city about 30 miles from the lake than Matthew 8:28 “Gadarenes,” which is only six miles from the lake but smaller, so it is accurate to describe the miracle in both regions. This region is a mixed Gentile and Hellenistic Jewish region.

8:26–39).¹⁶ These extremely strong violent men did not challenge Jesus directly for they asked if they were to be tormented before their time. At the same time, Jesus was commanding the demons to come out of them. Instead the legion of demons begged not to be sent to the abyss¹⁷ but to be sent into a herd of swine,¹⁸ perhaps to defeat Jesus ministry in the region. With Jesus' permission they ran the swine down into the sea drowning them. The herdsmen told the city and many came out to find the previously demonized men sitting, clothed, and in their right mind, healed or saved (ἐσώθη, Lk. 8:36) and listening to Jesus. The city folk implored Jesus to leave their region, perhaps because it had already cost them dearly. However, the healed were sent to testify to their friends, so they announced it throughout the whole Decapolis region.¹⁹

John's Promise of the Spirit

On His last night with His disciples, Jesus tells them He is about to go away so that he will send the Holy Spirit to them to carry on His ministry (Jn. 14:25–28; 15:26; 16:5–8, 12–17). The Messiah was anticipated to be a Comforter to restore the Kingdom of Israel (Isa. 40:1; 51:3; 61:2; 66:13; Lk. 2:25; Jn. 1:49; Acts 3:19–21).²⁰ The Holy Spirit will be such a Helper (παράκλητος), after the pattern of Jesus' help to His disciples (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 13–14; 1 Jn. 2:1). Though extra-Biblically the term παράκλητος often has a forensic sense as “a legal defender” in classical and rabbinic thought,²¹ the majority of the Johannine contexts don't seem to fit that sense very well. In John 14–16 the term extends Jesus ministry. For the specific context of John 16:8–11, the Spirit is the accuser, or the reverse to the forensic sense of παράκλητος. Furthermore, when the term describes Jesus it is in more of a priestly role accomplishing propitiation, than a legal role (1 Jn. 2:1). So it is better to see the Johannine παράκλητος in a broadly Messianic like role of Comforter to prepare for Kingdom.

Jesus has many more things to tell His disciples, but they couldn't bear any more that night and He was going away (Jn. 16:12). Both the Father and Son send the Holy Spirit to the disciples, so that in His role as Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit will bear witness of Jesus (Jn. 15:26).²² Specifically, the Spirit will teach the disciples all the things in which Jesus has been instructing the disciples, and thus He will especially call to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught His disciples (Jn. 14:26). Thus in the same manner as Jesus had pointed out His audience's sin (Jn. 3:17–18; 7:24; 8:15–26, 34, 46; 9:34–41), now the Spirit will continue, calling the world to His righteousness and from

¹⁶ Multiple attestation supports the authenticity of this miracle.

¹⁷ Judaism saw the deep as the judgment depository of demons (*Jub.* 5.6–7; *1 En.* 10.4–6; 18.11–16; cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

¹⁸ For Jews, pig keeping is prohibited (*m. Qam.* 7.7) and eating pork violates kosher (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8).

¹⁹ The population of the region was mixed Jew and Gentiles (Josephus, *Bell.* 3.51–8).

²⁰ *Num. Rab.* 13.5; *Lam. Rab.* 1.16.51.

²¹ A nice discussion and evidence for the view is provided by Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), vol. 2, pp. 956–7.

²² Wisdom and Spirit are found together (Isa. 11:2; Wis. 1.6–7; 9.17). The phrase “spirit of truth” is broader than prophecy, including the source for revelation and moral instruction (Jn. 14:13; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Jn. 4:6; *Jub.* 25.14; *1QS* 2.1; 3.18–19; 4.3; *4Q381* frag. 69; *4Q444* frag. 1 1.1; *4Q509* 5.15–16).

judgment (Jn. 16:8–12). Likewise, the Spirit will judge some of the world in sin because they do not believe in Jesus. The Spirit will especially have to demonstrate righteousness, because Jesus who fleshed out righteousness will no longer be available to demonstrate righteousness bodily before them. The Spirit will convict some of the world of judgment because the foe (the ruler of the world) is vanquished and judged. This already realization of judgment unto Kingdom connects the disciples presently with the future grander realization of Kingdom. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will continue to teach the disciples about the things that the Father and the Son have for them, especially prophecy of what is to come (Jn. 16:13–15).²³ This ministry will therefore glorify Christ among the disciples. Thus this continuation of the Spirit's presence where Jesus had been, should be profoundly reassuring to the disciples, providing them with peace, so that they might not be destroyed under the hatred of the world (Jn. 14:27–29; 15:18–16:4). This Spirit witness, utilizing what the disciples have seen of Jesus' ministry will equip the disciples to bear witness for Jesus as well (Jn. 15:27; Acts 1:8).²⁴

After Jesus has raised and as He meets with the disciples, He encourages them with a commission and enablement (Jn. 20:21–23). Jesus blesses His disciples with peace. He next commissions them to go; “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Jesus then breathed on the disciples, explaining the meaning to be their reception of the Holy Spirit. Either this is a temporary filling of the Spirit or John's orientation is more continuously an extension of Jesus' ministry without a break of a few days as Acts portrays. Enabled by the Spirit and sent by Jesus, the disciples are commissioned into a scribal ministry of forgiving sins to include others into Kingdom and retaining sins to exclude others from Kingdom.

The Great Commission

Jesus conveys the great commission to His disciples, sending them out to make disciples (Mt. 28:17–20). Jesus claimed all authority in heaven and earth, commissioning the disciples with the coming Spirit empowerment to be witnesses proclaiming the Kingdom message of repentance for forgiveness of sins to all nations beginning in Jerusalem and to make disciples of all people groups baptizing and teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded them (Mt. 28:18–20; Lk. 24:47–53; Jn. 20:21–23; Acts 1:5–8). This discipleship has more than conversion activities and communicating activities in view. Discipleship reproduces people who apply Jesus' teaching throughout their lives. Discipleship is thus a repetitive process multiplying more disciples for Christ. After reassuring them that He would be with them until the end of the age Jesus lifted His hands to bless them and then bodily ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9–11). That is, bodily He left but spiritually He remained to empower their disciple-making of His disciples. Additionally, the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples to enable their disciple-making and witness (Jn. 20:22; Act 1:5, 8, 2:4–18, 33, 38; 11:15–16).

²³ Jn. 14:26 and 16:12–14 do not teach that Christians are illuminated (cf. Doug Kennard, “Evangelical Views on Illumination of Scripture and Critique,” JETS 49(2006): 797–806.

²⁴ Bestowal of Spirit also indicates succession of ministry, so the disciples with the Spirit continue where their master left off (2 Kgs. 2:9; Acts 1:8; *Mek. Pisha* 1.150–3; *'Abot R. Nat.* 1 A; 1.2B; *Pesiq Rab.* 51.2; *Sir.* 46.1; 48.12; *T. Mos.* 1.7; 10.15; sometimes with diminution of authority [*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 24.18]).

Bestowal of the Spirit, Gentile Salvation and the Parting of the Ways

With the arrival of the Jewish Pentecost Feast (First Fruits), came the arrival of Jews and proselytes from all over the empire streaming back into Jerusalem. The crowds milled around speaking to one another in Greek and Aramaic. Many were devout, expectant of the events of the feast.

In a room nearby the believers waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit, prophesied by Jesus Christ just prior to His ascension (Acts 1:8; 2:15–21). They prayed and waited. Suddenly a powerful, forceful roar of wind filled (ἐπλήρωσεν) the house. The Holy Spirit came upon the believers, filling (πλήρεις) them for prophetic service.²⁵ An external sign of flames rested upon each believer's head signifying the Spirit's coming. All the believers went out into the crowd and began proclaiming the gospel in a variety of languages. Those gathered from all over the empire were amazed to hear their native language spoken. The message that they witnessed to was especially what identified Jesus as Lord.

Peter's witness began by identifying that this was the phenomena which Joel 2:28–32 prophesied as coming upon all mankind to initiate the Kingdom (Acts 2:15–21). Peter identified that Jesus as King had received the Holy Spirit from the Father so that the Lord Jesus could then pour out the Spirit upon them as well (Acts 2:33).²⁶ At the end of the sermon, Peter offered the Spirit and forgiveness to those who would repent and align themselves with King Jesus (Acts 2:38). Many did, showing themselves to be of one mind and sharing property with each other (Acts 2:43–47; 4:32–37). Among such folk the Spirit fostered traits of: boldness, generosity, wisdom, faith, and power (Acts 4:31–37; 6:3, 5, 8, 10).

Christianity begins to be shoved out of mainstream Judaism by the religious leaders, filled (ἐπλήσθησαν) with jealousy, continuing to persecute Christians, like they had Jesus (Acts 4:1–22; 5:17–32; 6:9–8:3; 9:1–2, 23–30; 12:1–5; 13:45–46, 50; 14:2–6, 19; 17:5; 18:6, 12–16; 21:28–32, 35–36; 22:4–5, 22–23; 23:2, 12–21; 24:1–9; 25:2–3, 7, 24; 26:9–11, 21). Unlike most who develop the parting of Christianity from Judaism, it begins earlier than is often acknowledged, but a form of Jewish Christianity remains within Judaism for centuries.²⁷ However, some of the Christians were martyred (Acts 7:60; 12:2). During these hearings before the Sanhedrin, Peter (after the pattern which Jesus promised) was filled (πλησθεῖς) with the Spirit and clarified that miracles and salvation are only accomplished in Jesus (Mt. 10:16–20; Lk. 12:12; Acts 4:8–12; 5:31–32). Additionally, the Council was unable to cope with the effective Spirit fostered

²⁵ Prophetic filling of the Spirit can produce tongues which is a form of prophecy (1 Sam. 10:5–13; 19:18–24; Acts 2:4–10, 17 and addition to quote in verse 18).

²⁶ Peter's gospel message, which focuses on Christ is developed in the chapter on "Jesus as Gospel."

²⁷ James Dunn *Jesus, Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), and *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Judith Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?" *JSNT* 56(1994): 101–19; *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Sakari Häkkinen, "Ebionites" and Petri Luomanen, "Nazarenes" in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics"* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 247–78, 279–315.

wisdom of Stephen so they killed him (Acts 6:10; 7:51, 55). This threat motivated the Christians to scatter, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom as they went. Phillip is a good example of this witness directed by the Spirit to Samaria, the Ethiopian eunuch, and the coastal cities (Acts 8:4–29–40). Wherever the gospel was received, the apostles followed providing them with the Holy Spirit to powerfully confirm them in their faith (Acts 8:14–17).

One of the difficult adjustments Peter and Jewish Christians had to face was that of fully accepting Gentiles as equals before God. Most Jews did not have a problem if a Gentile would proselyte to become a Jew, but many considered Gentiles to be unclean, and thus unacceptable to associate and eat with them (Acts 10:28; 11:2–3). Peter was staying with Simon the tanner. Apparently, he had no problem staying with one of an unclean occupation. In other respects, Simon must have still operated within the Jewish traditions. About noon, Peter was on the housetop praying and getting hungry. He had a vision of a large sheet lowered from heaven with all kinds of animals in it, clean and unclean. A voice announced to him “Arise, Peter, kill and eat!” Peter responded, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean.” The first voice responded, “What God has cleansed, do not consider unholy.” This interchange occurred three times and then the sheet was taken back up into heaven. This left Peter perplexed, wondering what the vision meant (Acts 9:43; 10:9–17).

As Peter reflected on the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold three men are looking for you, arise, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings; for I have sent them Myself” (Acts 10; 11:6–12). Peter obeyed and on the next day went with them to Caesarea. This vision and command was what Peter needed to convey the gospel to Gentiles without clothing it within Judaism. That is, when Jews go to Gentiles they need to show authentic Christianity available to the Gentiles, without forcing them to become Jews to be Christians.

Cornelius had assembled his relatives and close friends to hear Peter’s message. Peter explained as he entered the house that Jews do not associate or visit Gentiles because they are viewed as unclean, but God had shown Peter that he should not consider any man unclean so he came without objection.²⁸ This provided an opportunity to explain the gospel²⁹ to those in the house and the Holy Spirit fell upon all listening. The Gentiles began to speak in tongues as the Christians had at first, showing that they were authentically saved with the repentance that leads to life (Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–18).

When Peter got back to Jerusalem, some circumcised believers took issue with Peter for eating with uncircumcised men (Acts 11:2–3). Peter explained the vision, the Spirit’s command and that the Spirit fell upon them in the same manner as upon the Jewish Christians authentically saving them (Acts 11:4–18). Upon hearing that God had accepted them the group quieted down and glorified God.

Peter found that while he knew the truth of the equality of Gentiles it was hard to consistently live it. Once in Gentile dominated Antioch he ate with uncircumcised believers until some believers arrived from James’ Jewish Christianity. After their

²⁸ This is not an allegorical interpretation of the vision. The vision identified that Gentile foods were clean and the Spirit commanded Peter to accompany the Gentiles without misgivings (Acts 10:20). Peter logically concludes that the Gentiles are clean since their food is clean and the Spirit orchestrated him to be there.

²⁹ Peter’s gospel message (which focuses on Christ) is developed in the chapter on “Jesus as Gospel.”

arrival, Peter withdrew, fearing the circumcised believers. Even Barnabus was carried away into hypocrisy. Paul confronted Peter before the believers, accusing him of adding a work so that they would be acceptable before God (Gal. 2:11–21). Peter rejoined the believer’s fellowship but with a new appreciation of living this loving unity more consistently.

Paul Called by Christ as Apostle to Gentiles

While Saul was on the way to Damascus to round up Christians, Christ met him on the road and called him to be His apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:3–19; 22:5–21; 26:12). Luke records this conversion event three times in Acts underscoring its significance for the issue of authentic Gentile salvation. Caught within Christ’s blinding light, Paul fell to the ground. Christ demanded of him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” The speaker identified Himself as Jesus the Nazarene, whom Saul was persecuting (Acts 22:8; 26:15). Perhaps this statement, which reflects Jesus’ teaching elsewhere (e.g., Mt. 10:40; 25:35–40, 42–45), is the beginning of Paul’s body of Christ metaphor because the persecution done to the Christians was as though it was done to Christ. The Lord Jesus informed Paul and Ananias that, Paul was a chosen apostle to communicate the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:15, 21; 26:17–18). Christ said, “I am sending you to the Gentiles, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:17–18). The resurrected Christ explained that, in this service Paul would need to suffer greatly for Christ’s sake. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and healed of his blindness. He began to proclaim the gospel among the Jews³⁰ and suffer for Christ’s sake (Acts 9:20–30). As Jews repudiated this Christ centered gospel, Paul shifted his focus of communicating it to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46–48; 14:2–3; 19:9; 26:20, 23; 28:24–28; Rom. 1:16). He explained the move as fulfilling the prophesied Servant Song, “I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, that You should bring salvation to the end of the earth” (Acts 13:47 quoting Isa. 49:6). Paul continued to be empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles and confound the opposition (Acts 13:4, 9).³¹ Elect Gentiles believed in this gospel and were filled by the Spirit with joy and praised the word of the Lord (Acts 13:48–52). The Holy Spirit directed Paul to the Gentiles He wished to include as benefited in this ministry (Acts 16:6; 19:21). Likewise, the Spirit raised up elders among the churches (Acts 20:28). In this ministry to Gentiles, miracles confirmed to many that Paul was empowered by God, but the Gentile context at times made it difficult to clarify that it was the Jewish God, not a pagan god that undergirded this ministry (Acts 13:8–12; 14:8–18; 16:16–18; 17:18; 19:11–12; 28:6–9). In the loss of: income from trade in idols, or the use of demonized diviners, or honor to the pagan gods, Paul was persecuted by Gentiles as well (Acts 14:5, 19; 16:19–24; 17:5–9, 32; 19:23–34). Jesus Christ (to Paul while in a trance) and the Spirit (through prophets) warned Paul about some of the threats from these persecutions (Acts 21:11; 22:18, 21). Furthermore, the resurrected Christ appeared to Paul to reassure Paul that he would witness for Christ’s cause in Rome because Jesus

³⁰ Paul’s gospel message (which focuses on Christ) is developed in the chapter on “Jesus as Gospel.”

³¹ Paul’s gospel message (which focuses on Christ) is developed in the chapter on “Jesus as Gospel.”

claimed to protect him from Jews and Gentiles (Acts 23:11; 26:17). Through all this, Gentiles continued to be saved throughout the Roman empire. Additionally, Roman officials supported the innocence of Paul repeatedly, because the gospel proclaiming Jesus Christ did not violate Roman law, provided Christianity was viewed as a sect of Jewish Pharisaism (Acts 13:7–12; 16:35–39; 18:12–17; 19:35–41; 21:31–35; 23:6–9, 23–35; 24:21–26; 25:16–26; 26:8, 28–32). In spite of this perception of innocence, Paul appealed to Caesar to prevent himself from having a trial in Jerusalem or be killed on the way (Acts 25:2–12). Wherever Paul went he “kept preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness” (Acts 28:31).

Jerusalem Council Decision

Some Jewish Christians argued that Gentile Christians needed to embrace a Jewish way of life, including circumcision, kosher, and the keeping of Sabbath (Gal. 2:14; Acts 15:1, 5).³² Perhaps the issue was accentuated with the different presentations of James and Galatians, which were likely composed in 48 or 49 A.D. In fifty A.D. the Jerusalem Council took up this issue of authentic Gentile salvation and obligation in Christ (Acts 15:4–29).

Peter recounted that God saved the Gentiles in Cornelius’ household by giving them the Holy Spirit as He had done to the Jewish Christians as well. Luke records this event three times in the book of Acts indicating that Gentiles are authentically saved, without becoming Jews. It is from this appeal that Peter urges, “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are” (Acts 15:10–11).

Paul and Barnabus recounted how the Spirit had performed signs and wonders among the Gentiles confirming that Gentiles obtained authentic salvation as well (Acts 15:12).

James, one of the three pillars of the Jerusalem Jewish Christians along with Peter and John (Gal. 2:9), called the council to encourage the Gentile Christians within their salvation (Acts 15:14–21). James shows he is Hebraically Jewish in referring to Peter by his Hebrew name, “Simeon.” He recognized that the Spirit showed through Peter’s ministry that Gentiles were authentically saved. Quoting Amos 9:11–12, which calls Gentiles to the Lord at God’s coming and reconstruction of the Temple, James concludes that the Jewish Christians should not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God. James concluded that if God did not require the Gentiles to keep the Law to be saved, then no one should require it of them (Acts 15:19). However, with James’ commitment to the Law (Jas. 2:8–12), he does not allow the Gentiles to be antinomian for he appropriates four of the features of proselytizing³³ to aid in keeping the Christians unified from its Jewish and Gentile makeup. The apostles and the elders of the church concurred with James conclusions and composed their decision to be sent to the Gentiles (Acts 15:22–29). Luke records this decision three times indicating that the modest restrictions on

³² Ignatius, *B.J.* 2.17.10; 2.18.2; Plutarch, *Cic.* 7; however Jerome (*Comm. Isa.* 9.1) recounts that Paul’s teaching prevailed over the Nazarenes’ personal tradition for Christianity.

³³ E.g., *b. San.* 56b; *Gen. Rab.* 98.9; cf. note 37 below.

Gentile Christians is significant reassurance of their acceptability in salvation (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

In a scribal role, James places a ban on the Gentile Christians, binding them from practices as attempt for church unity. The first is to abstain from things contaminated by idols (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).³⁴ The contamination referred to is probably the pollution of making the food ceremonially unclean through its involvement with idolatry. It is essentially an exclusion from participation with idols in any way. John and Jesus concur with this restriction (Rev. 2:12, 14, 18, 20).³⁵

James' second exclusion is from fornication, though it is fourth on both the other lists (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).³⁶ Because the lists do not always retain this exclusion next to idolatry, it is clearly a ban from the immorality of fornication to maintain a pure life, rather than merely an exclusion of fornication as it relates to idolatry and temple prostitution. All the N.T. authors require such moral purity of Christians.

The other two exclusions always ride together conveying that they are addressing flip sides of the same issue: abstain from strangled (therefore bloody) meat and from the blood itself (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).³⁷ This is a repeat of the restriction in the Noachic Covenant to balance the privilege of eating meat (Gen. 9:3).³⁸ Such killing of animals as food retains the force of the creation mandate to rule, for in this subduing the animals loose their life, while humans obtain the spoils. However, in the midst of this domination of animals (for obtaining food) there is a restriction (Gen. 9:4). Living flesh (*'dbśr bnpšw/בְּנֶפֶשׁוֹ*) and blood (*dm/דָּמוֹ*), which emblems this condition of life, are both excluded from human diet. This restriction excludes from human diet meat that is still alive, such as swallowing goldfish and first kill celebrations where the animal begins to be devoured while still alive. This restriction also excludes blood from the diet, for it is a symbol of life. So ritual drinks of blood, German blood pudding or sausage, blood meal, and Filipino delicacies made from pig blood are all to be excluded from the human diet because such blood symbolizes life. These two sides of the restriction might also combine to exclude especially bloody meat from human diet which might happen if the

³⁴ David Aune (*Revelation. Word Biblical Commentary* 52A [Dallas: Word Books, 1997], p. 186) assumes that the restriction about eating strangled meat is akin to the restriction of eating meat offered to idols, however these practices occur together only in the report of this Jerusalem council decision (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25) contrary to Aune's claim.

³⁵ Paul is freer, for he does not accept the rationale that idols would metaphysically make things unclean, but practically it works out the same way, that Gentiles should not eat meat sacrificed to idols when there is anyone with such scruples, in order to preserve unity of the Christian church (1 Cor. 8:4–13; 10:7, 20).

³⁶ There is no evidence for emending the text to read “pork” as excluded, as William Neil (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], p. 174) proposes in an attempt to press kosher into these restrictions. The general tenure is to keep the Gentile Christians free from the Mosaic Covenant.

³⁷ Those who claim the exclusion from blood is addressing marrying within blood family as Lev. 18:6–18 demands or exclusion from murder (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17) impose features of the Law that contextually would not fit because: 1) the strangled and blood restriction always hang together in these discussions, so they need to be defined in relation to each other, 2) this council is excluding the Mosaic Covenant from binding on Gentiles, which counters the intuition of both suggestions because those solutions are binding aspects of the Mosaic Covenant upon Gentiles counter to the council's decision, and 3) murder would be an unnecessary restriction since it is already universally mandated against throughout the Roman empire.

³⁸ *Jubilees* 6:6–7 discusses the privilege humans have of eating animal meat, but also mandates the restriction of not to intake their blood. *Jub.* 10–14 further develops that Noah and his son must swear not to eat this animal blood and holds over them curse that if they do eat animal blood then they will be uprooted from the land.

animal was killed by strangulation. However, there is no development in Genesis or Acts of the more detailed stipulation of Leviticus 17:10–13, which discusses where the Israelite and resident alien can obtain their game animals. Furthermore, there is no restriction excluding rare meat from human diet. The blessings of eating meat (with this ethical restriction) continues to be in effect today because the Noahic Covenant is an everlasting covenant continuing to bless and restrict in this area of life, with the same persistence as the no-flood promise remains in effect. This continued restriction is not seen in the Mosaic Law because the Law bound a more restrictive obligation upon the Israelite and the resident alien (who lives in Israel) than did the Noahic covenant (e.g., Lev. 17:10–13). However, the Apocryphal text of *Jubilees* 6:6–7 and 10–14 mandates to not eat animal blood, and declares with the threat of a curse that any blood eater will be uprooted from the land. A latter Jewish tradition for proselytizing, called the “Noahic commands” as set out in *Sanhedren* 56b, include among its seven restrictions: abstinence from blood and abstinence from meat cut from a living animal.³⁹ The N.T. continues to remind Christians that all animals are clean and appropriate for food (Acts 10:12-16; Rom. 14:14, 20). However, within this freedom, the N.T. reminds the Gentile Christian that they should restrict from their diet: meat that is strangled and blood (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

James explains that these restrictions are because, “Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21). The emphasis on the longstanding practice of reading and preaching Moses in the synagogues has more to do with Jews being grounded in the Law already rather than the availability of the Law for future Gentile Christian study. Admittedly, some synagogues permitted interested Gentiles to come and study Law but that is not the past emphasis in the stated reason. In fact, the Gentiles outside of Israel had never been bound by the Mosaic Law. Rather, even the widely dispersed Jews had maintained their faith and identity on the Law for a long time, therefore Gentile Christians should abstain from these restrictions so that they would not run Jews away from their Christianity, and could join together in unified churches with Jewish Christians who may continue to practice the Law as their lifestyle. That is, the ban looks to provide Gentile Christians with the basic requirement they need to do to maintain peaceful relationships with Jewish Christians who continue to keep the Law.

Summarizing the Jerusalem council: 1) Jewish and Gentile Christians are authentically saved in Christ, 2) Gentile Christians do not have to keep the Law, 3)

³⁹ Within *Sanhedren* 56a-59a (and *M. M'lakhim* 9:1) the seven precepts of the Noahides are developed. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15 edition, vol. 8, p. 737 in the article “Noachide Laws”) describes that the Noachide precepts are “a Jewish Talmudic designation for seven biblical laws given to Adam and to Noah before the revelation to Moses on Mt. Sinai and consequently binding on all Mankind.” Thus all humans are then “sons of Noah” (Gen. 10; cf. *Ned.* 31a; *Sanh.* 57b). Normally these seven precepts are listed as: prohibition of: idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, incest, robbery, eating a limb or flesh severed from a living animal, and the command to set up a just legal system. The 102nd United States Congress and President George Bush senior recognized that the Seven Noahide Laws are the “ethical values and principles [which] have been the bedrock of society from the dawn of civilization” (Public Law 102-14, a joint resolution for “Education Day, U.S.A., March 20, 1991” signed into law March 20, 1991. Some Jewish traditions, such as Rabbi Samuel ben Hofni develop this material within 30 precepts, for more detailed analysis. Some other Jewish traditions see the keeping of the Noahic Laws as the means of salvation for Gentiles (e.g. *Noahides & Their Seven Laws* (Jerusalem: Top Torah Outreach Program, n.d. but printed in 1993).

Jewish Christians are not released from the Law, and 4) both have to live in harmony with each other in Christ. Each group should be sensitive to the context in which God has accepted the other. The authority of the ban is grounded in direct authority of God in accepting the Gentiles for salvation without the Law and circumcision (Acts 15:8, 19) and in the attempt of the apostles to release the tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians by commanding a few guidelines for the Gentiles to do (Acts 15:2, 19–20). This decision did not alter the established trajectory already laid down for the Jewish Christian. The direct authority for the decision comes from the Holy Spirit, apostles, and elders (Acts 15:23, 28) and is therefore binding on the church.

Luke addresses these issues once more showing that he is consistent: Jewish Christians should keep the Law, Gentile Christians do not have to keep the Law but they need to keep the Jerusalem council ban. Paul came to the Jerusalem church and reported to James and the elders what God had done among the Gentiles (Acts 21:17–27). The Jerusalem church rejoiced over the impact of salvation among the Gentiles. Then James raised a concern on behalf of Jewish Christians, some of whom had a false impression that Paul was urging Jewish Christians in the dispersion to forsake the Mosaic Law, circumcision and their traditions. These Jewish Christians were zealous for the Law and had heard or read some of the information that Paul told to Gentile Christians. Paul's teaching excluded circumcision, Law and Jewish customs from mandatory Gentile Christian practice. However, Paul had enabled the Jewish Christian Timothy to be circumcised (Acts 16:1–3) and had himself completed a Nazirite vow according to the Law, as modified only by the conditions of his ministry in the dispersion (Acts 18:18; Num. 6:18). Paul was sensitive to Jewish Christians as weaker brothers and urged the church to be unified without judging each other (Rom. 14–15; 1 Cor. 8–10). So he demonstrated that it was still appropriate for Jewish Christians to keep the Law. Therefore, James and the elders had Paul show his commitment to the Law and Jewish customs in Jerusalem by purifying himself in the *mikvot*⁴⁰ with four Jewish Christian men completing a Nazirite vow and thus paying for the four Jewish Christian's purification and burnt offerings (both of which atone),⁴¹ according to the Law's demand, as they completed their Nazirite vows (Acts 21:23–24; Num. 6:11–13).⁴² So Paul was in the process of accomplishing these Jewish practices and atoning sacrifices when the mob rushed him (Acts 21:26–27). James then clarified that this did not change the previous decision which the Jerusalem council had decided concerning the Gentiles as not being bound by the Mosaic Law, nor by the Jewish traditions, but by only the four previous restrictions to aid in Jewish/Gentile unity in Christ (Acts 21:25). God had accepted the Gentiles as authentically saved without becoming Jews or complying with the Law, and that Gentile acceptability without the Law was the established operating order.

⁴⁰ I.e. Ritual washing.

⁴¹ Purification offering atones: Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13; Num. 6:11; Guilt offering atones: Lev. 6:7.

⁴² In Numbers 6:13 the statement about the sacrifices in the third person "one shall bring" indicates that another than the Nazirite should provide his completion sacrifices, and it was also Jewish custom to comply in this manner (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.6.1).

Continuing Echo

The continued Gentile mission has become mainstream Christianity. So the echo can be the rest of this book or others, like Eckhard Schnabel's *Early Christian Mission*⁴³ or early Church histories, or any book or movie that continues with missions interest (like the Mission, Black Robe, *Wise Blood*, The Apostle, At the End of the Spear). However, these all lead away from the figure of Christ, to the continuing evangelists who follow Christ. The thing that marks this chapter apart from them is the focus on Christ's active involvement, even throughout Paul's ministry, showing the ascended Christ's commitment to Spirit endowed Gentile ministry.

⁴³ (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).