



Acts: God the Holy Spirit

Memory Verse: Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Background

The book of Acts is the 44th book of the Bible and the fifth book in the New Testament. Acts, or the “Acts of the Apostles”, is categorized as the only book of history in the New Testament. Authored by Luke, Acts picks up right where the Gospel of Luke left off, and covers the events in church history from the 30s-60s AD. This book, chronicling the life of the church following Jesus’ ascension, bridges the story of Jesus in the Gospels with the later epistles (letters) in the New Testament.

The title of the book comes from the Greek work *praxis*, a word used in early Christian literature to describe the great deeds of the apostles and other significant believers. Luke, as a follower of the apostles and later a missionary companion to Paul, was in an excellent position to accurately record these great deeds of the apostles empowered by the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts was likely completed around 60-62 AD, as it ends abruptly with Paul’s imprisonment in Rome and does not mention his death (c. 64-68 AD) nor the persecution of Christians in 64 AD under the Roman Emperor Nero.

The Short Story

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ followers proclaim the Gospel throughout the world.

What’s the Big Idea?

Acts begins with a resurrected Jesus appearing and giving “many convincing proofs that he was alive” to His disciples to banish any possible doubts (1:3). Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus told them, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (1:8). This statement outlines the book of Acts. At Pentecost, Jesus’ promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled and the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter preached the good news of Christ in Jerusalem and “three thousand were added to their number that day” and the church was born (2:41). The first seven chapters of Acts focus on Peter and the gospel being preached in Jerusalem to a mainly Jewish audience as the church grows and strengthens through trials and persecution. The next few chapters in Acts show how their evangelistic efforts would soon approach a national level. On the day that Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian Church, was stoned to death with Saul’s approval, “a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria...Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” (8:1-4). Just as Jesus had said, His followers were witnessing to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. In Acts 13, the focus shifts to Saul, the persecutor of Christians, who upon having a transforming encounter with Jesus, became the apostle Paul. The Christian missionary movement now begins as Paul takes the good news to the Gentile nations and the ends of the then known world.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God’s purpose for the book?

The book of Acts records the continued works of the risen Lord through the Holy Spirit. In only thirty years, a small group of frightened believers in Jerusalem transform the world with the Gospel, beginning a movement of people dedicating their lives to Jesus Christ. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit and God’s sovereign direction could this have happened. The power of the Holy Spirit is prevalent throughout Acts, giving the apostles boldness in preaching the good news, peace in the face of persecution, allowing them to witness the transforming of lives, and unifying the Jewish and Gentile believers. This same Holy Spirit is available for us today. Just as Peter preached, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (2:38-39).

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Acts 2:37-30 ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Who is the Holy Spirit? Why is He so important to those who are Christ followers?
- What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? Does this happen once or multiple times?
- Why is power often connected to the Holy Spirit in the New Test.? What does the power look like?
- What does repent mean? What does it look like in our daily lives? How hard is to repent?
- What is the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s fullness according to scripture in the disciple of Christ?

Practical Application

- How has the Holy Spirit touched your life? How did His power manifest itself in you?
- How has the Holy Spirit guided you in a difficult situation? What did that look like?
- Where do you lack understanding about the Holy Spirit’s activity in the life of a Christian?
- How do you know for certain that the Holy Spirit is a part of your life? How would you describe it?
- Where do you need to seek more of the Holy Spirit’s influence in your life? List three areas.

Hitting the Highpoints

- 1:8-11 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...and to the ends of the earth.”
- 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”
- 4:32-33 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
- 5:3 “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit”
- 9:1-17 ““Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes,...”
- 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me...”

Personal Takeaways and Notes