

Acts of the Apostles study 1:-

This Book in the New Testament could well be called 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit'. The great events of the Day of Pentecost and in the days following were driven by the Holy Spirit of God. Read Acts chapter 2, verses 32 – 33. Notice the strength of the words "*poured out*" in verse 33. This shows the generosity of the Lord and is a literal fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel chapter 2, verses 28 – 29.

I have always found it important to recognise the 'one off' experience of the infant Church on the Day of Pentecost (note that this was the Jewish 'Feast of Weeks', - a harvest festival - see Leviticus chapter 23, verses 15 – 17). However, remember that Pentecost was only the beginning of the empowering of the Holy Spirit for the disciples of the Lord Jesus. "*There were added that day about three thousand souls*". That was 'Episode One' and the first ingathering of souls for the Lord!

Like all good stories it is a case of 'what happened next?' Reading on to the end of chapter 2 of the Book of Acts (verses 46 – 47) we find the believers sharing in public worship, house fellowship and continued witnessing by their life style - "*and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved*". We must recognise that this was the Lord's doing! Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day.*" (Gospel of John, chapter 6, verse 44).

So, what did happen next? -Read Acts of the Apostles, chapter 3, verse 1 -chapter 4, verse 31. These chapters tell of the healing of the cripple at the Gate Beautiful of the Temple. A very public action and witness which led to a reaction by the 'authorities'. Street preaching has never been popular with the establishment who see it as a threat to their authority. On this occasion Peter and John use it as an opportunity to witness to the High Priest, his family and the rulers of the Temple in Jerusalem. Notice the recognition of the healing power exercised by the disciples – chapter 4, verse 7. The emphasis is always on the role of the Holy Spirit in the witness given by the disciples – chapter 4, verse 8. This confidence, given by the Holy Spirit of God, is recognised by the authorities as 'boldness'. Peter and John were 'uneducated' fishermen and were acknowledged as "*having been with Jesus*" chapter 4, verse 13.

Special note – This episode led to worship, thanksgiving and prayer by the 'friends' of Peter and John. As a result there was a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit enabling those gathered to "*speak the word of God with boldness*". Read again Acts chapter 4, verses 23 – 31. Pray that the Church of God may, in this time of need, find again the true source of power and boldness in its witness to a needy world.

1
*There shall be showers of blessing;
This is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing,
Sent from the Saviour above.
Chorus - Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need;
Mercy-drops round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.*

3
*There shall be showers of blessing;
Send them upon us, O Lord!
Grant to us now a refreshing;
Come, and now honour Thy Word.
Chorus*

2
*There shall be showers of blessing
Precious reviving again;
Over the hills and the valleys,
Sound of abundance of rain.
Chorus*

4
*There shall be showers of blessing;
O that today they might fall,
Now as to God we're confessing,
Now as on Jesus we call!
Chorus*

Daniel W. Whittle 1840 – 1901

Based on Ezekiel chapter 34, verse 26: Isaiah 44, verse 3: Acts 3, verse 19.