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The Holy Spirit and Baptism in the Book of Acts

Mark P. Surburg

On the day of Pentecost, Peter announced, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).¹ He explained this further in Acts 2:39 (connected with γάρ) by adding, “For the promise [ἡ ἐπαγγελία] is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” The language of “promise” identifies the Spirit received by believers as the same Spirit poured out on the disciples on Pentecost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33). Understood within the framework of the pneumatology in Luke-Acts, the primary focus of the Spirit’s work is empowerment for mission (Acts 1:8). However, the Spirit also is involved in bringing individuals to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and enables Christians to live in the salvation they have received.²

Acts 2:38 indicates that the Spirit is received through Baptism. However, Acts contains three texts that conspicuously do not work in this way. In Acts 8:4–13 the Samaritans believe and are baptized. However, the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them (8:16), and instead they receive the Spirit through the laying on of hands by Peter and John (8:17). Next, in Acts 10, Peter shares the gospel with the Gentile Cornelius and those gathered with him (10:34–43). The Holy Spirit falls directly on all who hear the word and they begin to speak in tongues (10:44). Then, later they receive Baptism. Finally, in chapter 19 Paul meets a group of “disciples” in Ephesus who know only “John’s baptism” (19:3). They are baptized, and then receive the Holy Spirit through Paul’s laying on of hands, and begin to speak in tongues (19:6). A closer examination reveals that Pentecost and these accounts are in fact linked by multiple interlocking textual features that lead us to interpret them together as unique and extraordinary events.³ We will see that this is a crucial factor for interpreting these texts.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the ESV.

² For a discussion of the pneumatology in Luke-Acts and the manner in which it is best understood according to the concept of the “Spirit of prophecy” present in Second Temple Judaism, see Mark P. Surburg, “Pneumatology in Luke-Acts and Baptism: An Explanation of the Samaritan Believers Who Had Not ‘Received the Spirit’ (Acts 8:4–17),” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (2022): 279–302.

³ Pentecost and Acts 10 are connected by the fact that the Spirit is poured out (ἐκχέω) in 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45 (only occurrences of the verb with the Spirit). The Holy Spirit is described as “gift” (δωρεά) in 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17 (only occurrences in Acts); is received (λαμβάνω) in 1:8; 2:33, 38;

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Acts 2:38

Acts 2:38 is naturally a critical text for understanding Baptism in Acts.⁴ In the interpretation of this verse, two sets of issues must be considered. First, the verse itself must be examined along with its relation to the context of 2:37–47. Second, the verse must be considered in relation to what is narrated about Baptism and reception of the Spirit in Acts 8, 10, and 19.

It is common to deny that in this verse Baptism is the means by which God gives the Spirit.⁵ Within the verse itself, the strongest argument used to support this is that the future verb *λήμψεσθε* is ambiguous and cannot provide precision regarding *when* the Spirit is received.⁶ This may in fact be a point in time *subsequent* to Baptism.⁷ On this basis, some have described repentance and Baptism as the prerequisites to receive the Spirit.⁸ In their view, the water of Baptism is not the means by which this happens.

More recently, Paul Elbert has argued that the syntactical construction (*καί*) used by Luke does not yield mere ambiguity, but instead proves that Baptism and the reception of the Spirit *cannot* occur at the same time. Elbert calls attention to “the conditional imperative–future passive indicative combination in Koine Greek where the subject of the two verbal ideas is the same, namely that the addressee(s) of the imperative in the conditional protasis is/are the same as the subject(s) of the

8:15, 17; 10:47; 19:2 (only occurrences of the verb with the Spirit); and falls upon people (*ἐπιπίπτω*) in 8:16; 10:44; 11:15 (only occurrences of the verb with the Spirit). There is speaking “in tongues” (*γλώσσαις*), which is found only in 2:4; 10:46; 19:6 (and is suggested by 8:18). Acts 1:8 says the disciples will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon (*ἐπέρχομαι*) them at Pentecost, and in 19:6 the Spirit comes upon (*ἐρχομαι + ἐπί*) the “disciples.” Finally, the laying on of hands to give the Spirit is present only in 8:17–19 and 19:6.

⁴ Though as we will see, some will argue that Acts 2:38 should not be accorded a special status when compared with what is present in Acts 8, 10, and 19.

⁵ Johannes Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum nach Verwendung, Herkunft und Bedeutung in religionsgeschichtlichem Zusammenhang untersucht* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1911), 165; and Laurence Decousu, *La perte de l'Esprit Saint et son recouvrement dans l'Église ancienne: La réconciliation des hérétiques et des pénitents en Occident du IIIe siècle jusqu'à Grégoire le Grand* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 453.

⁶ While not denying that Baptism and the Spirit go together, Andrew Das also has noted the temporal uncertainty (A. Andrew Das, “Acts 8: Water, Baptism, and the Spirit,” *Concordia Journal* 19 [1993]: 108–134, esp. 125).

⁷ Schuyler Brown, “‘Water-Baptism’ and ‘Spirit-Baptism’ in Luke-Acts,” *Anglican Theological Review* 59 (1977): 135–151, esp. 144; and John Fleter Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament: Its Significance, Techniques, and Effects* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 2009), 193.

⁸ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 203–204; and Nikolaus Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung: Eine exegetische-theologische Untersuchung von Apg 8, 14–17* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951), 27–28.

future indicative in the apodosis.”⁹ Elbert argues that in such constructions, which include Acts 2:38, the action expressed in the future passive takes place at some indefinite future time.¹⁰

Seeking to provide background relevant to the Lukan material, Elbert cites several examples from the papyri, the LXX, and Eusebius. Most importantly, the very first LXX example is 4 Kingdoms (2 Kings) 5:10, which reports Elisha’s message to Naaman: *λοῦσαι ἑπτὰκις ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ καὶ ἐπιστρέψει ἡ σὰρξ σου σοι καὶ καθαρισθήσῃ* (“wash seven times in the Jordan and your flesh will return to you and you will be cleansed”).¹¹ However, there is nothing indefinite about the timing between the washing and the being cleansed. The act of washing is the means that will provide cleansing.¹² Then, in a great irony, considering the subject of Elbert’s study, the word *βαπτίζω* is used when Naaman washes in the Jordan, and this is the means by which he is cleansed: “Naaman went down and washed [*ἐβαπτίσαστο*] in the Jordan seven times according to the word of Elisha and his skin returned as the flesh of a little child and he was cleansed [*ἐκαθαρίσθη*]” (4 Kgdms 5:14, my translation). Rather than supporting Elbert’s position, 4 Kingdoms 5:10 illustrates how this syntactical construction can be used to describe simultaneous action, and indeed it does so in a way that leads to the verb *βαπτίζω* as means by which the result is achieved.

Elbert must assign a future eschatological salvation to the statement in Acts 16:31, *πίστευσον ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ ὁ οἶκός σου* (“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your house will be saved”).¹³ While this is possible, it can easily be argued that the believing and the being saved occur at the same time since “salvation” is also a present reality in Luke’s writings.¹⁴ Elbert has failed to prove that in Koine Greek in general, or in Luke in particular, the construction necessitates a fulfillment in the indefinite future.

⁹ Paul Elbert, “Acts 2:38 in Light of the Syntax of Imperative-Future Passive and Imperative-Present Participle Combinations,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75 (2013): 94–107, esp. 95n2.

¹⁰ Elbert, “Acts 2:38 in Light of the Syntax,” 100–103, 107–108.

¹¹ My translation. Elbert, “Acts 2:38 in Light of the Syntax,” 101.

¹² Naaman’s own servants emphasize this when they attempt to persuade Naaman to follow through by quoting the prophet’s words, *εἶπεν πρὸς σέ, λοῦσαι καὶ καθαρίσθητι* (“he said to you, ‘wash and be cleansed’”; 4 Kgdms 5:13, my translation).

¹³ My translation.

¹⁴ Jesus says of Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house [*σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο*]” (Luke 19:9). Jesus forgives the sinful woman and tells her, “Your faith has saved you [*ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην*]” (Luke 7:50). Perhaps most pertinent to the subject of this study is the fact that Peter calls upon the crowd at Pentecost, “Be saved [*σώθητε*] from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40, my translation). In Acts 2:41, we hear about their Baptism, which is certainly part of how they are saved, and then 2:47 provides this summary statement: “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved [*τοὺς σωζομένους*].”

It has been observed that Acts 2:38 narrowly ties the forgiveness of sins to Baptism, rather than to the Spirit, as the purpose/result.¹⁵ Luther McIntyre has argued instead that since in 2:38 *μετανοήσατε* (“repent”) is second-person plural and the pronoun in the phrase *εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν* (“for the forgiveness of your sins”) is second-person plural, “the concord between verb and pronoun requires that the remission of sins be connected with repentance, not with baptism.”¹⁶ However, Ashby Camp has pointed out that McIntyre has ignored the unique character of *ἕκαστος* since “the singular form of *ἕκαστος* occasionally serves as the antecedent of a plural personal pronoun.”¹⁷ Consistent with this, Carroll Osburn had called attention to the construction in which a second-person plural imperative is followed by a third-person singular imperative where “in this distributive imperatival usage, the speaker attaches such tremendous importance to the command that he makes it clear with the third person singular imperative that not a single member of the group is exempt.”¹⁸

In Acts 2:38 the verb *λήμψεσθε* (“you will receive”) is linked to *βαπτισθήτω* by the conjunction *καὶ*. This *καὶ* follows an imperative and so is best understood as a *καὶ* consecutive.¹⁹ The translation then is “And so you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

While it is possible to understand the statement to mean that the Spirit is received after Baptism, this is in no way necessary. It is a matter of lexical semantics. The statement “Eat the pizza and you will enjoy it” does not indicate the enjoyment will happen at some future time after the eating. Instead, the enjoyment happens by means of the eating. The verb “eat” permits a fulfillment of the second verb simultaneous with itself. In the same way the verb “baptize” can be understood as the means by which the Spirit is received, and the fulfillment of “and so you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” occurs simultaneously with Baptism.

¹⁵ Brown, “Water-Baptism,” 141; and Scott Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 93.

¹⁶ Luther B. McIntyre, “Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 53–62, esp. 55.

¹⁷ Ashby L. Camp, “Reexamining the Rule of Concord in Acts 2:38,” *Restoration Quarterly* 39 (1997): 37–42, 39. Examples of this include Acts 3:26, John 7:53, and Rev 20:13 (39–41), and it is found in the LXX as well in Exod 1:1; 5:4; 7:12; 33:8; Deut 16:17; Josh 24:33; and Jer 6:3 (41n19).

¹⁸ Carroll D. Osburn, “The Third Person Imperative in Acts 2:38,” *Restoration Quarterly* 26 (1983): 81–84, esp. 83.

¹⁹ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), 442.2; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 27; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 154; and Michel Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit: Baptême et Esprit Saint dans les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 47.

Acts 2:38 states in a straightforward manner that each person who repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ The following verse (2:39) explains further (γάρ) that this promise of receiving the Spirit by repenting and being baptized is true for Peter's hearers. This is true for all whom the Lord calls to himself (ἄλλους ἀν προσκαλέσεται κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν). Those whom the Lord calls are those who call on the name of the Lord (mentioned earlier in 2:21: ἐπικαλέσεται) by being baptized in the name of Jesus (2:38). Acts 2:38–39 (and its relation to 2:21) establishes a very tight connection between faith, Baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit as God's promise to each believer. For this reason, a number of scholars have observed that the text does not provide any suggestion of a delay in receiving the Spirit.²¹

In addition, Luke's description of the first Christians in Acts 2:41–47 indicates that there was no such delay. He does not narrate the reception of the Spirit by the three thousand who are baptized (2:41). This is not surprising when the explicit nature of 2:38–39 is borne in mind. Instead, Luke immediately narrates the life of the community that is produced by the Spirit in 2:42–47.

The second issue that must be examined when looking at Acts 2:38 is how the description of Baptism in this verse relates to the accounts of Baptism and reception of the Spirit provided in chapters 8, 10, and 19. Many have argued that these chapters show there is no one pattern of Spirit reception, and that reception of the Spirit is

²⁰ This character of the text has led many scholars to conclude that the Holy Spirit is given through Baptism. See Friedrich Avemarie, *Die Taufenzählungen der Apostelgeschichte: Theologie und Geschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 82–84; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Eldon J. Epp and Christopher J. Matthews (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 22; Gustav Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 54; Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 49–50, 184; and Fredrick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 168. The Confirmationist view affirms that the Spirit is given through Baptism, but not yet as the gift or fullness that is provided by the laying on of hands. See J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1962), 56, 86; and Johannes Bapt. Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung: Eine biblisch-dogmatische Studie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1920), 113–114. The difficulty in explaining what this distinction really means is one of several major problems for this approach.

²¹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 105; Avemarie, *Die Taufenzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 143; and Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 358.

not tied to Baptism.²² However, this fails to grasp the manner in which these exceptions actually establish that Baptism and the Spirit belong together.²³ As we will see in the exegesis that follows, in each of these texts there is evidence that the separation of Baptism and reception of the Spirit is *abnormal* and must be redressed.

Peter's speech in Acts 2 is programmatic for Acts, in the same way that Jesus' speech in Luke 4 is for the Gospel of Luke.²⁴ In Acts 2:38–40 we find the only place where the three important themes of repentance, Baptism, and reception of the Spirit are linked with conversion.²⁵ Acts 2:38–40 thus provides the paradigm according to which all conversions in Acts are to be understood. They involve repentance, faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21), and Baptism, which gives the gift of the Spirit. This is for Luke the normative pattern by which an individual becomes a Christian.

Acts 10:44–48

We now turn to a close examination of the key texts in chapters 8, 10, and 19. For the sake of clarity in presentation, we begin with Acts 10, and do this for two reasons. First, Pentecost and the events with Cornelius and the Gentiles are the two most significant events of the work of the Spirit within the Book of Acts, and Acts 10 stands in a very close relationship to Acts 2. Second, the understanding of the relation between these chapters prepares us for the interpretation of chapters 8 and 19.

In Acts 10 Peter proclaims the gospel to Cornelius and the Gentiles (10:34–43), and 10:44 states, “While Peter was still saying these things [Ἐτι λαλοῦντος τοῦ Πέτρου], the Holy Spirit fell on [ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον] all who were hearing the word [ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸν λόγον].”²⁶ Peter and his companions were amazed “because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out [ὅτι . . . ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκέχυται] even on the Gentiles” (10:45). They knew the Spirit had

²² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 57; and Wilhelm Wilkens, “Wassertaufe und Geistempfang bei Lukas,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1967): 26–47, esp. 29.

²³ A point made by Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte, I. Teil: Einleitung, Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–8,40* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1980), 277; and Avemarie, *Die Taufereählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 140.

²⁴ The point is widely acknowledged. See for example Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 29–30.

²⁵ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 139–140.

²⁶ ESV modified. The particle *ἀκούοντας* is best understood as a participle of simultaneous action (Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1900], 54–55). The Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles at the same time they were hearing Peter's proclamation.

been poured out because the Gentiles were speaking “in tongues” (γλώσσαις) (10:46). After seeing this, Peter asked, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have [οἴτινες τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαβον ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς]?” (10:47). Then he commanded the Gentiles to be baptized (10:48).

Four features in this text serve to identify what happens to Cornelius and the Gentiles with what had happened to the first believers at Pentecost. First, there is a dramatic event when the Spirit falls upon the Gentiles (ἐπέπεσεν) (10:44), which is perceived as a pouring out of the Spirit (ἐκκέχυται) (10:45). This is the same verb that occurs in Peter’s quotation of Joel (2:17–18) and that is used to describe what the exalted Christ had done on Pentecost (2:33). Second, the gift of the Holy Spirit (ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) (10:45) is poured out on the Gentiles directly without Baptism, just like the Pentecost disciples.

Third, the Spirit causes the Gentiles to speak in tongues (αὐτῶν λαλούντων γλώσσαις) (10:46), just as he had caused the disciples to speak in tongues (2:4). Finally, Peter explicitly makes this identification when he refers to the Gentiles as those “who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have [οἴτινες τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαβον ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς]” (10:47).

This identification is further amplified when Peter defends his actions in Jerusalem. Peter reports that “the Holy Spirit fell on them [ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ’ αὐτούς] just as on us at the beginning” (11:15). Peter then describes how the event caused him to remember that Jesus had said, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (11:16). This reference back to Jesus’ statement in 1:5 directly identifies what happened to the disciples on Pentecost with what had happened to the Gentiles at Caesarea. Next, Peter adds, “If then God gave *the same gift* to them [τὴν ἴσην δωρεὰν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς] as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (11:17, emphasis added). The final identification of the two events occurs at the Jerusalem council when Peter says of the Gentiles that God “bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us [δούς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καθὼς καὶ ἡμῖν]” (15:8).

On four different occasions Luke equates the experience of the disciples on Pentecost with that of the Gentiles at Caesarea (10:47; 11:15, 17; 15:8). These texts leave no doubt that the event with Cornelius is a “Gentile Pentecost.” The dramatic features accompanying the Gentiles’ reception of the Spirit take place as the Gentiles receive the Spirit directly and apart from Baptism. The events do not follow the paradigmatic expectation established in 2:38–40 that Baptism gives the gift of the Spirit,

but do they contradict it?²⁷ Peter's statement in 10:47 indicates they do not, because it is based on the premise that the *Spirit and Baptism are expected to go together*: if the Gentiles have received the Spirit they cannot be hindered from receiving Baptism (and in fact in 10:48 Peter commands that they be baptized).²⁸ Instead, Acts 10:44–48 is an exception in which God works in an unanticipated manner at a turning point to demonstrate that the Gentiles too are included in the expansion of the gospel.²⁹

Acts 8:14–19

Turning next to chapter 8, we read that the persecution by Saul scatters the church in Jerusalem, apart from the apostles (8:1). Luke says that those who were dispersed “went about preaching the word [εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον]” (8:4). Beginning at 8:5, he then provides Philip as an example of this as Philip goes to the city of Samaria and “proclaimed to them the Christ” (8:5). The content of Philip's preaching and the description of the miracles he performs leave no doubt this is true gospel ministry that must be placed on the same level as that carried out by the apostles.³⁰

As a result of Philip's ministry, the Samaritans believe (ἐπίστευσαν) and are baptized (8:12). The verb πιστεύω is the standard means by which Luke expresses saving faith in Christ, and so it seems apparent that the Samaritans and Simon have converted and become Christians.³¹ James Dunn has denied that the Samaritans were actually believers in Jesus.³² However, his arguments do not withstand examination, and have been widely rejected.³³

²⁷ Scholars regularly assert that Acts 10 demonstrates that Baptism and the Spirit are not linked: Laurence Decousu, “Liturgie baptismale et don de l'Esprit aux origines chrétiennes: Une pneumatologie oubliée,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 89 (2015): 47–66, 133; and James B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991), 133.

²⁸ So also Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 54; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 86; and Avemarie, *Die Taufenzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 141–142, 349.

²⁹ So also G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study of the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1967), 66, 75; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 108; and Joel B. Green, “From ‘John's Baptism’ to ‘Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus’: The Significance of Baptism in Luke-Acts,” in *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 157–172, esp. 166.

³⁰ See the discussion of Philip's preaching and miracles in Surburg, “Pneumatology in Luke-Acts and Baptism,” 295.

³¹ The verb is used in this way in 2:44; 4:4, 32; 5:14; 9:42; 10:43; 11:17, 21; 13:12, 39, 48; 14:1, 23; 15:5, 7; 16:31, 34; 17:2, 34; 18:8, 27; 19:2, 4, 18; 21:20, 25; and 22:19.

³² James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching of the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM, 1970), 63–66.

³³ See Das, “Acts 8: Water, Baptism, and the Spirit,” 114–116.

The fact that the Samaritans had received the word of God and believed in Jesus Christ was an event of great significance because of the relation between the Jews and Samaritans, which was one of antagonism and religious animosity.³⁴ The report of the Samaritans' reception of the word of God prompts the apostles to send Peter and John to confirm the events in Samaria (8:14). It is important to recognize that the text does *not* describe the giving of the Spirit as the purpose of the journey.³⁵ There they find an unexpected situation. Luke states that "when they had gone down they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit [ὁπως λάβωσιν πνεῦμα ἅγιον], for he had not yet fallen on any of them [οὐδέπω γὰρ ἦν ἐπ' οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιπεπωκός], but they had only [μόνον] been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (8:15–16).³⁶

The statement that the Spirit had not yet fallen upon the Samaritans contradicts the expectation created by Acts 2:38–40.³⁷ Since the Samaritans are described as believers, some have argued that the Samaritans had received the Spirit. What they had not yet received were dramatic and charismatic manifestations of the Spirit.³⁸ However, multiple features in the text make it clear that the Samaritans had not received the Spirit in the manner Luke uses the phrase.³⁹

Peter and John pray for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit (8:15), and Luke states, "Then they laid their hands on them [τότε ἐπέτιθεσαν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτούς] and they received the Holy Spirit [καὶ ἐλάβανον πνεῦμα ἅγιον]" (8:17). In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands was used for blessing, in sacrifices, in the Day of Atonement rite, in the consecration of the Levites, in commissioning leaders, and to

³⁴ V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 77–78. See Samkutty's detailed examination of this history and the status of the Samaritans in 57–85.

³⁵ I have found this observation in only Gerhard Delling, *Die Taufe im Neuen Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 65; Turner, *Power from on High*, 360n31; and Decousu, "Liturgie baptismale et don de l'Esprit aux origines chrétiennes," 54. Scholars generally assume that Peter and John went to Samaria in order to give the Samaritans the Spirit, but the text nowhere says this.

³⁶ ESV modified.

³⁷ Luke's description of the believing Samaritans who have not "receive[d] the Holy Spirit" does not contradict Romans 8:9, because in Luke's pneumatology, to "receive the Holy Spirit" refers to a specific activity of the Spirit, and not the mere presence or absence. See the discussion in Surburg, "Pneumatology in Luke-Acts and Baptism," 286–302.

³⁸ John Ernest Leonard Oulton, "The Holy Spirit, Baptism, and Laying on of Hands in Acts," *The Expository Times* 66, no. 8 (May 1955): 240, 238; and Michel Gourgues, "Esprit des commencements et Esprit des prolongements dans les Actes. Note sur la «Pentecôte des Samaritans» (Act., VIII, 5–25)," *Revue Biblique* 93, no. 3 (1986): 378, 382.

³⁹ There is the explicit statement about the absence of the Spirit (8:16), the prayer of Peter and John that the Samaritans might receive the Spirit (8:15), and then the description that through the laying on of Peter and John's hands the Samaritans receive the Spirit (ἐλάβανον πνεῦμα ἅγιον) (8:17).

pass sentence on a blasphemer.⁴⁰ Although the data present challenges, it seems likely the hand laying to commission Joshua (Num 27:18–23; Deut 21:23; 34:9) was understood to give the Spirit.⁴¹ Hand laying was not used for healing in the Old Testament, but there is evidence that it came to be understood in this way during Second Temple Judaism.⁴²

Jesus used hand laying to bless and to heal.⁴³ In the rest of the New Testament, it is used for commissioning and ordaining, healing, and bestowing the Spirit.⁴⁴ This indicates that only blessing and commissioning were carried over from the Old Testament into New Testament practice.⁴⁵ More importantly, it seems certain that the use of hand laying to bestow the Spirit in the context of initiation is a Christian innovation not seen before.⁴⁶ The New Testament provides no evidence that Jesus established it, and so it appears to be an apostolic adaptation of a practice that had been used by Jesus in a different context.⁴⁷

David Daube maintained that the different vocabulary used for hand laying in the Old Testament provides the key to understanding ἐπιτίθημι + τὰς χεῖρας in the

⁴⁰ Blessing: Gen 48:13–16; sacrifice: Lev 4:4; Day of Atonement: Lev 16:21; consecration of Levites: Num 8:10; commissioning of leaders: Num 27:22–23 and Deut 34:9; and passing sentence on blasphemer: Lev 24:14. See Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 17–44, for a thorough examination of each of these uses.

⁴¹ See the discussion in Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 32–38.

⁴² When Naaman learns of Elisha's instruction for healing, he is angry because he expected that the prophet would "wave his hand over the place [סִבְּחָה לְיָדָיו וְיִגְדֵל] and cure the leper" (2 Kgs 5:11). Yet in the LXX this is translated as "lay his hand on the place [ἐπιτίθει τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον]" (4 Kgdms 5:11). Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the *Genesis Apocryphon* describes how Abraham healed Pharaoh through prayer and the laying of hands on Pharaoh's head (20.22, 29) (Everett Ferguson, "Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination," *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 [1975]: 1–12, esp. 1).

⁴³ Blessing (of children): Mark 10:6 (in Matt 19:13 parents ask him to lay his hands on children and pray for them); healing: Mark 5:23; 6:5; 8:23, 25; and Luke 4:40.

⁴⁴ Commissioning and ordaining: Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; and 2 Tim 1:6; healing: Acts 28:8; and bestowing the Spirit: Acts 8:17 and 19:6. In Heb 6:2 it is included among "the elementary doctrine of Christ [τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον]" mentioned in 6:1, but the verse and context provide no information on how the laying on of hands was understood.

⁴⁵ Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 293.

⁴⁶ This assessment is shared by Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 142–143, 145; Joseph Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. J. Kremer (Louvain: Leuven Univ. Press, 1979), 405–438, esp. 426–427 and 435–437; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 70; and Michael Patrick Whitehouse, "Manus Impositio: The Initiatory Rite of Handlaying in the Churches of Early Western Christianity" (PhD diss., Univ. of Notre Dame, 2008), 96.

⁴⁷ The complete absence of evidence has not prevented Umberg (*Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 136) and Adler (*Taufe und Handauflegung*, 76–77) from asserting that Jesus is the source.

New Testament.⁴⁸ However, his approach is certainly flawed.⁴⁹ Behm, Coppens, and Neumann have asserted that rabbinic ordination in which hand laying bestowed the Spirit provided a critical influence that led Christians to associate the bestowing of the Spirit with hand laying.⁵⁰ But this too faces serious problems that lead to rejection.⁵¹ Ysebaert has maintained that hand laying was accompanied by anointing and termed a sealing, and that “the three groups of terms may be used for the same gesture or rite.”⁵² Yet his evidence for anointing in the New Testament does not withstand examination.⁵³ Tipei argues on the basis of his study that in the New Testament the laying on of hands “always signifies the transference of some positive *materia*, blessing, ‘life-force,’ the Spirit and *charismata*.”⁵⁴ There is merit in his approach, but the vague definitions of what is bestowed in the “transference” is a drawback.

⁴⁸ Daube argued that there were two different kinds of laying on of hands. The verb קָנַח involved more pressure and indicates “the pouring of one’s personality into another being, the creation of a representative or substitute.” On the other hand, the verbs $\text{שָׁחַ$ or רָחַץ conveyed a lighter touch and were used in blessing, and to a lesser extent in healing. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 229. Daube then maintained this showed that in the New Testament usage of hand laying they “cannot all have had either the same form or the same import” (233).

⁴⁹ Daube himself had to admit that the LXX used the same verb ἐπιτίθημι [+ τὰς χεῖρας] to translate both קָנַח and שָׁחַ , just as the New Testament uses ἐπιτίθημι + τὰς χεῖρας for all types of hand laying (*The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 225). The Septuagint, Hellenistic Jewish writers, and the New Testament show no acknowledgment of a distinction (Everett Ferguson, “Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 26 [1975]: 1).

⁵⁰ Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 145–146, 161–163; Joseph Coppens, *L’Imposition des mains et les rites connexes dans le Nouveau Testament et dans l’Église ancienne* (Paris: Gabalda, 1925), 163, 169, 171, 371; and Johannes Neumann, *Der Spender der Firmung in der Kirche des Abendlandes bis zum ende des kirchlichen Altertums* (Freising: Kyrios-Verlag, 1963), 26, 33–34.

⁵¹ In very detailed studies, both Arnold Ehrhardt (“Jewish and Christian Ordination,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5, no. 2 [1954]: 125–138) and Lawrence A. Hoffman (“Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity,” *Studia Liturgica* 13, nos. 2–4 [1979]: 11–41) have demonstrated that hand laying was not used in rabbinic ordination during the time when the New Testament was being written. It therefore could not have been an influence on the development of Christian hand laying. In addition, both Hoffman (17) and Ferguson (“Jewish and Christian Ordination: Some Observations,” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 [1963]: 15–16) deny that there is any evidence that hand laying was understood to bestow the Spirit in early rabbinic ordination.

⁵² Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 254; see also 264 and 289.

⁵³ Ysebaert states, “Our conclusion may be that in the New Testament a gift of the Spirit is granted by an imposition of hands and an anointing. It is not necessary, however, to assume two separate rites, for it was already apparent that the imposition of hands is a gesture of touching that may comprise an anointing” (*Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 264). However, Ysebaert’s supposed proof of anointing combined with hand laying in the New Testament are the unusual healings performed by Jesus in Mark 7:33, 8:23, and John 9:6–7, 11, of which he says, “In a few passages it is mentioned that Jesus combines the gesture of touching with the use of something in the nature of an ointment” (258). Ysebaert’s qualification (“something in the nature of an ointment”) reveals the great weakness of his argument.

⁵⁴ Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 296.

The preferable approach to hand laying is that of Ferguson, who argues, “The idea of blessing or benediction, especially in the sense of an efficacious sign, is the meaning which best explains all the varied occasions when the rite was employed in the ancient church.”⁵⁵ It was an act of prayer in which the prayer stated the blessing God was asked to bestow and “the laying of hands suggests the identification of the object toward whom the benediction is directed.”⁵⁶

The Holy Spirit is given through hand laying in 8:14–19 and not through Baptism. The Confirmationist view has argued that hand laying is the primary (or even the only) means by which the Spirit is given. One version of this approach has argued that in Acts the Spirit is not given in Baptism at all, but instead is given only through hand laying.⁵⁷ Some who hold this view allow that Paul developed his ideas about Baptism in a different way that did to some degree connect the work of the Spirit to the water of Baptism.⁵⁸ The other version maintains that the Spirit is given through Baptism in a basic manner in Acts, but that hand laying works “a further imparting of the Spirit, which becomes manifest primarily in the gift of tongues and in prophecy.”⁵⁹

The Confirmationist position has usually argued that only the apostles could lay on hands and bestow the Spirit.⁶⁰ A modified version of this maintains that only the apostles could, or those designated and sent by them.⁶¹ However, there are four

⁵⁵ Ferguson, “Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination,” 6.

⁵⁶ Ferguson, “Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination,” 6. In Acts 8:15, Peter and John “prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.” Tipei agrees with Ferguson that blessing is the origin of hand laying for the bestowal of the Spirit (Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 228–229).

⁵⁷ Heinrich Elfers, “Gehört die Salbung mit Chrisma im ältesten abendländischen Initiationsritus zur Taufe oder zur Firmung?,” *Theologie und Glaube* 34 (1942): 334–341, esp. 335; Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 100–114, 172; Arthur James Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism: As Taught in Holy Scripture and the Fathers*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1893), 37; and Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 266–267.

⁵⁸ Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 165–175; Coppens, “L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres,” 426–428; and Thomas Marsh, *Gift of Community: Baptism and Confirmation* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1984), 53–54, 70–85.

⁵⁹ Burkhard Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, trans. John Jay Hughes (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 18–19. This lays an exegetical foundation for the classic Roman Catholic view that in Confirmation “the Holy Spirit is given for strength” (Council of Florence [1438–1445]) (Heinrich Denzinger et al., eds., *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed. [San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012], sec. 1319).

⁶⁰ Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 115–117; Neumann, *Der Spender der Firmung in der Kirche des Abendlandes bis zum ende des kirchlichen Altertums*, 35–36; Coppens, “L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres,” 186, 188; Franz Joseph Dölger, *Das Sakrament der Firmung: Historisch-dogmatisch dargestellt* (Vienna: Mayer, 1906), 141; and Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 205–207.

⁶¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts,” in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 1999), 165–183, esp. 182. Marsh describes them as “recognised leaders in the Church” (*Gift of Community*, 111).

reasons why this must be rejected. First, it is an entirely anachronistic view, based on later western church practice, to imagine that the apostles (or their delegates) followed up on every setting where conversions had occurred through the work of others.⁶² Second, when the church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas to Antioch to check on the newly founded church (11:22–24), there is no evidence that he lays hands on them to receive the Spirit.⁶³ Third, the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch that follows immediately after (8:26–40) completely contradicts this idea, unless one is willing to argue that the eunuch never receives the Spirit.⁶⁴ Finally, there is no evidence in the rest of the New Testament for a special hand laying administered by only the apostles or their delegates in order to bestow the Spirit.⁶⁵

Because of the hand laying in 8:14–19 and its use after the Baptism of the “disciples” in Ephesus (19:1–7), it has been common to assume that Baptism was accompanied by hand laying from the time of the apostolic church.⁶⁶ It is argued that in Acts 8 and 19, Luke gives a full account of initiation, and that other passages that only mention Baptism are merely summary accounts.⁶⁷ Therefore, the language of “baptism” can be understood to include hand laying, even when hand laying is not actually mentioned.⁶⁸

The question of hand laying and Baptism must be answered on two levels. First, we must consider how Luke intends hand laying to be understood in the Book of Acts. Here it must be denied that he saw hand laying as the *normal means* by which the Spirit was given to believers, and therefore a rite that was a necessary complement to Baptism. If hand laying was the means by which the Holy Spirit was given, it becomes inexplicable that when Peter speaks about receiving the gift of the Spirit

⁶² So also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 114; and Whitehouse, “*Manus Impositio*,” 78.

⁶³ So also Jean Amougou-Atangana, *Ein Sakrament des Geistempfangs? Zum Verhältnis von Taufe and Firmung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1974), 86; and Whitehouse, “*Manus Impositio*,” 78.

⁶⁴ So also Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 68; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 58; and Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, 2nd rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 35n27.

⁶⁵ So also Turner, *Power from on High*, 53–54; and Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 67.

⁶⁶ Coppens, “L’imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres,” 193; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 65; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 76–77; Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 28; and Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 121.

⁶⁷ Neumann, *Der Spender der Firmung in der Kirche des Abendlandes bis zum ende des kirchlichen Altertums*, 34–35; and Coppens, “L’imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres,” 209–210.

⁶⁸ L. S. Thornton, *Confirmation: Its Place in the Baptismal Mystery* (London: Dacre, 1954), 73; and Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, 48–49.

(2:38) at Pentecost he says nothing about hand laying and the entire context never mentions the action.⁶⁹

Second, with regard to the general practice of the early church, the available evidence makes it highly unlikely that during the first few decades there was ever *one* ritual practice in the administration of Baptism.⁷⁰ For example, the pre-Nicene evidence from Syria and Egypt does not have a post-baptismal hand laying, and instead emphasizes a pre-baptismal anointing.⁷¹ If there was truly *one apostolic practice*, how could these regions (especially Syria, for which Acts depicts very strong ties to Jerusalem and the apostles: 11:19–30; 15:1–35) have deviated so dramatically and so quickly? The absence of any reference to hand laying in relation to Baptism and the giving of the Spirit in Paul's epistles speaks strongly against the notion that this practice was an apostolic one present in all churches.⁷² At the same time, the association of hand laying with blessing and prayer that we have already seen would have made it a natural complement to Baptism. Hebrews 6:2 indicates that it was present in at least some churches during the first century AD, but there is nothing in this text or context that proves it was done to give the Spirit.

Returning to Acts itself, the most likely understanding of hand laying in Acts 8 and 19 is that it is used to address an *abnormal situation* in which the Spirit for some reason has not been received.⁷³ We will observe in the exegesis that follows that this

⁶⁹ So also Avemarie, *Die Taufenzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 166–167; and E. C. Whitaker, *Sacramental Initiation Complete in Baptism* (Bramcote, UK: Grove, 1975), 20.

⁷⁰ The work of Paul Bradshaw (*The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002]) has been of critical importance in revealing the extent to which previous scholarship assumed continuity and used evidence from disparate regions and time periods in order to create the impression of a united and common practice.

⁷¹ See the discussion in Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 41–82.

⁷² So also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 123; and R. E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation: A Theology of Baptism and Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 196. The absence of references to hand laying has not stopped scholars from arguing that texts in Paul's letters actually speak about it (Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 101–105; Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism*, 40–52; and Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 268–271), but this exegesis, which detects what is not actually mentioned, is forced and unconvincing. Recognizing this, others maintain that a hand laying that gives the Spirit must be assumed in Paul's letters that do not seek to describe the rite itself (Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," 265–266; and Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, 48–49). Yet this argument is itself based on the assumption that the practice was apostolic and present from the beginning.

⁷³ This is the position of Tipei (*The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 294), Avemarie (*Die Taufenzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 166–167), and Laurence Decousu ("Imposition des mains et onction: recherches sur l'adjonction de rites additionnels dans les liturgies baptismales primitives – Première partie: L'imposition des mains," *Ecclesia orans* 34 [2017]: 11–46, esp. 12–13).

coheres best with details of these texts. Acts 8 and 19 do not describe normal occasions of Baptism; rather, they are responses to abnormal and exceptional circumstances.

The details of Acts 8 have been explained by Pentecostals as an important example of subsequence—namely, that believers in Jesus Christ receive the Spirit at a later point in time (and the Spirit then provides charismatic gifts and empowerment for mission). Yet as we will see, 8:16 presents the delay as being *contrary* to normal expectation. It was commonly argued in the twentieth century that the challenging features of Acts 8 are the result of the way Luke has combined or adapted different sources, but this has been soundly rejected.⁷⁴ Quesnel has maintained that Acts 8:14–17 and 19:1–7 are different because they represent a completely different understanding of Baptism than that found in Acts 2:38 and 10:48.⁷⁵ But the use of different prepositions with βαπτίζω provides a weak basis for his argument.⁷⁶

Luke describes the absence of the Spirit in Samaria by stating, “For he had not yet fallen on any of them [οὐδέπω γὰρ ἦν ἐπ’ οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιπεπτωκός], but they had only [μόνον] been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (8:16). The key word in this description is the adverb οὐδέπω, which means “the negation of extending

⁷⁴ For more discussion of why this general approach should be rejected, see Turner, *Power from on High*, 361–362.

⁷⁵ Quesnel emphasizes that 8:16 and 19:5 both describe Baptism as εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. In these texts the giving of the Spirit then follows through hand laying. On the other hand, Acts 2:38 describes Baptism as ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and 10:48 as ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Acts 2:38 states that the Spirit is given through Baptism (Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l’Esprit*, 48–49, 57–59). According to Quesnel, these represent two different practices that existed in the church, and while the Acts 2:38 version is Luke’s own view, Luke has respected the traditions he received by retaining this different version of Baptism in Acts 8 and 19 (211).

⁷⁶ Lars Hartman has noted, “The expression ‘into the name (of somebody)’ is, however, unbiblical in so far as it does not occur in the Septuagint. In addition, it is at odds with Greek style, and actually in normal Greek used only in banking language” (Lars Hartman, “*Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*”: *Baptism in the Early Church* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997], 38; emphasis original). He also observes that Luke uses εἰς τὸ ὄνομα to describe Christian Baptism when he is the narrator (8:16; 19:5) and goes on to add that this “means that the form corresponds to his natural style, presumably the mode of expression he has learnt from his own Christian surroundings” (38). Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 1:13 where he points out the Corinthians were not baptized “into the name of Paul [εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου]” supports this. The form ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι in 2:28 has most likely been influenced by the citation of Joel in 2:21 (πᾶς ὃς ἀν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα) (Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte. 1 Teilband Apg 1–12*, 2nd ed. [Solothurn: Benzinger, 1995], 125; and Avemarie, *Die Taufersählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 35). It is an example of Luke’s skill in prosopopoeia as he gives Peter’s speech a biblical or Septuagintal tone. The same thing is true for ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι in 10:48, where Luke provides an account of Peter’s statement in indirect speech (Avemarie, *Die Taufersählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 35). For an extensive and detailed refutation of Quesnel’s position, see Avemarie, *Die Taufersählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 255–267.

time up to and beyond *an expected point*.⁷⁷ The word οὐδέπω defines the relationship between Baptism and reception of the Spirit. Baptism had occurred, but the expected event of the reception of the Spirit had not yet happened.

The adverb οὐδέπω indicates the expectation that Baptism and reception of the Spirit go together.⁷⁸ This explains the μόνον (“only”) of 8:16b. Contrary to normal expectation, Baptism had occurred and remained “alone” without the reception of the Spirit. Yet Thomas Marsh has emphasized that here and in Acts 19:1–7 we see the actual process of Baptism depicted, and so we receive a full description of what Luke considered to be normal in Baptism.⁷⁹ Like Marsh, many have seen in μόνον an indication that it was the normal expectation for the Spirit to be given after Baptism through hand laying.⁸⁰ But this ignores the fact that the text does not say Peter and John went to Samaria in order to bestow the Spirit. Instead, when they had gone down, they found that the Spirit “had not yet [οὐδέπω]” fallen on them (8:16). They found something that was *contrary* to the normal expectation established in 2:38–40, and so they took action to remedy the situation.

The need for the Spirit to be given through hand laying to those who had already been baptized marks 8:14–17 as an exceptional circumstance.⁸¹ An additional feature also marks this as an exceptional event. Acts 8:18 states that “when Simon saw that [ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Σίμων ὅτι] the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands,” he offered money to acquire this power. The fact that Simon could see the Spirit had been given indicates that there was some kind of perceptible manifestation of the Spirit’s presence.⁸²

It has been noted earlier that multiple interlocking textual features connect Acts 2 (Pentecost), Acts 8 (Samaritans), Acts 10 (Cornelius and the Gentiles), and Acts 19 (the “disciples”), and these lead us to interpret them *together* as unique and extraordinary events. Since there is speaking “in tongues” (γλώσσαις) present in 2:4,

⁷⁷ Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 736 (hereafter cited as BDAG) (emphasis mine).

⁷⁸ In 8:16’s explanatory statement, οὐδέπω is fronted for emphasis.

⁷⁹ Thomas Marsh, “A Study of Confirmation,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 39 (1972): 149–163, esp. 159.

⁸⁰ Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte. 1 Teilband Apg 1–12*, 275–276; and Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 58.

⁸¹ So also McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 35; Decousu, “Imposition des mains et onction,” 12–13; and Delling, *Die Taufe im Neuen Testament*, 66–67.

⁸² The obviously perceptible character of the Spirit’s presence has been commented on by Richard F. Zehnle, *Peter’s Pentecost Discourse: Tradition and Lukan Reinterpretation in Peter’s Speeches of Acts 2 and 3* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 128; Gourgues, “Esprit des commencements et Esprit des prolongements dans les Actes,” 382; and Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 1:413.

10:46, and 19:6, it is highly likely this is also the case in 8:16.⁸³ Most likely Luke leaves this strongly implied since the Samaritans are only the first step outside Judaism, and he saves a full description (10:44–46; cf. 11:15–17) for the great leap forward as the Spirit compels the church to recognize God's acceptance of the Gentiles.

Thus Acts 8 is a "Samaritan Pentecost" and it represents the first movement of the gospel beyond the Jews.⁸⁴ This is not an advance undertaken by the twelve apostles, and it is directed toward a group with whom the Jews shared a long and bitter opposition. The delay of the reception of the Spirit, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit through hand laying, and the likelihood of tongues and other manifestations of the Spirit serve to show God's approval of this development.⁸⁵ As we have already seen in Acts 10, exceptional circumstances in which the Spirit is not received through Baptism mark the advance of the gospel to other groups that have stood outside or in tension with the original Jewish-based church.⁸⁶

Acts 19:1–7

The final text to consider is Paul's encounter with the "disciples" at Ephesus in Acts 19:1–7. However, this is preceded by the description of Apollos at Ephesus (18:24–28), in which there is a significant parallel.⁸⁷ Apollos is a Jew from Alexandria who is described as "eloquent/learned [λόγιος]" and "powerful in the Scriptures

⁸³ The presence of tongues is suggested by Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 84; Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 122; Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 135; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 304; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 332; Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 194; and Anthony Ash, "John's Disciples: A Serious Problem," *Restoration Quarterly* 45 (2003): 85–93, 211.

⁸⁴ Lampe (*The Seal of the Spirit*, 72) and Richard I. Pervo (*Acts: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009], 213) both make this helpful identification.

⁸⁵ This point is emphasized by Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012–2015), 2:1521; Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 69; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 118; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 289; Samkuty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 174; and Oulton, "The Holy Spirit, Baptism, and Laying on of Hands in Acts," 239.

⁸⁶ Lampe comments that "the original nucleus of the Church received the Spirit in the most striking and dramatic way at Pentecost, and at every turning-point in the missionary enterprise something in the nature of a Pentecostal manifestation of the Spirit occurs" (*The Seal of the Spirit*, 72).

⁸⁷ Luke's intentional juxtaposition of the texts, and the need to understand them in relation to one another, is widely recognized: C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 885; Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 458; and Avemarie, *Die Taufenzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 71–72.

[δυνατὸς ὢν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς]” (18:24).⁸⁸ Luke then reports, “This one had been instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in the Spirit he was speaking [καὶ ζέων τῷ πνεύματι ἐλάλει] and was teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus [καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ]” (18:25).⁸⁹ Yet then he adds, “although he knew only the baptism of John [ἐπιστάμενος μόνον τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου]” (18:25). Apollos began to speak boldly (παρρησιάζεσθαι) in the synagogue, and when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, “they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately [προσελάβοντο αὐτὸν καὶ ἀκριβέστερον αὐτῷ ἐξέθεντο τὴν ὁδὸν [τοῦ θεοῦ]]” (18:26).⁹⁰

Luke’s description of Apollos presents him as a somewhat enigmatic figure.⁹¹ One line of interpretation argues that Luke presents Apollos as a Christian, but he does so because he has *misunderstood* the information about Apollos, who was in fact a non-Christian Jew.⁹² However, this argument founders on the fact that Apollos was a well known figure in the early church (certainly to Paul), and therefore such a basic error on Luke’s part is not plausible.⁹³

Michael Wolter maintains instead that Luke seeks to present Apollos as having a significant deficiency in his knowledge and teaching that renders him not yet a Christian.⁹⁴ For Wolter, the participial phrase ζέων τῷ πνεύματι (18:25b) does not refer to the work of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵ Apollos is described as showing that Jesus is

⁸⁸ BDAG, 598.1.2. Within the setting of the Hellenistic world where rhetoric stood at the center of education, there was no real difference between “eloquent” and “learned” (so also Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 157; and Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:887).

⁸⁹ ESV modified.

⁹⁰ ESV modified.

⁹¹ According to 18:25, Apollos has been taught the way of the Lord, the Spirit appears to be at work in him through his speaking, and he teaches accurately about Jesus. However, he only knows (and apparently has received) the Baptism of John (18:25). He needs further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila to understand the teaching of the church more accurately (18:26). Presumably this must have included instruction about Christian Baptism, yet Luke never says that Apollos *actually* received Christian Baptism. At the same time, Apollos is then sent forth by the Ephesian Christians to Achaia (18:27), where he proves to be a great help (18:28).

⁹² Eduard Schweizer, “Die Bekehrung des Apollos, Apg 18, 24–26,” in *Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Neutestamentliche Aufsätze (1955–1970)* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970), 71–79, esp. 77–79.

⁹³ See 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6; 3:22; 4:6; 16:12; and Titus 3:13.

⁹⁴ Michael Wolter, “Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger (Act 18:24–19:7),” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der ältern Kirche* 78 (1987): 49–73, esp. 63–65.

⁹⁵ It is not uncommon for scholars to take this phrase as an anthropocentric reference to Apollo being “fervent in spirit,” rather than to the work of the Holy Spirit (Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 459; Bock, *Acts*, 592; and Coppens, “L’imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres,” 217).

the Christ (18:28) only after Priscilla and Aquila explain the way of God more accurately (18:26).⁹⁶

However, the available evidence indicates that while Apollos' situation may be somewhat unusual, he is certainly a Christian. The phrase ζέων τῷ πνεύματι ἐλάλει (18:25b) is key to understanding Apollos' status, and four items demonstrate that the referent of τῷ πνεύματι is the Holy Spirit. First, in the paratactic construction this phrase is sandwiched between two statements (18:25a and 18:25c) that describe someone who is a Christian.⁹⁷ Second, while Luke can use πνεῦμα in an anthropological sense (Luke 1:47; Acts 17:16), Avemarie has pointed out that when Luke uses πνεῦμα absolutely and without qualification as in 18:25b, overwhelmingly the referent is the Spirit or a demonic or spiritual creature.⁹⁸ Third, in the immediate and parallel context of 19:1–7, the referent of πνεῦμα is the Holy Spirit (19:2, 6), and we should expect the same to be true in 18:25.⁹⁹ Finally, the parallel statement “fervent in spirit [τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες]” in Romans 12:11 provides further external confirmation that Luke is describing Apollos as an individual who has received the Spirit. (It is likely an early Christian idiom).¹⁰⁰

Luke says that Apollos taught the things concerning Jesus accurately (ἀκριβῶς), but he knew only the Baptism of John (18:25). Priscilla and Aquila then explained the way more accurately (ἀκριβέστερον) (18:26). Certainly, this teaching included

⁹⁶ This is part of Wolter's broader argument that Acts 18:24–19:7 is really about “Paul and Apollos” (“Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger,” 59–60). He argues that this has been generated by the conflict found in 1 Cor 1–4. He thinks Luke could not accept such a conflict and so presents Apollos as subordinate to Paul. Apollos was taught the true faith by Paul's associates, who also then encouraged the church in Achaia to receive him (Acts 18:27; Wolter, “Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger,” 65–66).

⁹⁷ 18:25a: “He had been instructed in the way of the Lord [οὗτος ἦν κατηχημένος τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ κυρίου]”; 18:25c: “and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus [καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ].” The importance of this for interpretation is noted by Ernst Käsemann, “The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964), 143; Turner, *Power from on High*, 389n124.

⁹⁸ Avemarie, *Die Tauferezählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 71n161. Expanding on Avemarie's evidence, the referent is the Holy Spirit in Luke 2:27; 4:1, 14; Acts 6:3, 10 (cf. 6:5); 8:18, 29; 10:19; 11:12, 28; and 21:4. It is a demonic or spiritual creature in Luke 9:39; 10:20; 24:37, 39; Acts 16:18; and 23:8, 9. The only possible exceptions are Luke 1:80, Acts 19:21, and 20:22, which could be anthropological. However, in each of these a strong case can be made that the referent is also the Spirit.

⁹⁹ Keener makes the same point (*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2808).

¹⁰⁰ So also Käsemann, “The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus,” 143; Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2807; F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 402; Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:888; and Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 250.

Christian Baptism as the means by which Christ now gives the Spirit to his church.¹⁰¹ In this sense, Apollos' knowledge was incomplete. However, the adverb ἀκριβῶς would be entirely inappropriate if Apollos did not have a Christian understanding of Jesus as the Christ who had died and risen from the dead.¹⁰² Apollos needed more knowledge (specifically about Christian Baptism), but he was a Christian and did not require conversion.¹⁰³

Apollos is a Christian in whom the Holy Spirit is at work, and yet he has known and received only the Baptism of John the Baptist. How was this possible? The answer must be found in the parallel that exists with the apostles and the small group accompanying them (Acts 1:15) at Pentecost who received the Spirit (2:1–4). We have no record that the accompanying group ever received Christian Baptism. Acts 1:22 and its description of the apostolic requirement for Judas' successor ("beginning from the baptism of John"; see John 1:35–42) indicates that many (if not all) had received John's Baptism. Apparently, the water of John's Baptism found its completion in the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:16).¹⁰⁴ It is likely that Apollos should be understood in the same way: the Baptism of John was completed by a reception of the Spirit.¹⁰⁵

Immediately after the description of Apollos (18:24–28), Acts 19:1 states Paul came to Ephesus, where he found "some disciples [τινας μαθητὰς]." The apostle asks in 19:2 what seems to be an unusual question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? [εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες;]." Their answer in turn is puzzling: "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit [ἀλλ' οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν]" (19:2). Paul then follows up with another question, asking, "Into what then [εἰς τί οὖν] were you baptized?" and they reply, "Into John's baptism [εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα]" (19:3).

¹⁰¹ This is, after all, the specific shortcoming identified by Luke (so also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 1998], 639; and Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 206).

¹⁰² So also Knut Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes: Eine Studie zu den religionsgeschichtlichen Ursprüngen des Christentums* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1991), 221–222; and Bock, *Acts*, 592.

¹⁰³ This is the same conclusion shared by F. Scott Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 233; and Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:887.

¹⁰⁴ This is a common position found in scholars such as Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 46; W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1964), 42; and Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 170.

¹⁰⁵ So also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 112; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 89; J. C. O'Neill, "The Connection Between Baptism and the Gift of the Spirit in Acts," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63 (1996): 87–103, esp. 95; Das, "Acts 8: Water, Baptism, and the Spirit," 125n36; and Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 227.

After acquiring this information, Paul tells them, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus” (19:4). We learn that when they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (19:5). Then, “when Paul had laid his hands on them [ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου [τὰς] χεῖρας], the Holy Spirit came on them [ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ’ αὐτούς], and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying” (19:6). Finally, Luke states that there were about twelve men in all (19:7).

The brief report provided by Luke is filled with difficult features.¹⁰⁶ The first question to be answered is whether the Ephesian “disciples” are Christians. Some have answered in the affirmative for four different reasons. First, Luke calls these individuals “disciples [μαθητὰς],” and in every other instance in Acts, the word refers to Christians.¹⁰⁷ Second, Paul describes the disciples as “believing [πιστεύσαντες],” and in Acts this verb always refers to Christian faith.¹⁰⁸ Third, Paul’s explanation in 19:4 contains little about Jesus’ saving work per se, and so shows that these individuals knew the basic saving content of the Christian faith.¹⁰⁹ Finally, some maintain that the juxtaposition of 19:1–7 with 18:24–28, which discusses the Christian Apollos, indicates that the Ephesian disciples were also Christians.¹¹⁰ Yet while these scholars identify the Ephesian disciples as Christians, they must immediately qualify this identification with expressions that indicate they were not “normal disciples.”¹¹¹ These qualifications indicate the highly ambiguous status of these “disciples” and ultimately point in the opposite direction.

Five factors indicate that the disciples were not Christians. First, Luke describes them as *τινας μαθητὰς* (19:1), and this is the only time in Acts when Luke uses this phrase.¹¹² While the indefinite pronoun *τις* can indicate unspecified quantity, it can also be used to moderate an expression that could be viewed as too definite, since it

¹⁰⁶ Backhaus comments that “Acts 19:1–7 is loaded with difficulties as hardly another New Testament text” (*Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 191), and Käsemann has called it “the despair of the exegete” (“The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus,” 136).

¹⁰⁷ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 222; and Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l’Esprit*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 208; Avemarie, *Die Tauferszählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 78; and Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 199.

¹⁰⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 642; and Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 208.

¹¹⁰ Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 197–198; Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 208.

¹¹¹ “Of a sort”: Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 468; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 643; “disciples’ of sorts”: McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 38; “in some sense at least”: J. H. E. Hull, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles* (Cleveland: World, 1967), 112; “in some imprecise way”: Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 207n58; and “defective Christians”: Avemarie, *Die Tauferszählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 73n167.

¹¹² Shauf, *Theology as History*, 146–147.

is used “to introduce a member of a class without further identification.”¹¹³ The fact that Luke provides the number of disciples in 19:7 speaks against a quantitative understanding.¹¹⁴ Here, “some disciples” has this indefinite qualitative sense as Luke introduces the “disciples” in an ambiguous way that raises questions about them because it stands in striking contrast to his typical practice.¹¹⁵

Second, Paul’s question in 19:2 about whether they had received the Holy Spirit is highly unusual. As Dunn comments, the question is “hardly his opening gambit in every and any conversation.”¹¹⁶ However, following the description *τινας μαθητὰς*, the question indicates Paul has perceived that something about the disciples is not right and he has begun to seek out the true nature of things. Third, the participle *πιστεύσαντες* used in the question is hardly surprising as Paul seeks to assess the true character of these believers. Set within the context of this question, this participle does not prove that Paul considered them to be Christians. This was in fact the very thing he was seeking to learn.

Fourth, within the very terse account found in 19:1–7, Paul’s explanation in 19:4 contains little about Jesus’ saving work per se. Yet it points to Jesus as the central object of faith, in contrast to John, who was the forerunner. Equally important, this is not the first time Luke has narrated Paul speaking about John the Baptist. Paul’s very first speech in Acts at Pisidian Antioch (13:15–41) describes John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (13:25–26) and then provides an extensive discussion about Jesus’ saving work (13:26–39). This preceding text informs our understanding of what Paul means in 19:4.¹¹⁷ Fifth, the “disciples” ignorance about the fact that the Spirit had come (see discussion below) demonstrates they are not Christian.¹¹⁸

Finally, the juxtaposition of 19:1–7 with 18:24–28, which discusses the Christian Apollos, demonstrates the *contrast* between Apollos and the disciples and not their similarity. Apollos is “fervent in spirit” (18:25), while the Ephesian disciples do not even know that the Spirit has been given (19:2).¹¹⁹ Apollos teaches accurately the

¹¹³ BDAG, 1008, 1.b.β. See Jas 1:18. Porter notes that the sense can be of an item that is “unspecified” (Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 135).

¹¹⁴ Shauf correctly asks, “If *τινας* is supposed to be merely quantitative in v. 1, i.e. indicating an indefinite number of disciples, why would Luke then correct himself by providing a definite number in v. 7?” (*Theology as History*, 147).

¹¹⁵ Shauf, *Theology as History*, 146–147. Shauf notes that Jacquier advocated this indefinite qualitative view (Eugène Jacquier, *Les Actes des Apôtres* [Paris: Gabalda, 192], 565). Dunn also argues that *τινας μαθητὰς* indicates they were not Christians (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 84).

¹¹⁶ Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 85.

¹¹⁷ Shauf, *Theology as History*, 157–158.

¹¹⁸ So also Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2816–2817; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 570; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 83; and Hartman, “Into the Name of the Lord Jesus,” 137–138.

¹¹⁹ So also Turner, *Power from on High*, 389.

things concerning Jesus (18:25), while the Ephesian disciples require instruction about faith in Jesus (19:4).¹²⁰ There is no mention of Apollos being baptized, while the Ephesian disciples receive Baptism (19:5). In fact, the only element the two texts have in common is the mention of the Baptism of John (18:25; 19:3).¹²¹

The shared connection of the Baptism of John and the vastly different treatment accorded by Luke to Apollos and the Ephesian disciples underscore an important truth about Christianity in the first century AD. The Christian church emerged out of the setting of John's baptizing ministry.¹²² Christian Baptism, as a washing administered to another person, was a reinterpreted application of John's baptizing practice.¹²³

These strong ties from the past existed, yet also there is evidence that John himself continued to be an influential figure after his death. He had his own group of disciples (Luke 7:18–19), and we cannot say how long they continued to function as a group.¹²⁴ However, the continuing popular views about John (that he had risen from the dead, Luke 9:7–9; that Jesus was John the Baptist, 9:19; that John had been a prophet, 20:6) demonstrate his ongoing influence. The fact that people attributed Herod Antipas' defeat by Aretas IV to God's judgment for John's death¹²⁵ and that Josephus provided an account about John¹²⁶ demonstrate that "John the Baptist was a well-known figure, whose memory lingered in Jewish circles."¹²⁷

Apollos and the Ephesian disciples illustrate the fact that first-century Christianity included a broad fringe of groups that were not strongly tied to the apostolic church (and of course some of these groups ultimately were not Christian or were heretical).¹²⁸ Considering the original ties Christian origins had with John the Baptist and his continuing influence in the first century, it is unsurprising that there

¹²⁰ So also Decousu, "Imposition des mains et onction," 20n16.

¹²¹ So also Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 642; and Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 281.

¹²² John proclaimed that one greater than he was coming (Luke 3:15–17), and Jesus came to receive John's Baptism (Luke 3:21–22). At least some of those who followed Jesus had been associated with John's baptizing ministry (Acts 1:22; John 1:35–42). Backhaus correctly emphasizes the significance of this point (*Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 330–333).

¹²³ Washings in Second Temple Judaism were self administered. The fact that John *administered the Baptism to others* set him apart and provided him with the moniker "the baptizer [Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων]" (Mark 6:14, my translation). (See Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991], 178–179.) Christian Baptism continued this practice of a washing administered by another person.

¹²⁴ They fasted and prayed (Luke 5:33) (prayer that was done in a form taught by John; Luke 11:1), and they buried him after his execution (Mark 6:29).

¹²⁵ Josephus, *Ant.*, 18.116.

¹²⁶ Josephus, *Ant.*, 18.116–118.

¹²⁷ Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 168.

¹²⁸ Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 212; and Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 96–97.

were groups that continued the practice of John's Baptism and shared his teaching that came into contact with the church.

Some have suggested that the Ephesian disciples are an example of disciples of John the Baptist who continued after their master's death.¹²⁹ However, two pieces of evidence indicate that they are not disciples of John. First, Luke does not identify them as such, while he does so elsewhere when referring to disciples of John (Luke 5:33; 7:18; cf. 11:1). Second, their lack of knowledge about the Spirit is completely inconsistent with anyone who had contact with John.¹³⁰ What they have received is the "baptism of John," which in this case means the baptismal rite that originated with John.¹³¹

Luke intentionally introduces the Ephesian disciples in a very ambiguous manner. As we will see in the exegesis that follows, the Ephesian disciples' association with the heritage of John the Baptist proves to be the key in understanding why they experience a reception of the Spirit that does not follow the paradigm established by Acts 2:38–40. This connection to John the Baptist is what puts them in a category to experience an event that has clear ties to Acts 2, 8, and 10.

In the exegesis of 19:1–7, it is critical to recognize that 19:2–6 has been arranged in an ABCB' A' chiasm. In 19:2 (A), Paul asks about whether the disciples have received the Holy Spirit, and in 19:6 (A'), the Holy Spirit comes upon them. In 19:3 (B), the discussion is about the Baptism they have received, and in 19:5 (B'), the disciples receive Baptism in the name of Jesus. Acts 19:4 (C) stands at the center of the chiasm as Paul explains the nature of John's Baptism and teaches that the true outcome of John's work must lead to faith in Jesus.¹³² The chiasm helps us to understand that the issues of receiving the Spirit and Baptism in the discussion ultimately have a christological focus and answer.

It has been noted earlier that Paul's initial question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? [εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες;]," is surprising and arrives with no prior preparation. Some have argued that Paul is asking whether the disciples know they have received the Spirit because of immediate perceptible

¹²⁹ Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:885. Käsemann has argued that these disciples of John were "a Baptist community in competition with the young Church" ("The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 141–142). Backhaus argues convincingly against such an understanding (*Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 190–197, 314).

¹³⁰ Rejecting their status as disciples of John are Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 209; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 84; Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 67; Shauf, *Theology as History*, 147–148; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferszählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 76, 436.

¹³¹ So also Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 84; Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 67; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferszählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 76, 436.

¹³² The chiasm is identified in Wolter, "Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger," 69–70; Shauf, *Theology as History*, 145; and Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 467.

evidence and point to 19:6 as support for this interpretation.¹³³ However, Paul's follow-up question in 19:3 indicates that the apostle's question about receiving the Spirit is intended to lead to the subject of Baptism.¹³⁴

The disciples' answer in turn is puzzling: "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit [ἀλλ' οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν]." It is virtually impossible to conceive of a way that anyone who had come into contact with the teaching of John the Baptist (and its background in Judaism) could be unaware of the existence of the Holy Spirit. Scholars have correctly interpreted the language here in light of John 7:39, and have understood the answer to mean that the disciples did not know that the Spirit had come and could be received.¹³⁵ Confirmation of this is found in the fact that Paul does not seek to explain what he means by "Holy Spirit."¹³⁶

The disciples' obvious failure to understand the presence and availability of the eschatological Spirit prompts Paul to ask, "Into what then [εἰς τί οὖν] were you baptized?" (19:3a). The fact that Paul goes immediately to a question about the Baptism they had received shows that Paul presupposes the close connection between Christian Baptism and reception of the Spirit.¹³⁷ It coheres with the paradigm about Baptism and reception of the Spirit that has been expressed in 2:38–40 and provides further evidence that this paradigm is foundational to Acts.

The disciples' reply, "Into John's baptism [εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα]" (19:3b), shows that they have not received Christian Baptism.¹³⁸ Yet Paul's answer reveals they are lacking a more basic understanding without which Christian Baptism is not possible. He says, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus" (19:4). The syntax is important here, since the object of the verb (εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ' αὐτὸν) in the

¹³³ Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: An Engaging Critique of James D.G. Dunn's "Baptism in the Holy Spirit"* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 59–60; Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 211; Turner, *Power from On High*, 392; and Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 200.

¹³⁴ So also Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 468; and Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 282. Johnson comments, "If they are in fact *mathetai*, the natural assumption would be that they had been baptized into Jesus and had received the Spirit" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 337).

¹³⁵ John 7:39 states, οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐδέπω ἐδοξάσθη. Translated literally, this would mean "for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not been glorified." Since the statement cannot be a denial of the existence of the Spirit, it is rightly translated "for as yet the Spirit had not been given." Scholars who advocate this interpretation include Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2819; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 571; and Wolter, "Apollos und die ephesischen Johannesjünger," 67–68.

¹³⁶ Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 157.

¹³⁷ So also Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 468; Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 253; Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 212–213; and Turner, *Power from on High*, 392.

¹³⁸ We have seen that the best understanding of this phrase is the baptismal rite that originated with John.

phrase ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν has been placed in front of the ἵνα clause itself (εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ' αὐτὸν ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν). This emphasizes the preparatory character of John's work, and identifies Jesus as the one proclaimed by John, a point that has pneumatologic importance.

It was noted earlier that 19:4 stands at the center of a chiasm in which the surrounding verses deal with the Spirit (19:2; 19:6) and Baptism (19:3; 19:5). Paul's answer provides the christological core that makes reception of the Christian Baptism and the Spirit possible. First, he identifies John's Baptism as a "baptism of repentance [βάπτισμα μετανοίας]."¹³⁹ This describes its preparatory character as part of John's ministry and distinguishes it from Christian Baptism. Next, the fronting syntax places emphasis on Jesus as the one coming after John (εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ' αὐτὸν). The fundamental point of John's message was that the mightier one coming after him would give the Spirit (Luke 3:15–17).¹⁴⁰ If the disciples had any familiarity with John's teaching, this statement would have identified Jesus as the source of the Spirit about whose coming they were ignorant.

Finally, Paul specifically identifies Jesus as the one coming after John: "that is, Jesus [τοῦτ' ἔστιν εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν]" (Acts 19:4). The argument drives toward the fundamental need of the disciples: correct faith in Jesus.¹⁴¹ As noted earlier, 19:4 contains little about Jesus' saving work per se, yet Paul's statement is followed by Baptism in the name of Jesus in 19:5. The most likely explanation for this is Shauf's suggestion that 19:4 is a concise summary of Paul's preaching in Acts at Pisidian Antioch (13:15–41) describing John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (13:25–26) and providing an extensive discussion about Jesus' saving work (13:26–39). This preceding text informs our understanding of what Paul means in 19:4, and what was said (it is unlikely that Paul's entire presentation of the gospel was a single sentence).¹⁴²

Acts 19:5 states that when the disciples heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Immediately after this we are told, "and when Paul had laid his hands on them [καὶ ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου [τὰς] χεῖρας], the Holy Spirit came on them [ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτούς], and they began speaking in

¹³⁹ It is important to observe that this phrase occurs in only Luke 3:3, Acts 13:24, and 19:4. The second and third instances are spoken by Paul.

¹⁴⁰ Jesus as the fulfillment of this is, of course, emphasized by Acts (1:5; 2:33; 11:16).

¹⁴¹ Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 206; and Shauf, *Theology as History*, 158.

¹⁴² Shauf, *Theology as History*, 157–158. Backhaus has plausibly suggested that the Ephesian disciples had some knowledge of Jesus, just as Cornelius did (10:37–39), which prepared them for the specific identification of Jesus as the object of faith (*Die „Jüngerkreise“ des Täufers Johannes*, 206).

tongues and prophesying [ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις καὶ ἐπροφήτευον]” (19:6). The questions and answers exchanged in 19:2–3 lead us to expect that the disciples will receive the Spirit through Baptism. Yet here, instead, they receive the Spirit through Paul’s laying on of hands. Naturally, the Confirmationist view has taken this as proof that the Spirit was given through this means in the church of the first century AD.¹⁴³ In our consideration of Acts 8:17, we have already seen the insurmountable problems of this approach.

The Pentecostal interpretation has maintained that 19:4–6 demonstrates how faith in Jesus and water Baptism are preconditions for “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” which is claimed to result in charismatic manifestations of the Spirit such as tongues and prophesying.¹⁴⁴ While this position incorrectly ignores the Baptismal paradigm of 2:38–40 and the evidence for it in 19:2–3, the Pentecostal emphasis on the character of 19:6 points in the correct direction for a proper understanding.

We have noted that the features of Acts 19:2–6 join those found in 8:14–17 (Samaritans) and 10:44–48, along with 11:15–18 (Gentiles), in a unique connection with Acts 2 (Pentecost). Three of them are found here. First, the text deals with reception of the Spirit using the verb λαμβάνω (19:2). Second, Jesus had promised in 1:8, using the verb ἐπέρχομαι, that the Holy Spirit would come upon the disciples at Pentecost. Here in 19:6 the Spirit comes upon the disciples (ἐρχομαι + ἐπί) (ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ’ αὐτούς). Third, there is speaking “in tongues” (γλώσσαις) (19:6), which is found only here in 2:4 and 10:46.¹⁴⁵

The interaction between Paul and the disciples had begun with the question in 19:2 about whether they had received the Spirit. Now, in 19:6, the disciples receive the Spirit in a dramatic fashion that does not directly involve Baptism. Like the previous occasions in Acts 8 and 10, this is an example of an exceptional circumstance, which highlights the significance of the event. The Spirit is received through hand laying, and just as in 8:16–17, this use of hand laying addresses an abnormal situation.

The exceptional circumstances in Acts 8 and 10 dealt with the inclusion of the Samaritans and the Gentiles, as they each experienced their own “Pentecost.” Acts

¹⁴³ Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, 40–41; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 98; and Yves-Marie Blanchard, “Esprit Saint et baptême à l’époque apostolique: Le témoignage des Actes des Apôtres,” in *Chrismation et confirmation: Questions autour d’un rite post-baptismal*, ed. C. Braga (Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 2009), 165–174, esp. 173–174.

¹⁴⁴ Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 58. It should be noted that the phrase “baptism in the Holy Spirit” never occurs in the New Testament.

¹⁴⁵ It is also strongly suggested by 8:18.

19:2–6 describes the inclusion of those who have been associated with John the Baptist’s Baptism, teaching, and influence. It is the “Johannine Pentecost.”¹⁴⁶ Luke has placed a large emphasis on John the Baptist in his Gospel.¹⁴⁷ However, this focus on John continues in Acts as he is mentioned on six occasions (1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24–25; 18:25; 19:3–4). The narration about Apollos and the Ephesian disciples demonstrates the continuing significance of John in the setting of Christianity in the first century AD. Groups under this influence were not pagan Gentiles, and they were not unbelieving Jews of the synagogue. Their close ties with the origins of Christianity, yet lack of true faith in Jesus, presented the potential for tension and misunderstanding.¹⁴⁸

Here, in the final mention of John the Baptist within Acts, Luke demonstrates in a definitive manner that a true understanding of John can only lead to faith in Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁹ Acts 19:2–6 presents the inclusion of a group that has been on the fringe of Christianity.¹⁵⁰ The features shared with Acts 2 (Pentecost), Acts 8 (Samaritans), and Acts 10 (Gentiles), in which exceptional circumstances occur that differ from the paradigm established in 2:38–40, are woven into the narrative of Acts to indicate the significance that this held as God demonstrated the legitimacy and need for this inclusion.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

These exceptional circumstances underscore the normative pattern of 2:38–40, in which Baptism gives the Spirit, and each one includes statements that affirm this pattern (8:16; 10:47; 19:2–3).

¹⁴⁶ Stählin (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 254) and Fitzmyer (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 644) both make this helpful identification.

¹⁴⁷ 1:5–25, 57–80; 3:1–20; and 7:18–35 focus on John, and reference is made to him in 5:33; 9:7–9, 18–19; 11:1; 16:16; and 20:3–6 (Shauf, *Theology as History*, 153).

¹⁴⁸ This view is shared by Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 569; Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 281; Blanchard, “Esprit Saint et baptême à l’époque apostolique,” 171; and Ash, “John’s Disciples: A Serious Problem,” 90.

¹⁴⁹ In the final analysis, this is the difference between Apollos and the Ephesian disciples. Apollos has true faith in Christ, and so he also has the Spirit. The Ephesian disciples do not have true faith in Christ, and so they have not received the Spirit.

¹⁵⁰ So also Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 641; Brown, “Water-Baptism,” 149; and Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 338.

¹⁵¹ Hand laying by Paul provides the Spirit in narration of the “Johannine Pentecost” in 19:2–6. It has been widely recognized that this serves to establish the parallel between Peter and Paul that is found in the two halves of Acts (Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 236). Just as Peter’s hand laying had given the Spirit to the Samaritans (a group on the fringe of Judaism), so also Paul’s hand laying gives the Spirit to a group on the fringe of Christianity.