

Acts: The Holy Spirit Working Through Christians



"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 NLT

- Do you feel like there is a higher purpose that God has for your life?

The Book of Acts is the only historical record of the church's birth and the beginning of the spread of Christianity. The Book of Acts describes the first 30 years of the church's existence. The book of Acts described the transition from the ministry of Jesus to the ministry of the Holy Spirit—the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is also called "**the Spirit of Jesus**"—(Acts 16:7; Romans 8:9; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11). So when we talk about the activity of the Holy Spirit, we are also talking about the activity of Jesus.

The main message of Acts is: **the Holy Spirit is at work through Christians to continue what Jesus began to do.** Acts 1:1-2 tells us, "*In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach...*" (NLT). We see the continuation of Christ's work in Acts by the first-century believers. Christ-followers have been continuing the work of Christ up to the present day. The baton has been passed on to us. We must pass it on to the generation after us.

Central Lesson:

The Holy Spirit works through Christians to continue what JESUS began. SURRENDER to the Holy Spirit so He can work through you!

The message of Acts and the emphasis on living by the power and control of the Holy Spirit is one of the most important teachings for our lives today. God commands all Christ-followers to be "*filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18), which means to be **controlled, directed, and empowered** by the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts shows us what the Christian life looks like when Christ-followers are filled with the Spirit.

Author: LUKE. From the second century, the early church leaders claimed that Luke wrote both the third Gospel and Acts, even though his name is not mentioned in either book. Both books are written to Theophilus—perhaps a Roman official with a strong interest in Christianity. (Luke 1:3-4; Acts 1:1-2).

What do we know about Luke? Even though Luke wrote more than one-fourth (28%) of the New Testament (more than even the Apostle Paul, who wrote 2,033 verses, and Luke wrote 2,138 verses), we know less about him than any other New Testament writer. The Bible reveals: (1) He was the **traveling companion of the Apostle Paul** indicated by the use of the word "we" in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16, which made him an eyewitness for the events in Acts chapters 13-28. (2) He was a **physician** (Colossians 4:14). (3) He was **faithful and supportive of Paul** even when all others deserted him in jail. Paul wrote, "*Only Luke is with me*" (2 Timothy 4:11). He was with Paul from at least **the time of Paul's Macedonian call** (Acts 16:9-10) **up to the time of Paul's martyrdom** (2 Tim. 4:11). (4) Luke

was a **Gentile** (Colossians 4:10-14) and is the only Gentile to author a book of the Bible. (5) He was **not** one of the **disciples nor an eyewitness of Jesus**. He makes a distinction between himself and those who were eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-2) and writes that he carefully investigated everything from the beginning (1:3) so there could be certainty about the facts (1:4). (6) Tradition says that Luke was **from Syrian Antioch**, remained **unmarried**, and **died at the age of eighty-four**.

Date: Acts was written about A.D. **63**.

Title: The book's title is named after the "**Acts**" of the Apostles, or more accurately, the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Bible teacher Ray C. Stedman explained: "**...in most editions of Scripture, it is called the Acts of the Apostles. But as you read the book, the only apostles whose acts are highlighted are Peter and Paul. Most other apostles go largely unnoticed in Acts. The book should be titled The Acts of the Holy Spirit—or even more appropriately, the Continuing Acts of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:1).**" The book of Acts is the account of the way the Holy Spirit moved and worked through the church to continue what Jesus began to do (Acts 1:1).

Key Verses: The key verse is Acts 1:8. **Key Chapter:** Acts chapter 2. Chapter 2 records the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. This fulfilled Christ's promise about the Comforter's coming (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 1:4-5, 8-9). The Holy Spirit took control of a small group of ordinary people, did the miraculous, and developed a worldwide church that continues to impact the world in fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). The Holy Spirit will do wondrous things through us if we yield our lives and hearts to Him.

Outline: The Life Application Bible outlines the book as:

- I. Peter's Ministry (Chapters 1-12)
- II. Paul's Ministry (Chapters 13-28)

Bruce Wilkinson in *Talk Thru the Bible* outlines the book based on Acts 1:8.

- I. Witness in Jerusalem (1:1-8:4)
- II. Witness in Judea & Samaria (8:5-12:25)
- III. Witness to the Ends of the Earth (13:1-28:31)

Key Words: The **HOLY SPIRIT** (mention over 40 times in 28 chapters: 1:2, 5, 8, etc.). **Filled with the Holy Spirit** (2:4; etc.). **The resurrection** of Jesus (1:22; 2:24; etc.). **Witness** (1:8, 22; 2:32; etc.). **The church** (5:11; 8:1, 3; etc.).

Bible teacher, Ray C. Stedman, writes, "**...the book of Acts was clearly an unfinished book. It ends—but it is not completed. Why?.... Because the Holy Spirit deliberately intended it to be unfinished! The book of Acts is still being written.... Jesus isn't finished yet. He began His ministry in His human body, as recorded in the Gospels. He continued in His [spiritual] body, the church, through the book of Acts. He continues His ministry today through you and me and every other believer on the planet. The book of Acts will be completed someday. And when it is completed, you and I will have a chance to read it in glory, in eternity, when the plan of God has been fulfilled. When we read it, what will my part be in that story? And what will yours be?"**

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► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.