

# The Misnamed Book In The Christian Bible

In most translations of the New Testament the book that follows the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is called 'Acts' or 'Acts of the Apostles'.

But when we read it closely we see that it should be named the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit'.

The apostles are all dead, they have completed their "acts" but the Holy Spirit is eternal and He should be allowed to "Act" in the church today as He did in the time of the apostles.

The Holy Spirit was the guide and driving force behind all that was accomplished in the early Christian church.

## Can the same be said of Christian churches today?

All I wish to do in the article is to allow God's Word to speak for itself as an example for Christians to follow today.

**Acts 1:1-8** [NIV] *"In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, **after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.** After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but **in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.**" So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **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.**"*

The promise of the Holy Spirit as the power by which they were enabled to do the work that Jesus had commissioned them to do [**Matthew 28:18-20**].

**Acts 1:15-16** [NIV] *"In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled **which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David** concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus,"*

This was before the Holy Spirit had come in power.

**Acts 2:1-4** [NIV] *"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.**"*

What they said was directly influenced by the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 2:16-19** [NIV] *"No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "**In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.**"*

This coming and work of Holy Spirit was prophesied long before that day.

**Acts 2:32-33** [NIV] *“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father **the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.**”*

The apostles knew who it was that was working in them and speaking through them. It was the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 4:1-8** [NIV] *“The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest’s family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?” **Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:** “Rulers and elders of the people!”*

The power was the active work of the Holy Spirit in Peter.

**Acts 4:29-31** [NIV] *“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.**”*

The boldness and courage of the early church was a result of their being filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 5:1-11** [NIV] *“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that **you have lied to the Holy Spirit** and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? **You have not lied to men but to God.**” When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.” Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.” At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.”*

The obvious presence of the Holy Spirit in the early church produced awe and respect for God.

**Acts 5:32** [NIV] *“**We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.**”*

The early church looked on their work of witness as a partnership with the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 6:1-7** [NIV] *“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, **choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.** We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose **Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit;** also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of*

*God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”*

The active presence of the Holy Spirit in a person was the guide by which the appointment of leaders and workers in the church were judged.

**Acts 6:8** [NIV] *“Now **Stephen**, a man **full of God’s grace and power**, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.”*

It was the power of Holy Spirit in the church leaders that caused great signs and wonders to happen that drew people to them to hear the gospel message.

**Acts 7:51** [NIV] *“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: **You always resist the Holy Spirit!**”*

It is the resisting of the work of the Holy Spirit that causes them to be blinded to the Good News.

**Acts 7:55-56** [NIV] *“But **Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit**, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the glory and holiness of God to us.

**Acts 8:9-24** [NIV] *“Now for some time a man named Simon had practised sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is the divine power known as the Great Power.” They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptised. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, **they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit**, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and **they received the Holy Spirit**. When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.” Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.”*

A very stern warning not to use the power of the Holy Spirit in us for personal prestige and financial gain.

**Acts 8:26-29** [NIV] *“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road, the desert road, that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. **The Spirit told Philip**, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”*

The Greek translated “angel” means “messenger”, this could be the Holy Spirit as He is the spokesman for the godhead on earth at this time.

**[John 14:15-18]** It was **the Holy Spirit who directly commanded Philip’s movements** in life.

**Acts 8:39-40** [NIV] “When they came up out of the water, the **Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away**, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.”

Even to supernaturally transporting him physically.

**Acts 9:17-18** [NIV] “Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “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.**” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised,”

The way Saul who was renamed Paul was illuminated was by the Holy Spirit. This was more than receiving physical sight again. [**John 14:26; John 16:13**]

**Acts 9:31** [NIV] “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and **encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers**, living in the fear of the Lord.”

It is always the work of the Holy Spirit in us that brings the increase.

**Acts 10:44-47** [NIV] “**While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.** The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

The Holy Spirit’s power is available for all who respond to the gospel message.

**Acts 11:11-16** [NIV] “Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. **The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them.** These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’ “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’”

Peter recognised and responded to the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 13:2-4** [NIV] “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the **Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”** So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. **The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.**”

Often it is in a time of worship or prayer that the Holy Spirit speaks to us as He did to those in the early church.

**Acts 13:9-12** [NIV] “**Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said,** “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.”

Paul was guided and empowered to give this powerful correction to a servant of Satan.

**Acts 13:48-52** [NIV] *“When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. **And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**”*

Paul, Barnabas and the other disciples experience joy in their being instruments of the Holy Spirit. We also can experience the same joy and peace of mind. [**John 14:26-27**]

**Acts 15:8** [NIV] *“God, who knows the heart, **showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.**”*

If our heart, the driving force of our life, is in harmony with God’s heart, then we receive the Holy Spirit to empower our lives.

**Acts 15:28** [NIV] *“**It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements:**”*

It was the Holy Spirit who made this decision.

**Acts 16:6-10** [NIV] *“Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, **having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.** When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”*

It was the Holy Spirit who directed where they were to give their witness, where He had already prepared the minds of the people to receive their message.

**Acts 19:1-7** [NIV] *“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, **the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.** There were about twelve men in all.”*

People can believe the message we bring to them and yet **not** receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

**John 14:15-17** [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, **the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. **But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.**”*

This is an example recorded in Acts of the two stages to receiving the Holy Spirit in His fullness.

It depends on our response to Him after being introduced to Him through scripture.

**Acts 19:21** [NIV] *“After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.”*

The Holy Spirit prompted the goals and the desires in Paul’s life.

**Acts 20:22-24** [NIV] *“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me, the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”*

Every aspect of Paul’s life was bound up in fulfilling the work that the Holy Spirit was showing was his to do.

**Acts 20:28** [NIV] *“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”*

We are all responsible for **not** only our own spiritual welfare but that of all we fellowship with as Christians.

We all as individual Christians and as Christian fellowships should use these examples of the influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the first Christians when we judge our conduct and the work we seek to do for our Saviour.

Only then will the church be able to continue the *“acts of the Holy Spirit”* in our generation.