

- 3.1-10—Peter and John heal in a way that reflects the Gospel healing acts of Jesus. The two reflect the spirit of material asceticism. The healing is one of delight and joy.

The ascension creates for Jesus the possibility of an altogether different form of presence. The heavenly Christ influences Luke's story at pivotal points, sending the Spirit (2.33), inspiring preachers (7.55-56), calling and commissioning his witnesses (9.5-6; 22.14-15, 17-21), healing the sick (9.34), and using his servants to accomplish his saving purpose in the world (26.16-18). The cumulative effect of such references is that 'the heavenly Christ is a key character within the book of Acts'.¹

- 3.11-25—The speech of Peter and John in the Temple: A summary of Luke's Gospel and the passion of Jesus.
 - Expresses faith in the Risen Jesus
 - Remembers the story of Israel: applied to the present situation.
- 4.1-31—The reaction of the Religious authorities: incarcerate Peter and John.
 - Summary in v 4: 5000 'men' = households x 500 = exploding growth of the Jerusalem Jesus movement and its success.
 - V7: Peter repeats the primary gospel message about Jesus.
 - V13: Summary of God's work with ordinary people: Action of God in 'ordinary people' who act with confidence: "Now when they saw the *boldness* of Peter and John and realized that they were *uneducated* and *ordinary* men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus."
 - The apostles are released.
 - V21: The praise of God, preaching consequences of God's action (the liberating delight of the one healed who was 'forty' years old.
 - Acknowledgment of the Creator God in prayer
 - V31: Mini-Pentecost: the action of the Spirit of Jesus. Confidence with 'boldness' in the action of God and presence of the Ascended Jesus
- 4.32-37: Summary: Jerusalem Jesus household, holding everything in 'common', releasing possessiveness. Introduction of Barnabas.

¹ David Petersen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2009), p. 48,

- 5.1-11: The contrasting story with Ananias and Sapphira, act with greed and lie to the apostolic community. A theological reflection on the spirit of greed that impacts and is serious within the Jesus movement.

While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? bAnd after it was sold were not the proceeds at your disposal? cHow is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God! (RSV)

- 5.12-42—Healing power of the apostles, imprisonment, release, preaching in the temple: Nothing holds the action of God within the community. Peter again preaches: They are inspired by God’s action, not by human direction. Apostles released and rejoicing. Final verse 42: ends on a note of hope reflecting the social and cultural context of the Jerusalem Jesus movement.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- From Acts 3-5, the apostles continue to remain faithful despite opposition? Are there parallels of this today?
- The community of Jesus followers is typified by confidence in God and material ascetism. How is this reflected in the Church community or local parish today?
- The apostles are described as ‘ordinary’ and ‘common’ by their detractors, thus affirming that God acts through ordinary people. Who are the ordinary people you know that God acts through?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- The next session will focus on Acts 6-8. In preparation for this session, spend time with this section of the *Acts of the Apostles*.