



# THEMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

## WEEK ONE: THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Background:** Many commentators agree that this book should be entitled: THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, given this is the overriding theme of the book.

It was written by Luke, a doctor, who also wrote the Gospel. The New Testament briefly mentions him a few times, and the book of Colossians refers to him as a physician (from the Greek for 'one who heals'); thus he is thought to have been both a physician and a disciple of Paul. Since the early years of the faith, Christians have regarded him as a saint. He is also known as *Luke the Evangelist*, his feast day being the 18<sup>th</sup> October. It is thought that Luke wrote his Gospel between AD63 and AD68; the book of Acts being written later, towards the end of the first century. Luke is the only Gentile to have written books in the Bible. His writings have been proven to be historically accurate.

Luke's Christian ministry can be followed in the book of Acts. *“Up until the sixteenth chapter the story of Acts is written in the third person, much like an historian recording facts. The voice of the narrator then changes to first person and scholars believe this is done at the time Luke first joined Paul at Troas in the year 51. The book of Acts switches back to third person and scholars believe that this reflects a period in time when Luke was not present during the events that are recorded.”* He never met Jesus but became a follower after Paul had taught him the gospel.

Theophilus, to whom both the Gospel and Acts was written, literally means “loved by God,” but carries the idea of “friend of God. We do not know who he was but clearly, he was important in the life of Luke.

Peter and Paul are the major players in this account with many new characters mentioned such as Stephen, Barnabas, Silas, John Mark and Apollos.

Acts begins where the Gospels finish with the instruction to go out from Jerusalem to all parts of the earth known as the Great Commission. Having seen Jesus ascending into heaven, they obeyed his instruction to waiting in Jerusalem until they had received the power of the Holy Spirit. Around 120 people: disciples, the brothers of Jesus and women, amongst whom was the mother of Jesus.

[Read Acts 2](#)

- Verse 1 highlights something of great importance: they were together and in **one accord**. The word here means unanimous, having mutual consent, having one mind and purpose. What lessons can we learn from this for the life of the Church today?
- They had shown obedience to the command of Jesus and so were able to receive the promised Holy Spirit. This power enabled them to do new and mighty things. Let us look at our lives and see to what extent we are being obedient to God's word. You might want to pray about this and then write down those areas of your life where you need to more closely, follow God's word.
- Those who took part in the study of Joshua (*What do these stones mean?*), will recall in chapter 1 of the book where Moses promised success PROVIDED Joshua and the people were obedient in following God's commandments. God's promises are always conditional in that they require something from us before they are fulfilled. Can you look at your life and see that when you are faithful then God keeps his promises to you and blesses you. Make a note of them – let them become memorials in your life as the stones were a memorial to the Children of Israel.

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit had been foretold by **Joel** in chapter **2:28-29** but is doubtful whether the crowds that day realised that. It was an incredible event: first *“a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind”* which filled the house where they were sitting. Then *“there appeared divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* (**Acts 2:2-4 NKJ**). Everyone thought they were drunk, and that at only 9 o'clock in the morning!

Remarkable as all this was, what happened afterwards was equally so. Read again verses 14-39. This man standing before the crowds, preaching with power (result of the Holy Spirit), was none other than Peter, he who had denied Jesus three times.

- What does this tell us about God?
- Notice that Peter was quoting from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and the Psalms. To be effective witness for Jesus, we need to read and memorise or write down, important scriptures in order to share what Jesus has done for us, backed up by the word of God. Everyone's experience will be different, but the scriptures remain the same.

Think back to a few weeks previous in the life of the disciples, they were hiding behind locked doors, afraid what the Chief Priest and his men would do to them. Yet now, Peter was openly accusing them of crucifying Jesus, who was both Lord and Christ.

- What happened in your life to cause you to believe in a God who can change you, empower you and make you ‘a new creation in Christ Jesus’?
- 3000 people joined themselves to the disciples that day. Verse 42 tells us that they continued to devote themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer which became their established pattern.
- Think about this: do you follow a similar pattern? How important is the fellowship of other Christians, to you? Do you understand the importance of taking communion, as a remembrance of what Jesus did for us? Do you regularly pray? Many of us will have spent a lot of time talking in various ways to friends and family during the Covid-19 lockdown. Have you taken the time to talk with God? This is key to our continued spiritual growth.
- Notice what verses 43-47 say. Do we expect God to perform miracles today? Do we share our possessions? Do we daily praise God?
- It is important to remember what Romans 13:8 says: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

We finish this week’s study with a look at [Acts 3 1:10](#)

If someone on the streets asked us for money, would any of us have the courage, and belief to say as Peter did: *“I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”*

- Are you understanding the enormous change that had taken place in the lives of the Apostles? From denying knowing Jesus to speaking healing in his name. No wonder people were filled with wonder and amazement when they saw the crippled man: *“walking and leaping and praising God”* as the childrens’ chorus says.
- We have access to that same power today. The Holy Spirit wants to come into our lives and empower us to bring healing in many ways, to the people we meet.



**Prayer: Father, fill us with your Holy Spirit and power.**