

A white dove is shown in flight, wings spread, positioned above a stylized, light gray globe. The globe is centered behind the title text.

# THE SPIRIT AND THE MISSION

*Reflections on Acts of the Apostles*

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DR. DANIEL I. AKHAZEMEA

## **THE SPIRIT AND THE MISSION - Relectioniions on *Acts of the Apostles***

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# ENDORSEMENT

The Spirit and the Mission is a timely and refreshing book that brings the Book of Acts to life for the contemporary believer. With clarity, passion, and deep spiritual insight, Dr. Akhazemea skillfully walks readers through the early church's journey, illuminating the power of the Holy Spirit in shaping a movement that transformed the world. Rooted in a Pentecostal perspective. The author's unambiguous faith, reliance on the Holy Spirit, and commitment to biblical truth shine through every page. The Spirit and the Mission is more than a literary piece —it is a spiritual companion for anyone longing to understand the early church and live boldly for Christ today.

## **Pastor Leke Sanusi**

Continental Overseer, RCCG Europe Continent 9

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In The Spirit and The Mission, Dr. Daniel leveraged on his experiences and expertise in ministry and academia to deliver a classic on the book of Acts of the Apostles. These studies stand out for its emphasis on the person of the Holy Spirit, narrative theology and practical applications. I believe that “The Spirit and The Mission” is an enlightening contribution to theological studies and can be used as a daily devotional.

## **Pastor Jude Olisa**

Head, School of Practical Ministries, Christ the Redeemer College, London

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Dr. Daniel Akhazemea provides a series of short and accessible studies on the text of the Acts of the Apostles that is both intellectually engaging and spiritually formative. These studies illuminate the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit, the birth and expansion of the early Church, and the bold witness of the apostles; they call readers to embody the same Spirit-empowered discipleship that shaped the first believers.

## **Dr. Phillip Barnes**

Emeritus Reader in Religious and Theological Education, King's College London

Many of the deep lessons from the life of Jesus Christ and his disciples appear lost in contemporary Christian ministry. The realities of today's ministry seem buried in the convenience of technological advancement and scientific innovation. Dr. Daniel Akhazemea has, in this book, successfully refocused believers attention to the unique persona of the Holy Spirit, in following Jesus Christ, and in prosecuting his mission on earth, for which we have been called. It is a commentary reflection from the perspective of a doer and teacher of the Word of God. I recommend it to everyone who is passionate to follow the Lord Jesus wherever He goes.

**Akinwale Ekundayo**

President, Rarebuild Kingdom Missions and Lebana Academy, Nigeria

# FOREWORD

We are not sure how Theophilus, the top official and possibly a secret follower of Jesus, to whom the Book of Acts was directed by St Luke, responded to its reading. It is plausible that he was pleased to have a further account of how the world responded to the story of the birth, death and Resurrection of Jesus, as earlier narrated by St Luke.

The Book of Acts remains fascinating to all those who are interested in the narrative on the expansion of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and utmost parts of the world, as enjoined by the Lord Jesus Himself on the eve of His Ascension after His Resurrection. The power of the Holy Spirit was so decisively powerful in directing the steps of the Apostles for three decades from the Resurrection of Jesus in AD 31 to the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment in AD 62 that it has been suggested that the Acts of the Apostles should be more appropriately named Acts of the Holy Spirit.

Dr Daniel the author of this latest contribution to the growing literature on this Book of Acts, is Rector of the Christ The Redeemer College in the United Kingdom and a Bible scholar. The title of his Book, *The Spirit and The Mission*, is pregnant with meaning as he expects his contribution to add to the discourse of the Book of Acts distinctively, laced with the fire of Pentecost. In the sub-title, *Reflections on the Acts of the Apostles*, the author promises a sober reflection and deeper and more penetrating study of the famous Book. He advises that the Book be used as a Devotional, a product of reflection. And he confesses that its orientation is determined by his orientation as an “unashamedly Pentecostal” Minister.

The Book is thus a combination of a penetrating study of the Book of Acts as well as ministration and deeper study of the Word. The author has provided a caption for each section of the Book of Acts, then given the passage to which he adds five Lessons learnt, derived from a careful amplification of the text selected as guide. This pattern has been repeated for the 380 parts of this Book. In the process, the author has interpreted the Book, adding his own perspective and appreciation.

For example, he attempts to discuss why the narratives have taken the form as contained in the original text, and under the Lessons, he teaches about the intervention of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of activity of the Boom of the Acts. This makes the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, the Acts of the Holy Spirit working through the Apostles. He concludes that “The effective ministry of the

saints (believers) today is also made possible by the Holy Spirit.”

The Book stresses the uniqueness and importance of the Book of Acts as “a framework to reconstruct the ministry of the early church.” The story is then told of how the early Church was established, the efforts of the young Church at “Persuading the Jews”, combating telling lies by the members, and narrating the exploits of the Apostles under very challenging circumstances. As he puts it “The testimonies of the Apostles in Acts must serve as encouragement to us on what God can do with a yielded vessel. God desires for his glory to be seen all over the world, using his children who would desire to bring him glory.”

This is an orderly, well-researched and thorough academic work. Purged of all stylistic infelicities, Bible scholars, historians, students and the public will find it a helpful addition to the literature on Biblical studies. It is reader-friendly, inspirational and authoritative, and an exceptionally well-crafted addition to Devotionals.

I commend the author for a brilliant work done and I enthusiastically recommend the Book to all categories of users.

**Emeritus Professor Michael Omolewa, OON FCOL**

Chairman of the Board of Governors of Christ the Redeemer College, UK  
Member of Council of the International African Institute, UK

# INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Jesus was an amazing experience, for the disciples, the public and the religious leaders. The disciples engaged this life transforming ministry as pupils, learning from him, observing his practices, engaging in practical activities of ministry, and sticking intimately with him. The Apostles, in particular, were mentored by him for the brief period of about 3 years. They got to understand his person, vision and purpose. He spent this period preparing them for what was going to be an exciting ministry after he had left.

The disciples were awed, excited and sometimes perplexed by the person of Jesus. Many of his words they believed even though they may not have understood. They enjoyed the miracles, learned from his teaching and were excited about their new experiences. They participated in his ministry with spectacular results, for which they themselves marvelled. No wonder they could not understand his teachings about his need to die, be buried, resurrect, ascend and come back again. It all came together for them after his resurrection from the dead.

Reality appeared to have dawned on them when he spent 40 days with them after the resurrection reminding them of what he had taught them, rebuking them for their unbelief and instructing them about their new mission. Not only will they be followers, but they also now become leaders of a faith movement that was going to bless the whole world. He needed to encourage them and reassure them of his presence with them. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to take over from where he stopped. The Holy Spirit would baptise them, transform them, empower them, bring to their remembrance what he had taught them, among other things. They were going to be agents to spread the gospel all over the world beginning from Jerusalem.

He gave them advance warnings of the sufferings associated with this assignment and the preparation they needed to make to succeed. In the midst of fear, doubt and trust in his promises they bade him farewell on the mount of ascension.

The confirmation of the angels that Jesus would come back again were the last they heard before he disappeared from their sight. This event was filled with joy and trepidation.

It is within this backdrop that the disciples started their ministry. Of the multitudes that followed Jesus during his lifetime, the event of his trial and crucifixion had reduced the number to only 120. They decided to come together

in prayer and fasting, to wait for the promised Holy Spirit. Their wait was not long. Ten days after his ascension, the realisation of the promise came in an unexpected manner on the Day of Pentecost, an experience that became a memorial to them all through their lives.

The book of Acts gives us a framework to reconstruct the ministry of the early church. The Acts and the epistles provide the believer with information, not only to understand the ministry of the early church but also serve as a bridge between the early church and the contemporary church. The book reveals how the Messiah of the Jews came to have an overwhelmingly non-Jewish church. It describes how the salvation promised to Israel in the Old Testament was accomplished by Jesus and then extended to the Gentiles. Jesus' parting words not to leave the disciples as orphans was adequately demonstrated; leading his people by the Holy Spirit, to go out into the world, preach the gospel and invite all nations and peoples to live under the reign of Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Reflections on the Acts of the Apostles is a brief walk-through of the recorded accounts of how these inexperienced followers of Christ created a movement that today is the church of God. As pioneers, they created a framework for ministry, went through the stormy wave of religious prejudice and persecution. They had to manoeuvre through separating the practices of the teaching of Christ from the teaching of Moses. This resulted in incredible opposition from the religious establishment to their teaching and religious practices. The disciples had followed the Law of Moses most of their lives before Jesus came into the scene. They were persecuted for not observing the Law, branded a sect, and brought no small anger to the religious elites.

Jesus was true to the promise he made to them. He gave them the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The book of Acts could rightly be said to record the acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles as their companion: leading, guiding, empowering them. This advised the title of this book, *The Spirit and the Mission*. The Acts of the Apostles was about the mission of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Apostles, the major focus being the ministry of Paul. This book provides several templates that could advise a biblical ministry in our times, providing valuable information on how to start a church and disciple believers. The book has many lessons for church leaders and ministers in every generation.

These reflections are written as a contemporary, Pentecostal and devotional consideration of the book of Acts. It is written to the man on the pew and also has abundant insights for the theologian. It is unashamedly Pentecostal in orientation and literal in its approach to Scripture. It is designed for multiple uses – it can be used for personal daily devotion, small group discussions or a whole church walk



through of the book of Acts. It is void of theological jargon and written in an easy-to-read format.

The desire of the author is to provide reflections for a one-year daily devotional. This has meant that a deeper more expansive discussion was not possible. It is hoped that this approach would make the volume manageable for busy believers and students of the Bible. The author has endeavoured to put ideas together in concise grouping within each section. These reflections could stir the minds of readers to the unpredictability of the book itself. These 365 reflections are attempts to provide insights to the reader, provoke personal thoughts on sections being reflected on, provide a basis for personal application and allow room for further reflections.

This book does not follow a traditional style commentary, although it has the features of a commentary. Each set of reflections has five paragraphs designed to commentate on short passages and provoke the reader's personal reflection and application.

The author is aware that biblical reflections are not void of personal presuppositions on biblical interpretation and welcomes criticism and suggestions for future improvement. It is hoped that these brief reflections would stimulate the minds of readers to undertake a deeper personal study of the Book of Acts. It is also hoped that these reflections would be a useful resource for study or teaching for ministry. If this book contributes to better understanding of the ministry of the early church and stimulate application for our personal Christian life and ministry, the objective of these brief reflections would have been met.

There are many theological commentaries on the book of Acts but very few devotional reflections or commentary on the book. This book is designed to provide material for this space.

The author has used the New King James Version of the Bible in these reflections. It provides in contemporary English of the translation of the Authorised King James Version. As a result, there are no references to the version of the Bible in these reflections.



# *Reflections*

*on Acts of the Apostles*



*" . . . of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,  
until the day in which He was taken up . . . "*

These words are first for doing,  
before they are effective when taught.  
May the Spirit of the LORD empower you to  
become the desire of God's heart.

## THE GREAT LUKE- ACTS CONNECTION

# 01

*"The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen"* | ACTS 1:1-2

### Lessons:

1. The book of Acts is a narration of the story of the ministry of the Apostles with particular focus of Apostle Paul. It connects the end of the Gospel of Luke, the post resurrection ministry of Jesus, and the ministry of the early Apostles. The former account here refers to the book of Luke which was essentially written to the same audience. Acts serves as a good bridge between the gospels and the Epistles.
2. Theophilus to whom the book is addressed is described by theologians as a high government official who converted to Christianity. The book appears to have been written to clarify the faith to him and those who were close to him. A written treatise is an effective way to disciple new believers. This can become a reference for better understanding. This also advised the Apostles to write Epistles to their converts.
3. The things Jesus did and taught while on earth were recorded in the four gospels. His ministry was a public ministry that drew the attention of seekers and opposers alike. It was evidenced by the demonstration of divine power to save, heal, deliver, strengthen, etc and to teach the way of righteousness and victorious Christian living. Our own ministry must also follow this pattern – that of Power and Purity.
4. His post resurrection appearances for 40 days were mainly to his followers. He needed to strengthen them, remove their doubts and empower them for ministry. A strong thrust of these appearances was the affirmation of his love for them and patience with them. We too must be patient with the people we lead even if it means repeating the same thing over and over.
5. He appeared to have given them several instructions about the Kingdom, the nature of his ascension and glorification. The discourse included the expectations regarding the continuation of the gospel, the coming persecution, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for ministry and so on. Shortly after, he ascended into heaven where he will remain until he comes back again.

## 02 JESUS' CONTINUING FELLOWSHIP WITH THE DISCIPLES

*"3. . . to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."* | ACTS 1:3

### Lessons:

1. While alive, Jesus had repeatedly taught his disciples that he would die and rise from the dead as announced by the prophets. He needed to assure them by several physical engagements that indeed, although he died, he was alive. The four gospels gave several instances of his self-presentation to them to demonstrate that he was indeed risen and that he was real. This became a memorial for the disciples as they proclaimed the gospel.
2. During the period of his suffering, many of his disciples deserted him, either as a result of fear, disbelief or unwillingness to suffer. His suffering, the judgement, the pain, the crucifixion, etc were necessary for the salvation of mankind. There was no other way to pay for the sins of man and reconcile them to God. Thank God that he bore our sins on the cross and saved us from the power and consequences of sin.
3. These appearances were to reinforce the teachings he gave them when he was still with them physically. Human mind can hold information for a certain length of time and then forget. This is why we need to read the Bible over and over and attend church gatherings again and again to learn more and more and be involved in ministry where we put our learning into practice like Jesus did.
4. These post resurrection interactions are proof of his resurrection and the efficacy of the gospel message. He spent 40 days with them in which he encouraged, taught and gave them promises and instructions. All these were to sustain their faith through the difficult days ahead. Your personal encounter with the Lord is a great anchor for your faith. The more encounters you have, the stronger your faith.
5. During these visits, he also taught the disciples or reminded them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. These teachings about the Kingdom of God must be the foundation for our faith and ministry. May they remind us of his faithfulness and love. May these teachings about the kingdom sustain our faith the way it did for the disciples. May the insights in the lessons of the kingdom lift us up to a higher level of personal faith and ministry.

PREPARING FOR  
ASCENSION 1

## 03

*"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; <sup>s</sup> for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* | ACTS 1:4-5

**Lessons:**

1. Jesus needed to give his disciples some parting gifts. Major reasons why he visited them before his ascension included:
  - 1) To point them to the fulfilment in him, of what was written in the Law and the Prophets.
  - 2) To remind his disciples that they are witnesses to everything that had happened.
  - 3) To remind them what he taught them, bless them and send them out to preach the Good News.
2. The gospels and Acts chapter 1 recorded different accounts of what happened during his last days with them as he prepared for the ascension. He was comfortable in their company and continued to reassure them of his continuing presence. This memory helped the disciples during the difficult days that followed. It is important that leaders are comfortable in the company of those they lead. It brings confidence and trust.
3. His instruction to them not to leave Jerusalem recorded here and in Luke's gospel is especially important. He did not want to send them into the battlefield without proper equipment. He was sending them into a hostile territory, and they would need divine presence and cover for them to succeed. Without divine empowerment, we will achieve little for the kingdom. We must thirst and hunger for his presence.
4. Jesus' method was to remind them about what he had taught them. What he taught them during those 40 days were not necessarily new truths but a recap of what he had already taught them. We need to regularly remind ourselves of the teaching of the Scripture and not some new revelations outside of it. All we need to know are written in the Bible. The Holy Spirit reminds us of what is already written.
5. He here reminds them that they needed to be baptised with the Holy Spirit. To baptise is to be immersed in something. They were reminded to expect an experience that will be an immersion into the person of the Holy Spirit. He had taught them this in John chapters 14-16. The Christian Walk is a supernatural walk; we need supernatural empowerment to live it successfully. May you be empowered today.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.