

THE SPIRIT WITHOUT MEASURE: Jesus as the Bearer and Giver of the Spirit in Luke-Acts

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Abstract

The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus has often been overshadowed by the church's focus on Jesus' divine nature, resulting in an underdeveloped pneumatological dimension in Christology. This article addresses this gap by examining Luke-Acts as a unified narrative that portrays Jesus as both the unique bearer of the Spirit "without measure" (John 3:34, a Johannine echo that Luke implicitly affirms) and the giver of the Spirit to the church. Through a narrative-theological and redaction-critical method, the study analyzes key Lukan passages—the annunciation, the baptism, the Nazareth sermon, the resurrection, and the ascension—to demonstrate that Luke intentionally presents Jesus' anointing as the model for the church's reception of the Spirit. The findings reveal that Jesus' possession of the Spirit is not merely functional or temporary but constitutive of his messianic identity as the second Adam and the true Israel. Furthermore, the same Spirit who empowers Jesus for prophetic mission is poured out at Pentecost, establishing the church as a community of Spirit-anointed witnesses. The article contributes to Lukan pneumatology and Spirit Christology by arguing that the "measure" of the Spirit in Jesus' life is the norm for Christian initiation, and that the church's missional identity is a direct extension of Jesus' own anointing. This integrative model challenges both the reduction of Spirit reception to conversion and the separation of Jesus' anointing from the church's empowerment.

Keywords: Spirit Christology; Luke-Acts; anointing; missional empowerment; baptism of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament has received renewed attention in recent decades, yet a comprehensive Lukan perspective remains surprisingly underdeveloped. While Pauline and Johannine pneumatologies have been extensively explored, Luke's distinctive portrait of Jesus as one who is "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1) and who returns "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14) has often been treated as merely preparatory for the church's experience at Pentecost.¹ This

¹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 150-151.

reductionist tendency, whether intentional or not, has resulted in a christological deficit: Jesus is seen as the one who *gives* the Spirit but not as the one who *bears* the Spirit in a way that is paradigmatic for his followers. The present article seeks to redress this imbalance by arguing that Luke-Acts presents Jesus as the definitive bearer of the Spirit “without measure” and, precisely because of this, as the sole giver of the Spirit to the church.

The state of the art in Lukan pneumatology reveals a significant gap. On the one hand, scholars such as Roger Stronstad and Robert Menzies have rightly emphasized the charismatic and missional function of the Spirit in Luke-Acts, but they have focused primarily on the church’s experience rather than on Jesus’ own anointing.² On the other hand, Spirit Christology as developed by Myk Habets, Ralph Del Colle, and Frank Macchia has tended to draw more heavily on Pauline and Johannine sources, leaving Luke’s contribution largely untapped.³ James D. G. Dunn’s classic work on baptism in the Holy Spirit, while foundational, treats Jesus’ reception of the Spirit as merely the prototype for Christian initiation without developing the qualitative uniqueness of Jesus’ anointing.⁴ What remains underexplored is the narrative logic by which Luke connects Jesus’ reception of the Spirit at the Jordan to his outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and how this connection establishes Jesus as both the normative bearer and the sovereign giver of the Spirit.

Three limitations in the existing literature warrant attention. First, most studies of Lukan pneumatology treat the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ life as incidental to the larger narrative of the church’s mission. Second, the Johannine claim that the Spirit is given “without measure” (John 3:34) has rarely been read in dialogue with Lukan themes, even though Luke’s redactional emphases point in the same direction.⁵ Third, the

² Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 10-12; Robert P. Menzies, “Luke and the Spirit: A Reply to James Dunn,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2, no. 4 (1994): 116-118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096673699400200410>.

³ Myk Habets, “Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11, no. 2 (2003): 202-205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096673690301100204>; Ralph Del Colle, “Spirit-Christology: Dogmatic Foundations for Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1, no. 3 (1993): 98-102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096673699300100305>; Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 45-62.

⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 45-60.

⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 89-95.

ecclesiological and missional implications of Jesus' own anointing have not been fully integrated into a coherent model of Christian initiation and empowerment.

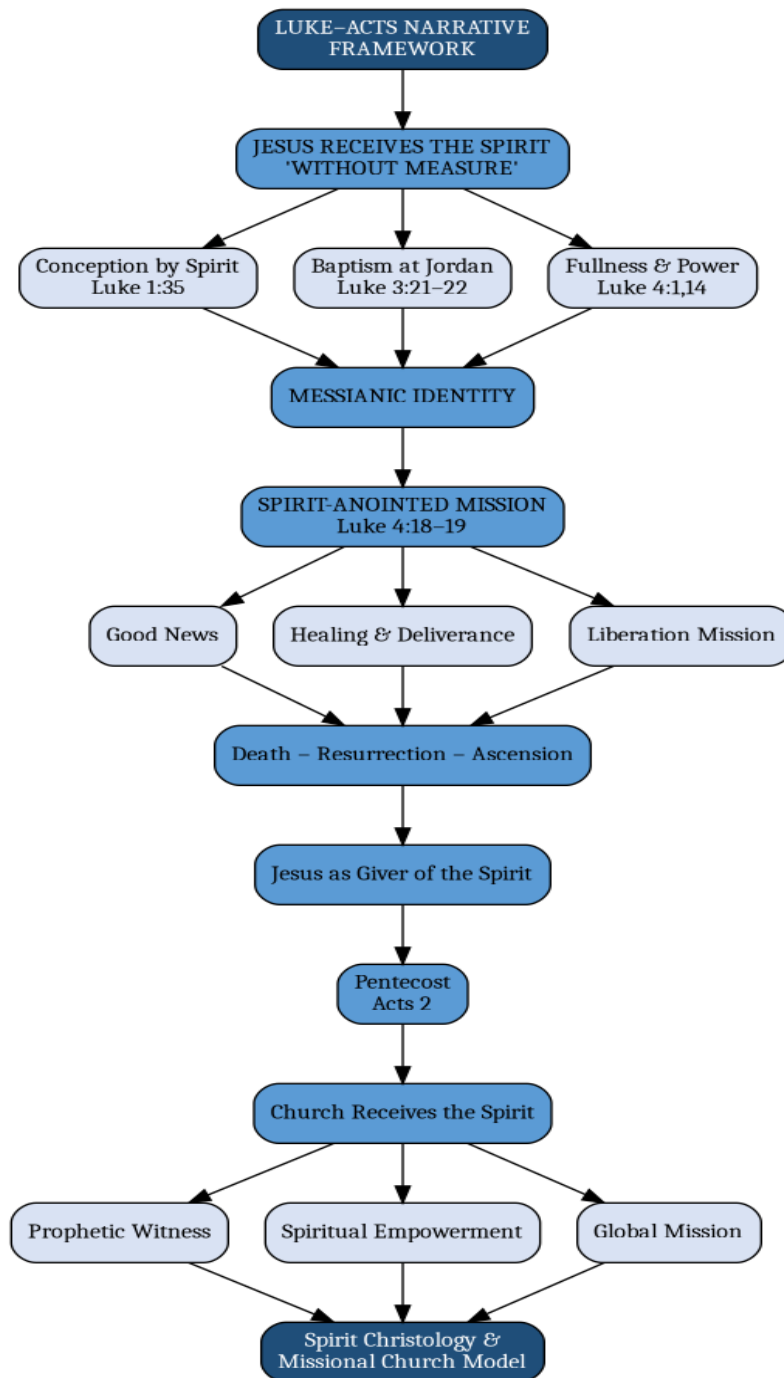


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Jesus as the Bearer and Giver of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. The thesis of this article is that Luke intentionally presents Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Messiah whose reception of the Spirit—visible, auditory, and empowering—serves as the prototype for the church's reception of the same Spirit for the same missional purpose.⁶

⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 152-157.

The purpose of this study is threefold: first, to demonstrate from Luke-Acts that Jesus' possession of the Spirit is unique in its fullness, quality, and permanence; second, to show that this unique anointing is the basis for Jesus' authority to give the Spirit to his followers; and third, to draw out the implications of this dual role—bearer and giver—for Lukan pneumatology, Spirit Christology, and the church's missional identity. Methodologically, the study employs a narrative-theological approach that attends to Luke's redactional choices, intertextual echoes with the Old Testament, and the literary unity of Luke-Acts.⁷ Special attention is given to key passages: the annunciation (Luke 1:35), the baptism (Luke 3:21-22), the Nazareth sermon (Luke 4:16-30), the promise of the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8), and the Pentecost narrative (Acts 2:1-41). By tracing the Spirit motif from Jesus to the church, the article offers an original contribution to both Lukan theology and the wider conversation on Spirit Christology.⁸

DISCUSSION

The analysis of Luke-Acts yields three major results that together establish Jesus as the bearer of the Spirit “without measure” and the giver of the Spirit to the church. These results will be presented in sequence: (1) the unique quality of Jesus' Spirit reception; (2) the missional purpose of his anointing; and (3) the extension of this anointing to the church through his giving of the Spirit.

The Unique Quality of Jesus' Spirit Reception: “Without Measure”

The Annunciation: The Spirit's Creative and Constitutive Role

Luke's Gospel begins with a pneumatological declaration that sets the tone for everything that follows. When the angel announces to Mary that she will conceive a son, he declares, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).⁹ This verse contains several distinctive features that differentiate Jesus' relation to

⁷ Joel B. Green, “The Spirit in the Gospel of Luke,” in *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 89-112; Bobby Kurnia Putrawan. “Pengantar Latar Belakang Kitab Kisah Para Rasul (Introduction to Acts Background).” *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 1, no. 2 (2019): 176-183. <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v1i2.8>.

⁸ Martin W. Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 45-48; Bobby Kurnia Putrawan. “Pengantar Teologi Pentakosta (Introduction to Pentecostal Theology).” *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019): 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v1i1.2>.

⁹ Luke 1:35 (ESV).

the Spirit from that of any other figure in Luke-Acts. First, the Spirit's role is not merely functional or inspirational but *constitutive* of Jesus' identity. The Spirit does not merely empower Jesus for a task; the Spirit actively brings about his very conception, making Jesus' existence from its inception a work of the Spirit.¹⁰ Second, the result of this Spirit-conception is that Jesus is called "holy" and "the Son of God," terms that indicate a unique, ontological relationship between Jesus and the Father mediated by the Spirit.

The annunciation narrative also establishes a crucial contrast with all other Spirit-reception accounts in Luke-Acts. Whereas the disciples receive the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), and whereas earlier figures such as Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Simeon are "filled with the Spirit" for specific prophetic utterances (Luke 1:41, 67; 2:25-27), Jesus' relation to the Spirit is not episodic but permanent and constitutive.¹¹ He does not receive the Spirit at a later point in life as an addition to an already existing identity; rather, the Spirit is integral to his very person from the moment of conception. This suggests that for Luke, Jesus is not merely a Spirit-filled man but *the* Spirit-conceived Son of God, a category that places him in a class by himself.

The language of "overshadowing" (ἐπισκιάσει) in Luke 1:35 evokes the Old Testament theme of the divine presence in the tabernacle and the temple, where the cloud of glory overshadowed the mercy seat (Exodus 40:35).¹² By using this term, Luke implicitly identifies Jesus as the new temple, the place where God's presence dwells in a way that surpasses even the tabernacle. This pneumatological temple-Christology is further developed in John's Gospel (John 2:19-21) but is already present in Luke's infancy narrative. Thus, from the very beginning of his Gospel, Luke establishes that Jesus' relation to the Spirit is unique in quality, permanence, and constitutive significance.¹³

The Baptism: Visible Descent and Divine Affirmation

The baptism of Jesus at the Jordan River (Luke 3:21-22) is the second major moment in which Luke emphasizes the unique quality of Jesus' Spirit reception. Unlike the other Synoptic accounts, Luke specifies that the Holy Spirit descended "in bodily form as a dove"

¹⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 2 vols., BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1:325-327.

¹¹ I. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, 150-151.

¹² Darrell L. Bock *Luke*, 1:327.

¹³ John Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 56-58.

(εἶδει σωματικῶς περιστερᾶν).¹⁴ This redactional addition is theologically significant because it stresses the physical, observable, and tangible nature of the Spirit's coming. The Spirit is not merely an inward experience or a private anointing but a publicly visible event that confirms Jesus' identity to John the Baptist and to the surrounding crowd. This visible descent provides a model for what Spirit reception should look like in the life of the church: not merely a cognitive assent or a private feeling but an event with observable manifestations.¹⁵

The divine declaration that follows—"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22)—simultaneously echoes Psalm 2:7 (the royal psalm of the Davidic king) and Isaiah 42:1 (the servant who bears the Spirit).¹⁶ By combining these two traditions, Luke presents Jesus as both the messianic King and the Spirit-anointed Servant. The declaration is not merely a statement of approval but a commissioning: Jesus is declared to be the Son precisely as he receives the Spirit for his mission. This is the Lukan equivalent of the Johannine claim that the Spirit is given "without measure" (John 3:34), for the descent of the Spirit is not a partial or temporary anointing but a full and permanent endowment that qualifies Jesus for his unique role.¹⁷

The baptism narrative also establishes a pattern that will be repeated in the life of the church. Jesus prays as the Spirit descends (Luke 3:21), connecting prayer with Spirit reception.¹⁸ The same connection appears in Acts, where the disciples pray before receiving the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:14) and where prayer accompanies the laying on of hands for the Spirit (Acts 8:15). Thus, Jesus' experience at the Jordan is not merely a christological event but a liturgical and spiritual paradigm for the church's own seeking and receiving of the Spirit.¹⁹

¹⁴ Luke 3:22; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 1:325-27.

¹⁵ Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit*, rev. ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005), 185-188.

¹⁶ Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 1:326-27.

²⁰ Luke 4:1; Myk Habets, "Spirit Christology," 202-5.

¹⁷ Frank D. Macchia, "Sighs Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Glossolalia," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1, no. 1 (1992): 56-58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096673699200100105>.

¹⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, 151.

¹⁹ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 237-245.

The Immediate Aftermath: Fullness and Power

Luke's unique emphasis on the immediate consequences of Jesus' baptism further underscores the quality of his Spirit reception. Immediately after the baptism, Luke notes that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" (πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου) as he returned from the Jordan (Luke 4:1).²⁰ The term "full" (πλήρης) indicates a state of complete indwelling and control by the Spirit, not a partial or intermittent presence. Unlike the disciples, who will be "filled with the Spirit" multiple times (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 13:9), Jesus is described as being *full* of the Spirit in a way that suggests a permanent, uninterrupted condition. This is consistent with the Johannine claim that the Spirit is given to Jesus "without measure."²¹

The same verse also states that Jesus was "led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). The passive verb "was led" (ἡγήετο) indicates that the Spirit's direction is continuous and active, not merely suggestive.²² Jesus does not decide on his own to go into the wilderness; he is directed there by the Spirit. This divine guidance is part of the Spirit's ongoing work in Jesus' life, preparing him for the testing that will precede his public ministry. The Spirit's leadership is not a one-time event at the baptism but an abiding reality that shapes every aspect of Jesus' actions.

Finally, Luke 4:14 states that Jesus "returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit" (ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος).²³ The phrase "power of the Spirit" (δύναμις τοῦ πνεύματος) is distinctive to Luke and highlights the dynamic, energizing aspect of the Spirit's presence. Jesus' ministry is not merely informed or inspired by the Spirit; it is empowered by the Spirit to perform miracles, exorcisms, and authoritative teaching. This combination of "fullness," "guidance," and "power" constitutes the Lukan portrait of the Spirit's work in Jesus' life—a portrait that serves as the norm for what the church should expect when it receives the same Spirit.²⁴

The Distinctiveness of Jesus' Anointing Compared to Other Figures

To appreciate the claim that Jesus receives the Spirit "without measure," it is necessary to compare his anointing with other Spirit-reception accounts in Luke-Acts. Old

²⁰ Luke 4:1; Myk Habets, "Spirit Christology," 202-205.

²¹ Craig S. Keener, *Spirit in the Gospels and Acts*, 95-98.

²² I. Howard Marshall, *Luke*, 152.

²³ Luke 4:14.

²⁴ Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 155-170.

Testament figures such as the judges, Saul, David, and the prophets received the Spirit for specific tasks, but the Spirit could also depart from them (1 Samuel 16:14).²⁵ In Luke's Gospel, John the Baptist is "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15), yet John's role is preparatory, and he explicitly states that he is not the Messiah. The disciples receive the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), but they also require repeated fillings (Acts 4:31) and are not described as being permanently "full" of the Spirit in the same way as Jesus.²⁶

Jesus, by contrast, is never described as losing the Spirit or needing a subsequent refilling. The Spirit's presence in his life is not episodic but constitutive. This qualitative difference is what Luke means when he presents Jesus as the unique Son of God (Luke 1:35; 3:22) and as the one who pours out the Spirit on others (Acts 2:33). Only the one who possesses the Spirit without measure can give the Spirit without limit.²⁷ Thus, the distinctiveness of Jesus' anointing is not merely a matter of degree but of kind: he is the Spirit-bearer par excellence, and this unique possession qualifies him to be the Spirit-giver to the church.

The Missional Purpose of Jesus' Anointing: Prophetic Liberation

The Nazareth Sermon as Programmatic Interpretation

The connection between Jesus' Spirit reception at the Jordan and his public ministry is made explicit in the Nazareth sermon (Luke 4:16-30). After reading from Isaiah 61:1-2, Jesus declares, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).²⁸ The passage he reads begins with the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). By applying this text to himself, Jesus interprets his Spirit anointing as a commissioning for prophetic, liberating mission. The Spirit is not given for personal ecstasy or private sanctification but for public proclamation and social transformation.²⁹

²⁵ 1 Samuel 16:14; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 246-247.

²⁶ Acts 4:31; Max Turner, *Power from on High*, 360-367; Widjaja Sugiri. "Spiritual Experience and Character Formation: Finding Balance in Pentecostal Spiritual Formation Tradition". *Indonesian Journal of Religious* 8, no. 2 (2025): 65-80. <https://doi.org/10.46362/ijr.v8i2.45>.

²⁷ Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 45-48.

²⁸ Luke 4:21; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 1:387-89.

²⁹ Max Turner, *Power from on High*, 398-408.

The content of the mission described in Isaiah 61 is multifaceted: “to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18-19).³⁰ Each of these phrases carries concrete, socio-economic, and political implications that cannot be reduced to mere spiritual metaphor. The “poor” are literally the economically destitute; the “captives” are those imprisoned or enslaved; the “oppressed” are those crushed by unjust systems. Thus, Jesus’ Spirit-anointed mission is not merely about personal salvation but about the holistic restoration of human life in all its dimensions.³¹ This aligns with the Lukan emphasis on care for the poor (Luke 6:20-26; 16:19-31) and the inclusion of marginalized groups (women, tax collectors, Samaritans).

The Nazareth sermon also functions as a Lukan programmatic statement for the entire Gospel and for Acts. Just as Jesus is anointed by the Spirit to proclaim good news to the poor, so the disciples, after receiving the Spirit at Pentecost, will continue the same mission.³² The geographical progression in Acts 1:8—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth—is the outworking of the mission announced in Nazareth. Thus, the Spirit who anoints Jesus at the Jordan is the same Spirit who empowers the church at Pentecost, and the mission of the church is a direct continuation of the mission of Jesus.³³

The Spirit as the Source of Jesus’ Miraculous Power

Luke’s emphasis on the “power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46) is consistently linked to Jesus’ miraculous deeds. When Jesus heals the sick, casts out demons, and raises the dead, he does so not by his own divine power alone but by the Spirit’s anointing. Peter’s summary of Jesus’ ministry in Acts 10:38 makes this explicit: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”³⁴ The verb “anointed” (ἐχρίσεν) directly echoes the language of the Nazareth sermon and establishes that Jesus’ entire ministry of healing and deliverance is the result of the Spirit’s empowering presence.

³⁰ Luke 4:18-19; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 1:387-89.

³¹ William P. Atkinson, “Pentecostal Responses to James D. G. Dunn’s *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Luke-Acts*,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 3, no. 6 (2011): 95-98.

³² Acts 1:8; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 36-37.

³³ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 237-245.

³⁴ Acts 10:38.

This pneumatological account of Jesus' miracles has significant implications for the church's own ministry. If Jesus performed miracles by the Spirit's power, then the church, which receives the same Spirit at Pentecost, should also expect to demonstrate the same power.³⁵ This is precisely what happens in Acts: Peter heals a lame man (Acts 3:1-10), Paul blinds Elymas (Acts 13:6-12), and the apostles perform many signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 5:12). The continuity of miraculous power between Jesus and the church is grounded in the continuity of the Spirit's anointing. The Spirit who worked through Jesus continues to work through his disciples, not because they have divine nature but because they are Spirit-anointed witnesses.³⁶

The exorcisms in particular are linked to the Spirit's power. In Luke 11:20, Jesus states, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."³⁷ Matthew's parallel reads "Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28), and Luke's use of "finger of God" likely alludes to Exodus 8:19, where the magicians of Egypt recognize the "finger of God" in the plagues. Thus, Jesus' exorcisms are demonstrations of the Spirit's kingdom-inaugurating power. The same power is given to the disciples when they are sent out to heal and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-2; 10:9, 17-19). The Spirit-anointed mission of Jesus becomes the model for the Spirit-anointed mission of the church.³⁸

The Spirit and Jesus' Obedient Suffering

One often-neglected dimension of Lukan pneumatology is the role of the Spirit in Jesus' passion. While Luke does not explicitly state that the Spirit empowered Jesus to endure the cross, there are several indicators that the Spirit's presence sustained him through his suffering. In Luke 4:1, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, suggesting that the Spirit's guidance includes times of testing. Similarly, during the passion, Jesus' prayer life is emphasized (Luke 22:39-46), and prayer is consistently linked to the Spirit's presence in Luke-Acts (Luke 3:21; 11:13; Acts 1:14; 4:31).³⁹

³⁵ Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit*, 185-88; Lewi Kabanga, "Pelatihan Peningkatan Efektivitas Pelayanan Jemaat di Gereja Bethel Jemaat Sion Kemiri-Sentani". *SERVIRE: Journal of Research and Service* 2, no. 2 (2022): 111-124. <https://doi.org/10.46362/servire.v2i2.119>.

³⁶ Acts 2:43; 5:12; 3:1-10; 13:6-12.

³⁷ Luke 11:20.

³⁸ Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 57-59.

³⁹ Luke 3:21; 11:13; Acts 1:14; 4:31.

The most explicit connection between the Spirit and Jesus' suffering appears in Hebrews 9:14, which states that Christ "offered himself without blemish to God through the eternal Spirit."⁴⁰ While Hebrews is not Lukan, the theological principle it expresses—that the Spirit empowered Jesus' sacrificial death—is consistent with Luke's portrayal of Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Servant. Jesus' death is not a defeat but the culmination of his Spirit-led mission. The Spirit who anointed him at the Jordan, who empowered his healings and exorcisms, and who led him to the cross also raised him from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32). Thus, the Spirit's work in Jesus extends from conception to resurrection, and every phase of his life is marked by the Spirit's presence.⁴¹

This has profound implications for the church's understanding of suffering and martyrdom. In Acts, Stephen is "full of the Holy Spirit" as he faces death (Acts 7:55), and the Spirit guides Paul through hardships (Acts 20:22-23).⁴² The Spirit who sustained Jesus through his passion also sustains his followers through theirs. Thus, the Spirit's empowering work is not limited to miraculous signs but includes the grace to endure persecution and martyrdom for the sake of the gospel.⁴³

Jesus as the Giver of the Spirit: From the Ascension to Pentecost

The Promise of the Spirit in the Farewell Discourse (Luke 24:49)

Luke's account of the resurrection appearances includes a crucial promise that connects Jesus' departure to the sending of the Spirit. In Luke 24:49, Jesus instructs his disciples to "stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."⁴⁴ The verb "clothed" (ἐνδύσθησθε) evokes Old Testament imagery of being clothed with the Spirit (Judges 6:34; 1 Chronicles 12:18; 2 Chronicles 24:20), suggesting that the Spirit is not merely an interior presence but an external garment of power that enables prophetic and military action. The phrase "power from on high" (δύναμιν ἐξ ὕψους) is a Lukan circumlocution for the Holy Spirit, emphasizing his divine origin and his empowering function.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Hebrews 9:14.

⁴¹ Acts 2:24, 32; F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 61-62.

⁴² Acts 7:55; 20:22-23.

⁴³ Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 120-125.

⁴⁴ Luke 24:49.

⁴⁵ F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 36-37.

This promise is repeated in Acts 1:4-5, where Jesus commands the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for “the promise of the Father, which you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”⁴⁶ The language of “baptism in the Holy Spirit” connects Pentecost to John the Baptist’s prophecy (Luke 3:16) and establishes the Spirit’s coming as a divine immersion that overwhelms and empowers. Importantly, the Spirit is described as “the promise of the Father,” indicating that the outpouring of the Spirit is not an afterthought but the fulfillment of God’s covenantal promise to pour out his Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28-32).⁴⁷

The waiting period between the ascension and Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14) is marked by prayer and unity. The disciples “devoted themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:14), and this posture of expectation is crucial for the reception of the Spirit.⁴⁸ Jesus himself prayed when the Spirit descended at his baptism (Luke 3:21), and now the church prays before the Spirit descends at Pentecost. Thus, the giving of the Spirit is not automatic or mechanical; it is a gift that is sought through prayer and communal preparation. This has implications for the church’s practice of seeking the Spirit’s empowerment for mission.⁴⁹

Pentecost as the Fulfillment of Jesus’ Promise

The events of Acts 2 are the climactic fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send the Spirit from the Father. Peter’s sermon interprets Pentecost as the outpouring of the Spirit promised by Joel (Acts 2:16-21) and as the result of Jesus’ exaltation to the right hand of God. In Acts 2:33, Peter declares, “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”⁵⁰ This verse is theologically dense and crucial for understanding Jesus as the giver of the Spirit. First, it establishes that Jesus’ exaltation precedes the outpouring of the Spirit; he must be glorified before the Spirit can be given. Second, the Spirit is not given from Jesus’ own divine nature but “received from the Father” and then “poured out” on the disciples. The Spirit is the gift of the exalted Christ, mediated through the Father’s promise.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Acts 1:4-5.

⁴⁷ Joel 2:28-32; Frank Thielman, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 89-95.

⁴⁸ Acts 1:14.

⁴⁹ Max Turner, *Power from on High*, 360-367.

⁵⁰ Acts 2:33; F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 61-62.

⁵¹ Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 95-106.

The result of Pentecost is that the disciples are empowered for prophetic witness. They speak in other tongues (Acts 2:4-11), fulfilling the promise that the Spirit would enable them to be witnesses “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).⁵² The languages spoken are not ecstatic utterances but real human languages understood by the diverse crowd gathered in Jerusalem. This linguistic miracle reverses the confusion of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) and establishes the church as a Spirit-empowered, cross-cultural, missional community. The Spirit who descended on Jesus at the Jordan as a dove now descends on the church as tongues of fire—a theophanic sign of divine presence, purification, and empowering for mission.⁵³

Pentecost is not an isolated event but the inauguration of a new era in which the Spirit is available to all who repent and are baptized in Jesus’ name. Peter’s promise in Acts 2:38-39 extends the gift of the Spirit to “you and your children and to all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”⁵⁴ Thus, the Spirit that Jesus pours out is not a temporary endowment for the apostles alone but a permanent gift for the entire church. The giving of the Spirit is the hallmark of the new covenant, and Jesus, as the exalted Lord, is the sole dispenser of this gift.⁵⁵

The Spirit as the Continuing Presence of the Exalted Jesus

One of the distinctive features of Lukan pneumatology is the intimate connection between the Spirit and the continuing presence of the exalted Jesus. In Acts, the Spirit is sometimes called “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7) or “the Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 5:9; 8:39).⁵⁶ This identification suggests that the Spirit is not an independent agent but the mode by which the risen Christ remains present with his church. Jesus’ physical departure at the ascension (Acts 1:9-11) is not an absence but a transformation of his presence: he is now present through the Spirit.

The Spirit directs the mission of the church in ways that reflect Jesus’ own guidance. The Spirit tells Philip to approach the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29), leads Peter to Cornelius’s house (Acts 10:19-20), separates Barnabas and Saul for missionary work

⁵² Acts 2:4-11; 1:8.

⁵³ Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, “Water Baptism and Spirit Baptism in Luke-Acts: Another Reading of the Evidence,” *Pneuma* 38, no. 4 (2016): 482-485. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700747-03804006>.

⁵⁴ Acts 2:38-39.

⁵⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 98-101.

⁵⁶ Acts 16:7; 5:9; 8:39.

(Acts 13:2), and prevents Paul from preaching in Asia (Acts 16:6-7).⁵⁷ These directives are not merely providential nudges but explicit commands that continue the work of Jesus, who during his earthly ministry directed his disciples where to go and what to do (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-12). The Spirit thus functions as the executive agent of the exalted Christ, ensuring that the mission inaugurated in Galilee continues to the ends of the earth.⁵⁸

The connection between Jesus and the Spirit is also evident in the sacramental life of the church. Baptism is administered “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), and the Spirit is received through this baptism or through the laying on of apostolic hands.⁵⁹ The Spirit is not a separate gift but the gift of the risen Lord himself, given to incorporate believers into the body of Christ and to empower them for witness. Thus, to speak of Jesus as the giver of the Spirit is to affirm that the Spirit’s work is always christologically oriented: the Spirit glorifies Christ (John 16:14) and continues his mission.⁶⁰

Implications for Spirit Christology and the Church’s Missional Identity

Jesus as the Normative Bearer of the Spirit

The Lukan portrait of Jesus as the one who receives the Spirit “without measure” has profound implications for Spirit Christology. Traditionally, Spirit Christology has been developed in dialogue with the Synoptic baptism narratives and with Paul’s statements about Jesus as the “last Adam” who became “life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45).⁶¹ Luke’s contribution to this conversation is his emphasis on the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ conception, baptism, and entire ministry. The Spirit is not an add-on to an already existing divine nature but is constitutive of Jesus’ identity as the Son of God in his incarnate humanity.

This Lukan perspective challenges both Adoptionist and Docetic Christologies. Against Adoptionism, Luke insists that Jesus is the Son of God from conception, not merely

⁵⁷ Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:2; 16:6-7.

⁵⁸ Robert P. Menzies, “Luke and the Spirit,” 115-38.

⁵⁹ Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; Kilian McDonnell and George Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 323-325.

⁶⁰ John 16:14; Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 102-105.

⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 15:45; Myk Habets, “Spirit Christology,” 202-205.

from his baptism. Against Docetism, Luke insists that Jesus' sonship is realized in and through the Spirit's work in his fully human life.⁶² The Spirit does not replace Jesus' humanity but empowers it to be fully obedient to the Father. Thus, Jesus is not less human because he is full of the Spirit; rather, he is the true human, the second Adam, who lives in perfect dependence on the Spirit. This makes him the paradigm for all human life lived coram Deo.

For the church, this means that Jesus is not only the object of faith but also the model of Spirit-filled existence. Believers are called to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29), and this conformity includes being filled with the same Spirit that empowered Jesus.⁶³ The church does not receive a different Spirit or a lesser Spirit; it receives the same Spirit of sonship, mission, and power that rested on Jesus at the Jordan. Thus, Jesus' anointing is not a relic of the past but a present reality that shapes the identity and mission of the church.⁶⁴

The Church as the Spirit-Anointed Witness

If Jesus is the bearer of the Spirit "without measure," then the church, as the recipient of the same Spirit, is called to be a community of Spirit-anointed witnesses. This has direct implications for the doctrine of Christian initiation. In Luke-Acts, the reception of the Spirit is not merely a private experience of regeneration but a public empowerment for prophetic witness.⁶⁵ The disciples at Pentecost do not receive the Spirit for their own edification alone but to speak "the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11) to a diverse and unbelieving world. The same pattern holds for the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), and the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:1-7): in each case, the reception of the Spirit is linked to visible manifestations that authenticate the inclusion of new groups into the missional community.⁶⁶

The church's missional identity is thus a direct extension of Jesus' own anointing. Just as Jesus was anointed to proclaim good news to the poor, so the church is anointed to continue that proclamation. Just as Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons by the

⁶² Ralph Del Colle, "Spirit-Christology," 98-102.

⁶³ Romans 8:29.

⁶⁴ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 153-169.

⁶⁵ Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 237-245; Widjaja Sugiri, "Spiritual Experience and Character Formation: Finding Balance in Pentecostal Spiritual Formation Tradition": 65-80.

⁶⁶ Acts 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7; Max Turner, *Power from on High*, 362-367.

Spirit's power, so the church is empowered to do the same.⁶⁷ The continuity between Jesus' ministry and the church's ministry is not merely a matter of imitation but of participation: the same Spirit who worked through Jesus now works through his body, the church. This understanding challenges any ecclesiology that reduces the church to a human institution or a voluntary association. The church is, by its very nature, a Spirit-empowered, missional community.⁶⁸

The emphasis on the Spirit's missional purpose also guards against individualism and triumphalism. The Spirit is not given for private spiritual thrills or for the aggrandizement of individual charismatics. In Luke-Acts, the Spirit's manifestations—tongues, prophecy, healings—always serve the purpose of witness and community building.⁶⁹ When Simon the magician offers money for the power to give the Spirit (Acts 8:18-24), Peter rebukes him sharply, indicating that the Spirit is not a commodity to be bought or a power to be wielded for personal gain. The Spirit is the gift of the exalted Christ for the mission of the church.⁷⁰

The Spirit, Baptism, and the Unity of Initiation

The Lukan connection between Jesus' baptism and the church's reception of the Spirit has significant implications for the theology of Christian initiation. In Luke-Acts, water baptism and Spirit reception are not separate stages but two dimensions of a single initiation event. Jesus' own baptism at the Jordan, where the Spirit descends visibly, establishes the pattern: water and Spirit belong together.⁷¹ This pattern is then repeated in the life of the church, as seen in Acts 2:38 ("Repent and be baptized... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"). The normal expectation is that water baptism and Spirit reception occur together as one integrated event.⁷²

The exceptional cases in Acts (Samaria, Cornelius, Ephesus) do not negate this pattern but confirm it by their exceptionality. In each case, the normal sequence is disrupted for a missional purpose: to authenticate the Samaritan mission, to demonstrate

⁶⁷ Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 9:32-35.

⁶⁸ David T. Williams, "The Spirit in Creation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67, no. 1 (2014): 9-11. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003693061300029X>.

⁶⁹ Acts 2:4-11; 10:44-48; 19:6.

⁷⁰ Acts 8:18-24.

⁷¹ Luke 3:21-22; Acts 2:38-39.

⁷² Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, "Water Baptism and Spirit Baptism," 482-485; Steven Tubagus and Oey Natanael Winanto, "Roh Kudus Dalam Alkitab: Refleksi Peran Roh Kudus di Dunia," *Journal of Religious and Socio-Cultural* 3, no. 1 (2022): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.46362/jrsc.v3i1.63>.

God's acceptance of Gentiles, or to bring John's disciples into the full Christian initiation.⁷³ Once the anomaly is resolved, the result is the full integration of water and Spirit. Thus, the church should not institutionalize a two-stage theology that separates water baptism from Spirit reception. Instead, it should expect that the Spirit who descended on Jesus without measure is also given to the baptized in measure, empowering them for witness.⁷⁴

This unified understanding of initiation has practical implications for baptismal liturgy and pastoral practice. Baptismal liturgies should include an explicit epiclesis (invocation of the Spirit) and, where possible, the laying on of hands, visibly uniting water and Spirit.⁷⁵ The congregation should pray for the newly baptized to be filled with the Spirit for witness, and the church should expect to see the fruit and gifts of the Spirit manifest in their lives. Baptism is not merely a symbolic rite of initiation but a Spirit-empowered commissioning for mission.⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Luke-Acts presents Jesus as both the bearer of the Spirit "without measure" and the giver of the Spirit to the church. The annunciation establishes the Spirit's constitutive role in Jesus' identity as the Son of God, setting him apart from all other Spirit-reception figures in the narrative. The baptism adds the visible descent of the Spirit and the divine declaration of sonship, presenting a pattern of water, Spirit, and mission that becomes normative for Christian initiation. The Nazareth sermon interprets the Spirit anointing as a commissioning for prophetic, liberating mission, linking Jesus' ministry directly to the church's calling. Finally, the ascension and Pentecost show that the exalted Jesus pours out the same Spirit on his followers, empowering them to continue his mission to the ends of the earth.

The theological implications of this study are threefold. First, Spirit Christology must give due attention to Luke's distinctive contribution, which emphasizes the Spirit's constitutive role in Jesus' identity and mission from conception to resurrection. Second, the church's missional identity is a direct extension of Jesus' own anointing; the same

⁷³ Acts 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7; Max Turner, *Power from on High*, 362-367.

⁷⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 152-157.

⁷⁵ McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation*, 323-325.

⁷⁶ Roger Stronstad, *Prophethood of All Believers*, 57-59.

Spirit who empowered Jesus empowers the church for prophetic witness, healing, and suffering. Third, Christian initiation is a unified event of water and Spirit, modeled on Jesus' own baptism, and the church should expect the newly baptized to receive the Spirit's empowering for mission.

Future research could extend this prototype model in several directions. A comparative study of Jesus' reception of the Spirit in all four Gospels would illuminate the distinctive contributions of each evangelist to Spirit Christology. An exploration of the reception history of Lukan pneumatology in the early church fathers could show how the prototype model was understood and applied in post-apostolic theology. Finally, a constructive liturgical theology could develop concrete proposals for baptismal rites that visibly unite water, Spirit, and missional commissioning, recovering the Lukan pattern for contemporary practice. The baptism of Jesus at the Jordan stands as the permanent hermeneutical norm for understanding the Spirit's work in the life of the church. Jesus is the Spirit-anointed One par excellence, and the Spirit he pours out is the same Spirit who rested on him. To be a Christian is to participate in this anointing, to be clothed with power from on high, and to be sent as a witness to the ends of the earth. The Spirit without measure is not a distant memory or a future hope but a present reality, given to the church for the continuation of Jesus' mission until he comes again.

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