

Power Encounters In Acts

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POWER ENCOUNTERS IN ACTS

I. INTRODUCTION

God has worked in different ways to manifest himself during the history of the New Testament Church. The first records of church history, as seen in the book of Acts, are replete with examples of God's dealings with and for his children in mighty and direct ways. An honest exegetical study of these passages can provide the present day reader with a sense of awe and wonder of the might and power of our God.

This view of God will have a lasting effect on the believer not only in his personal life but also in his view of the ministry. It is hoped that this study will provide the searching Christian with a better understanding of the actual events of history and will also help the believer gain a better understanding of the reason for and effect of these early church power encounters.

The entire concept of "power" in New Testament evangelism was foreshadowed by the ministry of Christ. He did great works and He promised his disciples that they would do even greater works than he had done.

John 14:10-12 (NKJV) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own [authority]; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. 11 "Believe Me that I [am] in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. 12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater [works] than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

The power encounters reported in the early life of the church have been divided into major categories and analyzed accordingly. Each section is concluded with a summary of the significance of the particular type of power encounter. The final section of the paper provides a brief summary of "power" in the Book of Acts.

II. TERMS

A. POWER

(δύαμις), (1411) is (a) power, ability, physical or moral, as residing in a person or thing; (b) power in action, as, e.g., when put forth in performing miracles. It occurs 118 times in the N.T. It is sometimes used of the miracle or sign itself, the effect being put for the cause, e.g., Mark 6:5, frequently in the Gospels and Acts. In 1 Cor. 14:11 it is rendered "meaning"; "force" would be more accurate.¹

The word power occurs ten times in the book of Acts. It is an extremely critical word in the analysis of power encounters as it forms the basis of the initial promise of Christ concerning the

¹Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

ministry of the New Testament disciples. The examples given in the scriptures of this power as well as its significance and use in the lives of the believers and unbelievers is especially helpful. It is through these illustrations that we can begin to gain an appreciation of the integral part this display of power had in the ministry of the New Testament believers.

Luke 24:49 (NKJV) "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with **power** from on high."

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) "But you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 2:22 (NKJV) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by **miracles**, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--

Acts 3:12 (NKJV) So when Peter saw [it], he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own **power** or godliness we had made this man walk?

Acts 4:7 (NKJV) And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what **power** or by what name have you done this?"

Acts 4:33 (NKJV) And with great **power** the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Acts 6:8 (NKJV) And Stephen, full of faith and **power**, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Acts 8:10 (NKJV) to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great **power** of God."

Acts 8:13 (NKJV) Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the **miracles** and signs which were done.

Acts 10:38 (NKJV) "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with **power**, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Acts 19:11 (NKJV) Now God worked unusual **miracles** by the hands of Paul,

B. Baptism

1. Baptism [verb]

Acts 1:5 (NKJV) "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

- a) Contrast between baptism of John and "baptized with the Holy Spirit
- b) an event which would occur in the near future -- "you shall be baptized not many days from now
- c) baptized "with" the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:38-41 (NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added [to] [them].

- a) connected with -- "repent" and "for the remission of sins"
- b) name -- "in the name of Jesus Christ"
- c) Promise -- is to
 - you and to your children [Jews]
 - and to all who are afar off [Gentiles]
 - as many as the Lord our God will call [the church]
- d) result -- you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
- e) connected with -- "received his word were baptized"

Acts 8:12 (NKJV) But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. 14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

- a) connected with "belief in"
 - things concerning the kingdom of God
 - and the name of Jesus Christ
 - received the word of God

- b) miraculous was a part of this ministry -- “seeing the miracles and signs which were done”
- c) Relationship of the Holy Spirit to the believers
- d) Believers had been -- “baptized in the **name** of the Lord Jesus”
- e) Believers and the Holy Spirit
 - believers had not yet -- “received the Holy Spirit”
 - Holy Spirit had not yet -- “fallen upon them”
- f) Apostles and the Holy Spirit
 - prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit
- g) they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:36-38 (NKJV) Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, [here] [is] water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

- a) baptism was a part of the belief system
 - “See, water. What hinders me from being baptized?”
 - “If you believe with all your heart, you may”

Acts 9:18 (NKJV) Immediately there fell from his eyes [something] like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Acts 10:44-48 (NKJV) 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we [have]?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

- a) connected with the “word”
 - “While Peter was still speaking these words”
 - “Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word”
- b) relationship of the Holy Spirit to believers
 - “Holy Spirit **fell upon** all those who heard the word”
 - “the gift of the Holy Spirit had been **poured out** on the Gentiles also”
 - “have **received** the Holy Spirit just as we”
- c) result of “gift of the Holy Spirit” -- “heard them speak with tongues and magnify God”
- d) water baptism followed “receiving the Holy Spirit
- e) “baptized in the **name** of the Lord”
- f) events with Cornelius parallels events with Peter
 - “had been poured out on the Gentiles **also**”

- “received the Holy Spirit **just as we**”

Acts 11:15-18 (NKJV) "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. 16 "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 "If therefore God gave them the same gift as [He] [gave] us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" 18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

- a) connected with the Word -- “as I began to speak”
- b) relationship of the Holy Spirit to believers
 - “Holy Spirit **fell upon** them”
 - “God **gave** them the same gift”
- c) events with Cornelius fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy -- “John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit” Acts 1:5
- d) events with Cornelius parallels events with Peter
 - “as upon us at the beginning”
 - “God gave them the same gift as us”
- e) receiving the “gift” [speak with tongues and magnify God] was proof of the validity of salvation -- “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life”

Acts 16:15 (NKJV) And when she and her household were baptized, she begged [us], saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Acts 16:33 (NKJV) And he took them the same hour of the night and washed [their] stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Acts 18:8 (NKJV) Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Acts 19:3-5 (NKJV) And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 22:16 (NKJV) `And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

2. **Baptism [noun]**

Acts 1:22 (NKJV) "beginning from the **baptism** of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Acts 10:37 (NKJV) "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the **baptism** which John preached:

Acts 13:24 (NKJV) "after John had first preached, before His coming, the **baptism** of repentance to all the people of Israel.

Acts 18:25 (NKJV) This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the **baptism** of John.

Acts 19:3 (NKJV) And he said to them, "Into what then were you **baptized**?" So they said, "Into John's **baptism**."

4 (NKJV) Then Paul said, "John indeed **baptized** with a **baptism** of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

C. Signs

(σημειον) , (4592), a sign, mark, indication, token, is used (a) of that which distinguished a person or thing from others, e.g., Matt. 26:48; Luke 2:12; Rom. 4:11; 2 Cor. 12:12 (1st part); 2 Thess. 3:17, "token," i.e., his autograph attesting the authenticity of his letters; (b) of a sign as a warning or admonition, e.g., Matt. 12:39, "the sign of (i.e., consisting of) the prophet Jonas;" 16:4; Luke 2:34; 11:29, 30; (c) of miraculous acts (1) as tokens of Divine authority and power, e.g., Matt. 12:38, 39 (1st part); John 2:11, R.V., "signs;" 3:2 (ditto); 4:54, "(the second) sign," R.V.; 10:41 (ditto); 20:30; in 1 Cor. 1:22, "the Jews ask for signs," R.V., indicates that the Apostles were met with the same demand from Jews as Christ had been: "signs were vouchsafed in plenty, signs of God's power and love, but these were not the signs which they sought. ... They wanted signs of an outward Messianic Kingdom, of temporal triumph, of material greatness for the chosen people. ... With such cravings the Gospel of a 'crucified Messiah' was to them a stumblingblock indeed" (Lightfoot); 1 Cor. 14:22; (2) by demons, Rev. 16:14; (3) by false teachers or prophets, indications of assumed authority, e.g., Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; (4) by Satan through his special agents, 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13, 14; 19:20; (d) of tokens portending future events, e.g., Matt. 24:3, where "the sign of the Son of Man" signifies, subjectively, that the Son of Man is Himself the sign of what He is about to do; Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7, 11, 25; Acts 2:19; Rev. 12:1, R.V.; 12:3, R.V.; 15:1.

Signs confirmatory of what God had accomplished in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, His resurrection and ascension, and of the sending of the Holy Spirit, were given to the Jews for their recognition, as at Pentecost, and supernatural acts by apostolic ministry, as well as by the supernatural operations in the churches, such as the gift of tongues and prophesyings; there is no record of the continuance of these latter after the circumstances recorded in Acts 19:1-20.²

²Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

neuter of a presumed derivative of the base of 4591; TDNT - 7:200,1015; n n AV - sign (50) / miracle (23) / wonder (3) / token (1) [77] I a sign, mark, token that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and is known a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e. an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature.

2a) of signs portending remarkable events soon to happen

2b) of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's

D. Wonders

(τέρας), (5059), something strange, causing the beholder to marvel, is always used in the plural, always rendered “wonders,” and generally follows (shmei'ōn), “signs;” the opposite order occurs in Acts 2:22, 43; 6:8, R.V.; 7:36; in Acts 2:19 “wonders” occurs alone. A sign is intended to appeal to the understanding, a wonder appeals to the imagination, a power (dunami") indicates its source as supernatural. “Wonders” are manifested as Divine operations in thirteen occurrences (9 times in Acts); three times they are ascribed to the work of Satan through human agents, Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22 and 2 Thess. 2:9.³

III. “POWER” IN ACTS

A. The Promise of Power

1. Luke 24:49

Luke 24:49 (NKJV) "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

- a) Christ was responsible for the sending of the promise
 - b) The promise was from the Father
 - c) The disciples were to wait for the promise (endued with power from on high) before going out to carry out the other commands of Christ
- endue** (ἐνδύω), (1746), in the Middle Voice, to put on oneself, be clothed with, is used metaphorically of power, Luke 24:49⁴
- d) Power was from "on high" height, "heaven -- God"

2. Acts 1:5

According to Luke's second account, as seen in the beginning verses of Acts, Jesus promised the disciples that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and that they would receive power after that the Holy Spirit was come upon them.

3Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

4Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

Acts 1:5-8 (NKJV) "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- a) The phrase (endued with power--Luke 24:49) parallels (baptized with the Holy Spirit-- Acts 1:5)
- b) Future event -- "shall be"
- c) Not distant--"not many days hence"

3. Acts 1:8

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- a) Future event -- "Shall"
- b) Power preceded by the Holy Spirit "coming upon you" (ἐπέρχομαι), (1904), to come or go upon (ἐπι, upon)⁵
- c) Purpose of the "Power"-- Be witnesses, Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:38-41; 13:30-31; 22:13-15; 22:20 (martyr); 26:16
- d) Holy Spirit "coming upon" parallels "endued with power" Luke 24:49 and "Baptized with the Holy Spirit" 1:5

This promise is a pivotal point in the development of the teaching of power encounters in Acts. It is one which sheds light on the whole question of power encounters and thus must be studied and interpreted in the context of the New Testament culture and economy.

B. Power and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The promise of the power is directly tied in with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and appears to become effective in the lives of the disciples at the time of the Spirit baptism. This view can be supported by the combination of the promise as seen in Acts 1:8 with the experience of Peter in Acts 10:44-48 and the explanation of the event by Peter in Acts 11:15-17.

1. Peter at the house of Cornelius, a Gentile

Acts 10:44 (NKJV) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed

⁵Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we [have]?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

- a) The Holy Spirit "fell on them" as a result of hearing the Word (ἐμπίπτω), (1968), to fall upon⁶
 - 1) Acts 8:15-17 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet He had **fallen upon** none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit **fell upon** all those who heard the word.
 - 3) Acts 11:15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit **fell upon** them, as upon us at the beginning.
- c) The gift of the Holy Spirit "was poured out on them" (ἐκχύνω), (1632) to pour out⁷
 - 1) Acts 2:17-18 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, 1 That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.
 - 2) Acts 2:33 "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

2. It is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel which was repeated in Acts 2:17-18

Acts 2:17 (NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

3. The gift of the Holy Spirit parallels "Holy Spirit fell on them" 10:44; "poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit" 10:45; and "baptized with the Holy Spirit" 1:5; and Holy Spirit "come upon you" 1:8

⁶Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

⁷Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

4. The sign that the Gentiles had received the gift of the Holy Spirit was that the Jews heard them speak in tongues and magnified God; (cp. 1 Cor. 14:22)

1 Cor. 14:22 (NKJV) Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.
5. Peter baptized the new converts based on the evidence of them receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit
6. The "gift of the Holy Spirit" came at the point of conversion, (accepting the finished work of Christ of Calvary).
 - a. Acts 2:38 "receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is the natural result of repentance.

Acts 2:38 (NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Acts 19:3-6 The disciples of John accepted the work of Christ, were baptized, received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, and prophesied.

Acts 19:3-6 (NKJV) And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.
7. Peter's defense before the church at Jerusalem

Peter parallels the events at the house of Cornelius with those of the beginning, Acts 2

- Acts 11:15-17 (NKJV) "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. 16 "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 "If therefore God gave them the same gift as [He] [gave] us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"
- a. Holy Spirit "fell" on them as on us
 - b. Fulfillment of Christ's promise, 1:5
 - c. God gave same gift to "them" and "us"
 - d. Avenue for receiving was to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"

8. God was working with the Gentiles in the same way he had worked with the Jews

Based on these verses it appears that the power which Jesus promised his disciples included not only an inner ability and strength but also outward manifestations of power such as tongues and signs and healing.

C. Purpose of Power

The power was promised by Christ to the disciples for the primary purpose of authenticating their message. This power was to be used as a means of presenting the message of salvation in Jesus Christ and ultimately to bring men and women to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It was not given for personal use and glory but to glorify the name of God and his work. These truths become very evident as the specific passages dealing with the supernatural events are analyzed and critiqued.

D. Analysis of passages

1. Peter healing the lame man. Acts 3:1 - 4:22

Acts 3:12 (NKJV) So when Peter saw [it], he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own **power** or godliness we had made this man walk?"

Acts 4:7 (NKJV) And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what **power** or by what name have you done this?"

Acts 4:32 (NKJV) Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great **power** the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

- a. Peter and John were adamant to deny that the power was of themselves but it was the very power of God.
 - b. Peter had the ability to heal the lame man.
 - c. The healing was done in the name of Jesus Christ. It is significant to note that the concept of name and power were very similar and in many instances were identical. This is seen in Acts 4:7 where the Jewish leaders equated the two terms and in the following verses where Peter answered them with the statement that it was in the name of Jesus that this Acts was done.
 - d. Salvation for a multitude was the result of the power encounter.
 - e. The disciples used the power to witness of the resurrection of Christ.
2. The ministry of Stephen

Acts 6:7 (NKJV) Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. 8 And Stephen, full of faith and **power**, did great wonders and signs among the people.

- a. The power was used to present Christ and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased as well as the fact that many priest also believed.
- b. The power was accompanied by the ability to do wonders and miracles.

3. Philip and Simon in the city of Samaria

Acts 8:10 (NKJV) to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great **power** of God."

Acts 8:13 (NKJV) Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the **miracles** and signs which were done.

- a. The people associated the ability to perform miraculous feats with the power of God.
- b. Philip used the power to witness of Christ and the things concerning the kingdom of God.
- c. Many believed the ministry of Philip and were saved.

4. Ministry of Paul

Acts 19:11 (NKJV) Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul,

- a. It was the power of God that accompanied the Word and validated its authenticity.
- b. God manifested his power through the individual ministry of Paul. It was Paul who had the apparent ability to perform the works at his discretion.

IV. POWER ENCOUNTERS IN THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

There are two references in the book of Acts which deal with the relationship between power encounters and the ministry of Christ. These are especially significant as they give us a better understanding of the purpose and place of power encounters as seen from the perspective of the disciples.

A. Acts 2:22

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles (**δύαμις**), wonders [**τέρας**], and signs (**σημειον**) which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—

1. The power (miracles in the King James), wonders and signs which Christ performed were a proof of the authenticity of the man and the message.

(ἀποδείκνυμι) , (584), lit., to point out, to exhibit (ἀπο), forth, (δείκνυμι), to show), is used once in the sense of proving by demonstration, and so bringing about an approval. The Lord Jesus was “a Man approved of God by mighty works and wonders and signs,”⁸

2. It was God who performed the power encounters through Christ much the same as he did in the ministry of the disciples.
3. The power which Christ promised his disciples he had already demonstrated in his own ministry. The disciples would have been accustomed to the use of power encounters in preaching and teaching and would have considered it unnatural to not have them as an integral part of the ministry.

B. Acts 10:38

Acts 10:38 “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

1. Christ was anointed with the same Spirit and power that he promised his disciples.

anointed sacred and symbolic anointings / Acts 4:27

Acts 4:27 (NKJV) "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together

2. The power that God manifested through Christ was the sign that Christ was approved of God.
3. A part of the ministry of Christ was the direct confrontation with Satan and the demonic forces.
4. Christ emphasized the importance of works in his ministry both through their prominent place in his activities and through his statements.

C. Conclusion

These verses give us a glimpse of the significance of power encounters in the plan of God. If our Savior had his ministry authenticated by these works then is it so strange that God did the same thing for the disciples. The contrary seems to be true.

The works which the disciples performed were a part of God's blessing and goodness. He gave to them the same authority which he had given his only begotten Son. What a privilege it was for the disciples to be able to experience this integral part of the ministry of their Lord. The disciples had seen and experienced this power prior to the ascension of Christ but now they were seeing and feeling it in a new and exciting way.

⁸Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

V. THE PLACE OF POWER ENCOUNTERS IN NEW TESTAMENT EVANGELISM

A. Direct Power Encounters

The book of Acts is filled with accounts of power encounters between the early disciples and the unsaved. The scriptures very clearly indicate that the use of direct power encounters was not only an acceptable means of evangelism but also a method used of God to indicate his approval of both the message and the messenger.

A prime example of this truth is seen in the previous section dealing with Christ and the place and significance of power encounters in his personal ministry. This ministry which Christ had during his earthly stay was being duplicated by his disciples after his death and the record of these actions is given to us in the Acts of the Apostles.

It is significant to note that God met the needs and gave victory in a most dramatic fashion. The Word of God went forth in power and people were liberated from darkness and the power of Satan to the glorious light of the gospel.

B. Power In Prayer

An excellent example of the prayer of faith is seen in the following passage.

Acts 4:29-33 (NKJV) "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

1. Serious opposition from the Gentile and Jewish leaders was encountered by the disciples and they desired the ability to speak the Word of God with boldness. It was their belief that they should oppose this threat to the church and their message. (Acts 4:29) They were willing to face the unsaved in a direct confrontation by the use of the visible manifestation of the power of God.

boldness [**παρρησιάζομαι**], (3955) to speak boldly or freely; unreservedness

- a. Example of Peter: Acts 2:29
Acts 2:29 (NKJV) "Men [and] brethren, let [me] **speak freely** to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

- b. Example of Peter and John: Acts 4:13
Acts 4:13 (NKJV) Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.
 - c. Disciples' request: Acts 4:29
Acts 4:29 (NKJV) "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all **boldness** they may speak Your word,
 - d. God's answer to prayer: Acts 4:31
Acts 4:31 (NKJV) And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with **boldness**.
 - e. Example of Paul: Acts 28:31 (confidence)
Acts 28:31 (NKJV) preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all **confidence**, no one forbidding him.
2. The boldness which they desired was further defined by the ability to do healing by their hands and signs and wonders in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:30) The power they desired was not only an inner strength but also a visible mastery over the powers of darkness and Satan.
 3. God honored their request and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and were able to speak the Word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31) This statement would appear to indicate that God gave them the ability to perform healings, signs and wonders at their discretion.

While this supposition cannot be proved by direct statements, it does have support from accounts in the text. If the disciples actually had this ability to work at their own discretion it would be a very significant point in the analysis of power encounters in the present time as a reproduction of the early church ministries and also of the entire charismatic movement.

4. The results were that many believed, a multitude, and the believers manifested their new life by an outward show of unity and commonness of purpose. (Acts 4:32) It is possible that the outward manifestation of power in the evangelism was the spark or pattern needed to produce an outward show of their new belief. Christianity was viewed as a powerful religion.

The God of Christianity was a sovereign, omnipotent God who demonstrated his power in the lives of his children. The believers of that day must have had a sense of the power and majesty of God which was reminiscent of the Old Testament when God performed his mighty feats before men.

5. The disciples recognized that all of the power was from God and the works needed to be done in the name or power of Jesus Christ. Even if the disciples had the ability to perform the acts at their will, it was only operative by the power of Christ.
6. The disciples were first filled with the Holy Spirit before they spoke with boldness. The power promised by Christ in Acts 1:8 was to become real and effective only after the Holy Spirit had come upon them. It was only as the disciples had experienced the baptism and filling of the Holy spirit that they were able to perform the acts.

There is a direct connection between the presence and power of the Spirit in the life of the believer and his ability to perform power encounters for the glory of God. This truth is graphically illustrated in the passages dealing with power encounters and the unsaved.

7. Speaking the Word of God with boldness, which was a summary of the healing, signs and wonders, appears to be equated with the great power of the apostles to witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is an example of the power promised in Acts 1:8 which was to be used for witnessing. The disciples had a very literal view of the promise as can be seen from their prayer and it is equally obvious that God meant it to be taken in this manner as evidenced by his dramatic answer to the prayer.

VI. SIGNS AND WONDERS

The terms, signs and wonders, are descriptive of a form of power encounters which occurred often during the history of the early church. The term, wonders, always occurs in conjunction with signs, but the term, signs, occurs alone four times.

These are general terms which are used to describe a wide variety of power encounters. The majority of places where this phrase is seen is dealt with in other sections therefore it will be sufficient at this juncture to simply state some general observations which can be gleaned from the study of these verses.

sign [σημειον] a sign, mark, indication, token

wonder [τέρας] something strange, causing the beholder to marvel, is always used in the plural, and generally follows "signs--[σημειον]".

A "sign" is intended to appeal to the understanding, a "wonder" appeals to the imagination, a "power--[δύαμις]" indicates its source as supernatural. (Vine, 1240)

A. Signs and Wonders

1. Acts 2:22 (NKJV) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles [dunami"], wonders [τέρας], and signs [σημειον] which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--
 - a) Christ ministry was approved by miracles and wonders and signs
 - b) God performed the miraculous works by Christ
2. Acts 2:43 (NKJV) Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders [τέρας] and signs [σημειον] were done through the apostles.
 - a) The apostles performed the same wonders and signs as Christ
 - b) The result of the miraculous events was that "fear came on every soul"
3. Acts 4:29 (NKJV) "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs [σημειον] and wonders [τέρας] may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."
 - a) The ability to perform the miraculous came as a result of prayer
 - b) The ability to perform the miraculous was associated with "speaking the word with boldness"
 - c) Signs and wonders were done by the "hands" of the apostles
 - d) Signs and wonders were done by the name of Jesus
4. Acts 5:12 (NKJV) And through the hands of the apostles many signs [σημειον] and wonders [τέρας] were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.
 - a) Signs and wonders were done by the "hands" of the apostles
 - b) The result of the signs and wonders was unity among the brethren
5. Acts 6:8 (NKJV) And Stephen, full of faith and power [dunami"], did great wonders [τέρας] and signs [σημειον] among the people.
 - a) Signs and wonders are related to faith
 - b) Signs and wonders are related to power
6. Acts 7:36 (NKJV) "He brought them out, after he had shown wonders [τέρας] and signs [σημειον] in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.
 - a) Signs and wonders were a part of the O.T. economy
 - b) Signs and wonders were used to manifest the power of God to those outside the household of God
7. Acts 14:3 (NKJV) Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs [σημειον] and wonders [τέρας] to be done by their hands.
 - a) Speaking boldly was associated with signs and wonders

- b) Signs and wonders gave testimony to the word of God
 - c) Signs and wonders were done by their hands
8. Acts 15:12 (NKJV) Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles [σημειον] and wonders [τέρας] God had worked through them among the Gentiles.
- a) Signs and wonders authenticated the ministry of Barnabas and Paul
 - b) Signs and wonders were done among the Gentiles as well as the Jews

B. Signs Only

1. Acts 4:16 (NKJV) saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle [σημειον] has been done through them [is] evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny [it].
 - a) Religious leaders recognized that the miracle was supernatural
 - b) Religious leaders authenticated the reality of the miracle
2. Acts 4:22 (NKJV) For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle [σημειον] of healing had been performed.
 - a) The ministry of Peter and John was authenticated by a notable miracle
 - b) Miracles were tangible evidence of the power of God
3. Acts 8:6 (NKJV) And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles [σημειον] which he did. 3.
 - a) Miracles were physical evidence of the authenticity of Philip's message
 - b) The result of the miracles was that the people "with one accord gave heed"
4. Acts 8:13 (NKJV) Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles [dunami] and signs [σημειον] which were done.

C. Analysis of the passages

1. Wonders and signs were a very common phenomena during this time.
2. The disciples were able to perform these signs and wonders as an integral part of their ministry.
3. The disciples were reminded that God had performed signs and wonders in the Old Testament times and that these signs and wonders were a demonstration of His great power and might.
4. Miracles, signs, and wonders were a part of the presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They authenticated the message to a people who had not yet believed.
5. A strong presentation of the gospel was a result of the signs and wonders.

D. Signs and wonders in the Old Testament

God has given a reference to the Old Testament use of signs and wonders in Acts 7:36 and this verse would have given the disciples a true vision of the significance of the signs and wonders which were being experienced at that time. It is also noteworthy to see that the illustration given by Christ was that of Moses. This Acts of God was the standard for the demonstration of the power of God for the Jewish nation.

Acts 7:36 (NKJV) "He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

This same power to deliver his people from oppression was evident in the early church. The difference was that now the disciples were using power encounters rather than crossing the sea. God had demonstrated his might to pagans of Egypt and he was then demonstrating this same power to the pagans of New Testament history.

VII. POWER ENCOUNTERS INVOLVING HEALING

A. Acts 3:6-9

Acts 3:6-9 (NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted [him] up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

Acts 4:4 (NKJV) However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

1. It was done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It appears that 'name' signifies 'power'.
2. It gave the apostles an opportunity to preach Christ. (Acts 3:11; 4:2)
3. The apostles acknowledged that the power for the healing came not from themselves but from God. (Acts 3:12-13, 16; 4:10)
4. Salvation was the result of the power encounter. (Acts 4:4)
5. The healing was immediate.
6. The rulers recognized that it was the power of God and this authenticated the message of the apostles. (Acts 4:7, 14, 16)

- Acts 4:14-16 (NKJV) And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them [is] evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny [it].
7. The people who saw the miracle glorified God for the event. (Acts 4:21)

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all [men] glorified God for that which was done. (Acts 4:21)

B. Acts 5:12-17

Acts 5:12 (NKJV) And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. 14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid [them] on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who [were] with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation,

1. Signs and wonders were an integral part of the ministry of the apostles. (Acts 5:12)
2. The visible manifestation of the power of God caused the people to fear the believers and this tended to eliminate from the group those who were not true believers.
3. Healing was accomplished by a variety of means. The disciples used their hands most commonly but there were times when many were healed by simply having the shadow of Peter pass over them.
4. Everyone was healed. There is no distinction between the saved and unsaved in the question of healing.
5. The healing ministry included not only physical maladies but also the casting out of unclean spirits.
6. The people recognized that the signs and wonders were from God and they either magnified God for them or feared these who had the power of an almighty God. (Acts 5:13)
7. The results of the signs, wonders and preaching was salvation. (Multitudes of both men and women -- Acts 5:14)
8. The healing and casting out of unclean spirits was immediate.
9. The power encounters caused violent opposition from the opposing religious leaders as they saw the power of God manifested by these men.

C. Acts 8:5-8

Acts 8:5-8 (NKJV) Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city.

1. Philip's preaching was accompanied by power encounters and these miracles were an integral part of the preaching ministry of the early church.
2. Lame and those with palsy were healed and unclean spirits came out of individuals who were possessed.
3. The healing and casting out of unclean spirits was immediate.
4. The people listened to Philip because of the proof of the supernatural events he performed. It authenticated his message.
5. There was "great joy in the city" as a result of the encounter.

D. Acts 9:17-18

Acts 9:17-18 (NKJV) And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes [something] like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

1. Ananias was sent to Paul in order that he would receive his sight and also be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:17)
2. The results were immediate and he was baptized. There is not a clear indication that salvation occurred at this time or previously. (Acts 9:18)
3. Paul was saved as a result of this encounter.

E. Acts 9:32-35

Acts 9:32-35 (NKJV) Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all [parts] [of] [the] [country], that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. 33 There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. 35 So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

1. Peter healed Aeneas in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 9:34)
2. The healing was immediate. (Acts 9:34)
3. The healing resulted in salvation to all who lived at Lydda and Saron who saw him. (Acts 9:35)

F. Acts 9:40-42

Acts 9:40-42 (NKJV) But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her [his] hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

1. Peter acknowledged his need for the power of God by prayer. (Acts 9:40)
2. Peter raised her immediately from the dead by a simple command. (Acts 9:40)

3. The result of the power encounter was salvation. (Acts 9:42)

G. Acts 14:8-11

Acts 14:8-11 (NKJV) And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 [This] man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. 11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian [language], "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

1. Paul perceived that the man had faith to be healed. (Acts 14:9) These verses do not give any detail concerning the need of faith in the recipient of the healing. It appears that in this particular situation it was very important, but this importance is not born out in the other passages.
2. Paul healed the man by a simple command and the result was immediate.
3. Paul fought vehemently against the idea that the power was of him or that he should receive any glory from it. He attributed all of the power and glory to God. He began where all the people were concerning their belief in the supernatural and built from there the acceptance of the one true God. It is the opposite of the use of power by the unsaved.

H. Acts 19:11-12

Acts 9:11 (NKJV) So the Lord [said] to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for [one] called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12 "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting [his] hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Acts 19:20 (NKJV) So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

1. Healing and casting out of evil spirits occurred through an indirect contact with Paul by the use of articles of clothing being sent to the sick from Paul. (Acts 19:12)
2. The results were immediate. (Acts 19:12)
3. The ministry of healing and casting out evil or unclean spirits appears to be interrelated. It is possible that the casting out of the evil spirits is the means of the physical healing also.
4. The results was that the Word of God grew and prevailed. (Acts 19:20)

I. Acts 20:9-12

Acts 20:9-12 (NKJV) And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing [him] said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." 11 Now when he had

come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. 12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

1. Paul raised the man from the dead. (Acts 20:10)
2. The believers were comforted by the encounter. (Acts 20:12)
3. The results were immediate.

J. Acts 28:3-6

Acts 28:3-6 (NKJV) But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid [them] on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live." 5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

1. The unsaved believed that God worked his vengeance through immediate means. (Acts 28:4)
2. The unsaved attributed Paul's ability to the fact that he was a god. This is similar to the reaction that Paul received in Acts 14:8-11 at Lystra.

K. Acts 28:8-10

Acts 28:8-10 (NKJV) And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. 9 So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. 10 They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.

1. Paul acknowledged his need for the power of God by prayer. (Acts 28:8)
2. Paul healed him by the laying on of his hands and the result was immediate. (Acts 28:8)

VIII. POWER ENCOUNTERS AND THE UNSAVED

The ability to perform power encounters was not limited to believers only. There is evidence in the New Testament of the widespread use of supernatural acts by the unsaved for their own personal gain or glory.

A. Acts 8:9-13

Acts 8:9-13 (NKJV) But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." 11 And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name

of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. 13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

1. Unsaved people have the power to perform super- natural events using sorcery and by bewitching the people. (Acts 8:9)
2. An unbeliever uses supernatural events to draw attention to himself and to increase his own power. (Acts 4:9-11) Simon allowed the people to give him the glory. This is in stark contrast to Peter and John's reaction to this same type of situation.
3. The believer uses the supernatural events to authenticate the message of the gospel of Christ and salvation results. (Acts 4:12-13) The obvious distinction between the purpose of power encounters for the unbeliever and believer is clearly seen here.

B. Acts 12:21-24

Acts 12:21-24 (NKJV) So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

1. People proclaimed that Herod was the voice of God. (Acts 12:22) The supernatural was so much a part of their lives and the teaching that the gods lived and worked among people so prevalent, it was only natural for the people to ascribe deity to their sovereign.
2. The angel of the Lord smote him because he did not give God the glory. It was probably because of the image of this incident that Paul was so adamant against claiming any glory for himself in Acts 14:8- 11. (Acts 12:23)
3. Judgment was final and death was the final outcome. (Acts 12:23)
4. The result was salvation and the Word of God grew and multiplied. (Acts 12:24)

C. Acts 13:6-12

Acts 13:6-12 (NKJV) Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name [was] Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also [is] [called] Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, [you] son of the devil, [you] enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord [is] upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

1. Unsaved men can use sorcery to turn others from the truth to themselves. (Acts 13:7-8)
2. Paul was filled with the Spirit and spoke. Judgment came upon Elymas. (Acts 13:10-11)
3. Paul attributed the power to the hand of the Lord and the judgment was immediate. (Acts 13:11)
4. The result was salvation for the deputy. (Acts 13:12)

D. Acts 16:16-18

Acts 16:16-18 (NKJV) Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

1. Unbelievers are able to perform supernatural acts such as soothsaying through the spirits of divination. (Acts 16:16)
2. Paul cast out the spirit by a command in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 16:18)
3. The spirit came out of her the same hour.
4. God can use even the unsaved to proclaim his truth and for his glory. The woman was speaking the truth even as she had a spirit in her.
5. There is no record that the woman was a believer before or after the demon departed.

E. Acts 19:13-17

Acts 19:13-17 (NKJV) Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

1. Unbelievers are able to cast out spirits. This is not stated explicitly but is hinted at by the term used to describe these Jews, exorcists. (Acts 19:13)

[ἐξορκιστής , (1845)] 1) he who extracts an oath of one / 2) an exorcist i.e. one who employs a formula of conjuration for expelling demons

2. Unbelievers cannot use the name of the Lord Jesus to call out evil spirits. (Acts 19:13, 15) The power is not in a magical use of the name but it is God using a Spirit filled person to accomplish his glory.

3. God judged the unbeliever who attempts to use the name of Christ for personal gain. (Acts 19:16)
4. The result was that the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. (Acts 19:17)

F. Acts 8:18-25

Acts 8:18-25 (NKJV) And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21 "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 "For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." 24 Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." 25 So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

1. Simon desired to have the power to perform signs and wonders for his own glory and power.
2. Simon understood that the disciples had the power to give the Holy Spirit.
3. Peter judged Simon because of his attitude. It was the reason for the request which was condemned and was called wickedness.
4. It is open to debate whether Simon was saved at this time. I have assumed that he was not.

G. SUMMARY

This section is of great importance as it exposes the wrong use of power encounters. It is evident from the scriptures that unsaved people were able to perform supernatural acts. This fact forces us to realize that the accomplishment of a feat does not constitute its validity. There were those disciples who did not always make this distinction and were thus fooled into thinking that all powers and signs were from God and therefore all people able to perform such feats were also messengers of God.

If we keep the examples of unbelievers performing supernatural feats in mind we will be better able to judge the validity of power encounters in today's setting. There are those who will simply accept anyone who will show them a sign and many times they will even make the performance of these signs and wonders a test of true spirituality.

The true test is not the performance but the attitude behind the Acts. If the action is done for the glory of God and for his praise then the disciples were to accept it as from God. If it was for self-glory then it was to be exposed and rebuked.

IX. POWER ENCOUNTERS AND PRISON

There are three passages in Acts which deal with deliverance from prison. These have been grouped here as they all are dealing with a common theme and the truths which can be learned from them are very similar.

A. Acts 5:17-20

Acts 5:17-20 (NKJV) Then the high priest rose up, and all those who [were] with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

B. Acts 12:5-11

Acts 12:5-11 (NKJV) Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. 6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. 7 Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by [him], and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off [his] hands. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and [from] all the expectation of the Jewish people."

C. Acts 16:25-30

Acts 16:25-30 (NKJV) But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

1. God delivered his disciples from the power of the civil government in each of these cases.
2. God displayed his ability to keep and deliver his disciples from any danger that the civil government could threaten.

3. The deliverance was proof from God of his personal calling in the life of the disciple.
4. Salvation was the result of the power encounter in at least one of the situations.

D. Conclusion

The disciples faced not only opposition from religious leaders but also from political ones. God manifested his ability to control even these great leaders. They were recognized as gods by the people but God declared by his actions that they were still subject to his sovereign power.

X. POWER ENCOUNTERS AND THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Acts 2:1-4

Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV) When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and [one] sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

1. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. The result of the filling was that the disciples spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4)

B. Acts 4:29-31

Acts 4:29-31 (NKJV) "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

1. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit as an answer to their prayers.
2. The result of the filling was that the disciples spoke the Word of God with boldness.

C. Acts 8:14-17

Acts 8:14-17 (NKJV) Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

1. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit as an answer to the prayer of Peter and John.

2. The filling of the Holy Spirit was not an event which was coincidental with salvation at this time.
3. Peter and John had the power to impart the Holy spirit. This power came as a result of the power of God in their lives.
4. Baptism preceded the filling of the Holy Spirit.

D. Acts 9:17-18

Acts 9:17-18 (NKJV) And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes [something] like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

1. Ananias had the power to impart the Holy Spirit under the direction of God.
2. The filling of the Holy Spirit was coincidental with the healing and was followed by baptism.

E. Acts 19:2-6

Acts 19:2-6 (NKJV) he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

1. Paul questioned the disciples of John concerning their relationship to the Holy Spirit.
2. Paul explained the new relationship which then existed between the baptism and the filling of the Holy Spirit. They were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
3. Paul then laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

F. Conclusion

The filling of the Holy Spirit was a very important in the life of the early disciples. There was a change of pattern concerning the time of the filling as can be seen in the development of the previous passages. It appears that there was a direct Acts of God involved in the early history but this direct Acts seems to become less prominent in the later chapters of Acts.

The speaking in tongues was an outward manifestation which accompanied the filling of the Spirit on several occasions but this also seems to be less prevalent in the later chapters.

XI. POWER ENCOUNTERS AND THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

Another purpose of power encounters is its place in the introduction of Christianity into a new culture or area. It is easily seen from the New Testament accounts that there was an increase of power encounters when a new area was approached. The following list of power encounters gives the statement of the power encounter with the name of the new area which was being invaded.

A. Power Encounters

- 1:8 Promise of power
- 2:1-4 Pentecost
- Introduction of Christianity to Jews
- 2:19 Prophecy of wonders and signs
- 2:22 Christ approved of God by power encounters
- 2:43 Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles
- 3:1-4:22 Healing of lame man by Peter and John
- 4:29-33 Prayer for boldness to preach the Word of God
- 5:12-16 Many signs and wonders done by the apostles
- 5:17-20 Apostles released from prison
- 6:6-8 Stephen did great wonders and miracles
- 7:36 Reminder of the signs and wonders of the past
- 8:5-8 Philip preaching in Samaria
- Introduction of Christianity to Samaria
- 8:9-13 Philip's confrontation with Simon
- 8:14-17 Peter and John's ministry in Samaria
- 8:18-23 Peter's confrontation with Simon
- 9:17-18 Conversion of Saul
- Introduction of Christianity to Paul
- 9:32-35 Peter healing Aeneas
- Introduction of Christianity to Lydda
- 9:40-42 Peter raising Tabitha from the dead
- Introduction of Christianity to Joppa
- 10:38 Christ anointed with Holy Spirit and power
- 10:44-48 Peter preaching to Cornelius
- Introduction of Christianity to Gentiles
- 12:5-11 Peter delivered from prison
- 12:21-24 Death of Herod
- Introduction of Christianity to Caesarea
- 13:6-12 Paul's confrontation with the sorcerer
- Introduction of Christianity to Paphos
- 14:3 Many signs and wonders done by Paul
- Introduction of Christianity to Iconium
- 14:8-11 Paul healing the impotent man at Lystra
- Introduction of Christianity to Lystra
- 15:11-12 Barnabas and Paul did miracles with Gentiles
- Introduction of Christianity to Gentiles

- 16:16-18 Paul's confrontation with damsel with spirit
Introduction of Christianity to **Thyatira**
- 16:25-30 Paul and Silas released from prison
- 19:2-6 Paul meeting with disciples of John
Introduction of Christianity to **John's disciples**
- 19:11-12 Paul healing by handkerchiefs or aprons
Introduction of Christianity to **Ephesus**
- 19:13-17 Paul's confrontation with Jewish exorcists
- 20:9-12 Paul raising the young man from the dead
Introduction of Christianity to **Troas**
- 28:3-6 Paul is bitten by the snake
Introduction of Christianity to **Melita**
- 28:8-10 Paul healing the father of Publius
Introduction of Christianity to **Melita**

B. Conclusion

Power encounters were on the leading edge of evangelism into new areas. This seemed to be the second major purpose for God manifesting his power in such a visible manner.