

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

## Outpour at Pentecost

Acts 2:1–13

**Our passage today is Acts 2:1–13. I’ve entitled this message “Outpour at Pentecost.” This passage relays one of the seminal moments in human history. Full stop. No qualification.<sup>1</sup> We call this day, Pentecost. And as we’ll see in the text, Pentecost is the day that the promised Holy Spirit comes in power. It’s the day that the disciples have been anticipating and waiting for since Jesus ascended into heaven a few days before this in Acts 1. Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come. Well, he’s about to come.**

**But the promise of the Holy Spirit goes back further than that. Jesus told his disciples the night before he died, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16–17).<sup>2</sup> The promise of the Holy Spirit goes back even further than that to the days of John the Baptist, who said, “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt 3:11).<sup>3</sup> Actually the promise of the Holy Spirit goes back even farther than that to the prophecies of the OT (Joel 2:28–32).**

**Well now in Acts 2, after all this waiting, the day finally comes.<sup>4</sup> And the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as we’ll see in a moment, is an absolutely unmistakable, supernatural event. The Holy Spirit doesn’t come with a whisper. The Holy Spirit doesn’t come with a nudge or a soft hug. No, the Holy Spirit comes with fireworks. The Holy Spirit comes with wind and fire and pandemonium. And the church is birthed. And the world will never be the same again. That happens at Pentecost. That happens in our text today, Acts 2:1–13. So strap on your safety belts. This is a marvelous passage of Scripture.**

**And I want to approach our text today with a question as we get started. It’s a dangerous question. It’s the question “why?” “Why was the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost?” You can see that question in your notes with the answers that follow.**

**Why was the church birthed in this manner? Why didn’t God just use an advertising campaign to launch his church? Why didn’t he reveal his plans for the church to Caesar or to Herod and let them advance it militarily? Why pour out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost with a scene that could be described as utter pandemonium?**

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<sup>1</sup> Sproul, *Acts*, 44: “Pentecost was a watershed moment in the history of the church. The day of Pentecost was that moment in redemptive history when God unlocked the power of the Holy Spirit and gave it to His church, not just for those who were gathered there, but to the church of every age and to every Christian throughout time.”

<sup>2</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 95: “A significant parallel between Pentecost and the Lukan infancy narrative is the prominent role of the Spirit in both. John was to be filled with the Spirit for his role as witness to Christ (Luke 1:15), as were the various other witnesses to the significance of the child Jesus in God’s saving purposes—Elizabeth (1:41), Zechariah (1:67), and Simeon (2:25–35). Above all, Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit (1:35). Just as through the Spirit God and humanity were perfectly united in Christ, so through the same Spirit God was united with his church at Pentecost.”

<sup>3</sup> In the Luke 3:16–17 passage, John says, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” The partial fulfillment of this in Acts 2 should be clear. This is the case with Joel 2:28–32 in Peter’s sermon too. The baptism of the Holy Spirit part of John’s prophecy has taken place. Jesus’s judgment still awaits a future fulfillment.

<sup>4</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 130: “The NT signifies the central importance of the Holy Spirit for Christian life and ministry in various ways (e.g., Rom. 5:5; 7:6; 8:1–16; 1 Cor 2:10–16; 12:1–13; 14:1–40; Gal. 5:16–26; Tit. 3:5–6). However, apart from Acts 2:1–41; 10:47; 11:15–17, only John 20:22 is an independent witness to the Pentecost event portrayed in Acts 2.”

Some of you might respond to that question with a smart-alecky response, “Because God wanted it that way, Pastor Tony. That’s why!” Touche. That’s not a bad answer. But beyond that there are some clues in the text that give us a more detailed answer to that question “why.” Why was the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost?

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I’ll give you three answers to that question. Here’s the first.

**Why was the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost?**

1) To birth the church in an unmistakably **supernatural manner** (2:1–4)

Here’s what happened. Look with me at Acts 2:1.

<sup>1</sup> When<sup>5</sup> the day of Pentecost<sup>6</sup> arrived,<sup>7</sup> they were all together in one place.

Notice that they were “together” again. And the “they” is a reference to the 120 men and women from chapter 1. And “they” were together “in one place.” The “place” is probably the upper room where they were praying previously.<sup>8</sup> They were all *together*, obeying Jesus and waiting for the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

I can’t emphasize the word *together* enough! This concept of “togetherness” is a major theme in the book of Acts. We’ll see it a lot in this book. “Togetherness” is an important part of the early church’s beginning. They got together. They weren’t solitary or aloof. They weren’t secluded or unsociable, seeking God in isolation. They were together in one place. That’s important.

Also the fact that this was “the day of Pentecost,” [see that in **verse one**], that was important too. In Jewish culture, Pentecost (also called “The Day of Firstfruits” or “The Feast of Harvest” or “The Feast of Weeks”<sup>10</sup>) was one of the three major festivals in Jerusalem. There was Passover, Pentecost, and The Feast of Tabernacles.

Now the word “Pentecost” in Greek (πεντηκοστή) means “fiftieth.” That’s because it took place fifty days after Passover.<sup>11</sup> Coincidentally the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai approximately fifty days after the Passover.<sup>12</sup> So Pentecost has often been associated with the giving of the Law at Sinai.<sup>13</sup> As Christ is the fulfillment of Passover, the birth of the church is the fulfillment of Pentecost.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 113: “The infinitive-with-accusative phrase translated as ‘when the day of Pentecost had fully come’ [ESV: ‘when the day of Pentecost arrived] specifies the time of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in 1:5, 8. It refers to the morning of the full day of the feast, not the evening of the day before, when the feast began

<sup>6</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 95: “This is one of three uses of the term ‘Pentecost’ in the NT (see also Acts 20:16; 1 Cor. 16:8).”

<sup>7</sup> The Greek συμπληρώω here is present, passive, infinite. It could be translated “was fulfilled” or “was brought to fulfillment.” Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 96: “The time was the day of Pentecost, which Luke noted with a phrase that is literally translated ‘when the day of Pentecost was fulfilled.’ The ‘fulfillment’ language bears more weight than mere chronology as the fulfillment of the time of the divine promise for the gift of the Spirit.”

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 113: “Luke’s readers would assume that this was the ‘upper room’ of 1:13.”

<sup>9</sup> Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, chapter 3, Kindle: “During that ten-day wait between the Ascension and Pentecost they became increasingly aware of their need to be filled. During Christ’s life they had known his exhilarating presence. Even during the forty days between the Resurrection and Ascension they had repeatedly been blessed by his visits. But during these ten days the disciples undoubtedly felt empty. They were more aware than ever of the importance of their Savior’s presence — and now he was gone. The Master’s words recorded in John 15:5, ‘Apart from me you can do nothing,’ were forever embedded in their consciousness. But their profound emptiness, as trying as it was, made them ready for Pentecost.”

<sup>10</sup> Sproul, *Acts*, 41: “A week has seven days, so a week of weeks is seven times seven, which is forty-nine days. After those forty-nine days are accomplished, the fiftieth day is Pentecost, so fifty days after the great celebration of Passover is this feast.”

<sup>11</sup> There is the possibility that Pentecost occurred on a Sunday. For more on that possibility, see Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 61–2. It seems appropriate that the church would be birthed on a Sunday, since we’ve been meeting on Sundays ever since. But if that was the case, why wouldn’t Luke state that explicitly in Acts 2? Luke seems to highlight that later (see Acts 20:7).

<sup>12</sup> HEINRICH BULLINGER: “As the law was received on Mt. Sinai, so the Spirit was sent as a gift on Mt. Zion.” Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 20. Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 350: “Pentecost was inseparable from Passover and was marked specifically from the date of Passover (Lev. 23:16).”

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 19:1 says, “On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.” Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 174 states, “On the third new moon puts their arrival at Sinai about seven weeks after the exodus. This coincides with the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), which among other things celebrates the giving of the law (Lev. 23:15–21).” Although Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus: Commentary*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2014), 458 disputes this: “The most reasonable interpretation is that

In Hebrew, this OT feast was called חַג שָׁבֻעֹת [hag šavuot], which means “Feast of Weeks.” In the OT, it was a festival that celebrated the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest (see **Exod 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:15–21; Deut 16:9–12; 2 Chr 8:13**).<sup>15</sup> It was a day of solemn assembly when all work would cease.<sup>16</sup> It was a time to praise and worship God for the firstfruits of the harvest.<sup>17</sup> How interesting that this day was used for the firstfruits of the church harvest!<sup>18</sup>

Pentecost was also a time when many Jewish pilgrims would visit the city of Jerusalem from all over the world to worship. Some scholars say that there were more Jews in Jerusalem for Pentecost than even Passover, because the weather at that time of year was more favorable for travel. Strategically speaking it was a time when maximum impact could be made on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the visitors to Jerusalem.

As I said a few weeks ago, the population of Jerusalem is estimated to be somewhere around 100,000 people at this time. And the city would swell significantly to twice that amount during holidays and feasts. Some scholars believed that the population would swell even larger.<sup>19</sup>

So the day of Pentecost was strategically significant as the day for the Holy Spirit’s “coming out party.” Keep that in mind as we move through this passage.

Look at **verse 2**.

<sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from heaven [in other words this was a supernatural event] a sound like a mighty [Greek: “violent” or “forceful”] rushing wind<sup>20</sup>

**Imagine the sound of a tornado spinning and roaring through a small town. That’s what we have here. Or imagine the sound of hurricane-force winds swirling and rumbling to shore. It’s that kind of sound. It’s the kind of sound that would bring panic and alarm to a crowd, especially if it happened all of a sudden, like what we see here.**

and **it** filled the entire house where they were sitting

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they arrived on the fifteenth day of the third calendar month, that is, two months to the day after their departure from Egypt. The essential chronology is that they left Egypt on the morning after the Passover meal (the 14th day of the 1st month; 12:41), arrived at the Wilderness of Sin on the 15th day of the 2nd month (16:1), and arrived at Mt. Sinai on the 15th day of the 3rd month.”

<sup>14</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 131: “Jesus reinterprets the Passover to signify the inauguration of a new covenant in his blood (Lk. 22:15–20; cf. Je. 31:31–34), and the promised renewal of God’s relationship with Israel is experienced fifty days later through the gift of his Spirit, as a direct result of Jesus’ redemptive death and resurrection.”

MARTIN LUTHER: “Now in the Old Testament stories we see, as Paul says, what happened to the Jews was a foreshadowing of certain events which should take place in the New Testament, in the time of grace. Thus, just as we in the New Covenant have a different and better Easter lamb to eat, so also we have in the New Covenant a different and better Pentecost than they had in the Old Covenant.”

Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 19.

AUGUSTINE: Fifty days are reckoned from the celebration of the Passover (which, as Moses ordered, was accomplished by slaying the lamb, a type to signify the future passion of the Lord) to the day on which Moses received the law on tablets written by the finger of God. Likewise, when fifty days had passed from the slaying and resurrection of him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, the finger of God, that is, the Holy Spirit filled the believers gathered in one place.” See also the comments of LEO THE GREAT and BEDE in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 87.

<sup>16</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 97: “It was a day of ‘solemn assembly,’ and all work ceased. It was also one of the most popular pilgrim festivals, even more so than Passover, which was likely due to the improved weather conditions by the time of Pentecost.”

<sup>17</sup> Sproul, *Acts*, 41: “It was the Jewish Thanksgiving of the Old Testament. It was also called the Feast of Firstfruits because, since the arid climate of Palestine has two rainy seasons, they had two growing seasons, a former season and a latter season. They would celebrate at the former rains and again at the later rains.”

<sup>18</sup> CHRYSOSTOM: “Do you see the type? What is this Pentecost? The time when the sickle was to be put to the harvest and the fruits to be gathered. Look at the reality now, how the time has come to ply the sickle of the Word. The Spirit, keen-edged, came down in place of the sickle.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 20. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 106: “Just as Pentecost was the festival of the firstfruits, so these are the ‘firstfruits’ of the harvest in the Spirit. This connects with a third emphasis of the text: the spiritual harvest did not culminate at Pentecost. It began there and continued in ever-widening circles, from Jerusalem to Samaria to Antioch, from Cyprus to Asia Minor, from Greece to Rome, from Jews to Samaritans, from God-fearers to Gentiles.”

<sup>19</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 116: “Some scholars estimate that one million pilgrims visited Jerusalem for Pentecost.”

<sup>20</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 114: “The sound they heard was like the sound of a strong, violent wind (πνοή) rushing along. This ‘wind’ is not identical with the Spirit—the Greek term (πνεῦμα), which means both ‘spirit’ and ‘wind,’ is not used here; rather, the term ‘wind’ signifies the coming of the Spirit.”

Now what's the "it" here? It's not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an "it." It's actually the "sound of the rushing wind." There's only one subject in the previous clause. There's only one noun in the Greek nominative case and that's the "sound." The "sound" filled the house—not the wind and not the Holy Spirit. Not yet anyway. So you have this sound like a violent rushing wind filling the house, but no actual wind yet. That must have been pretty terrifying for these 120 disciples.<sup>21</sup>

Look at **verse 3**.

<sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them [each of the 120].

Notice the sound was *like* a mighty rushing wind. The tongues were "as of" fire. Luke is using similes here to describe the indescribable. **"They were kind of like this. They reminded me of something like that."** How do you describe the indescribable? How do you express the inexpressible? I don't know. Luke's doing the best he can with these similes.

Now this description of "*divided* tongues as of fire" is absolutely fascinating. I wonder, what were they divided from? Each other maybe? Was it a huge flame of fire that divided into 120 tongues? Was it one huge tongue of fire, and then it divided into 120 tongues? I don't know.

**Here's what I envision in my brain. It's a little dangerous venturing into my brain, but let me just share with you how I see this.**<sup>22</sup> I see in that upper room, a miniature "pillar of fire," similar to the pillar of fire that led the Israelites in the wilderness.<sup>23</sup> God often used fire for divine theophanies (i.e. appearances of God) in the OT. Remember the burning bush and Moses?<sup>24</sup> Similar to that, God uses fire as a theophany in this episode of the NT. This is God's *shekinah* glory coming down.

So I see this singular pillar of fire in the middle of the room that slowly takes the shape of a tongue, a human tongue. And all of a sudden that singular tongue divides into two and then into four and keeps dividing until there are 120 individual tongues of fire resting above every man and woman in the room.

But these fiery tongues didn't just rest above them. **Verse 3** says they "rested on each one of them," meaning they came to rest inside each of them. Later on when they are speaking in tongues, the tongues of fire aren't visible to those listening. So the fiery tongues must have disappeared inside of them. This is God's *shekinah* glory coming down. And now that *shekinah* glory indwells his people!<sup>25</sup>

Jesus prophesied this in **Luke 24:49**, when he said, "I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." **They were clothed with this power. The tongues of fire came to rest upon them. They were "clothed" with tongues of fire. In other words, the fire indwelt them.**

Look at **verse 4**.

<sup>4</sup> And they were all filled<sup>26</sup> with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues<sup>27</sup> as the Spirit gave them utterance.

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<sup>21</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 94: "That houses could hold a group of 120 or so (Acts 1:15) has been shown by an unearthed mansion in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, with its meeting hall of 11 by 6.5 meters (Menzies 1991: 208–9n5; Avigad 1984: 95–103)."

<sup>22</sup> Here's how Brian Vickers imagines it: "I have an image in my mind of the apostles hearing something like the sound of wind from the inside, with walls and roofs creaking, windows rattling, and the sound of rushing air shaking everything in its path, straining to get past. Maybe to us it would have sounded like an oncoming train" (Vickers, "Acts" in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 351).

<sup>23</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 98: "God's presence comes with fire in the burning bush of Exod. 3:2 (Acts 7:30), the pillar of the fire in Exod. 13:21 (Deut. 4:33; 5:24–26; 18:16), before Elijah (1 Kings 18:38), and in association with Ezekiel's call (Ezek. 1:13–14, 27). God is described as a consuming fire in Deut. 4:24 and 9:3 as an image of judgment."

<sup>24</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 133: "This visionary experience is best understood against the background of passages like Exodus 3:2–5; 19:18; 24:17; 40:38, where fire symbolizes the presence of the Holy One to communicate with his people and guide them."

<sup>25</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 63: "This was an appearance of the Shechinah glory, the visible manifestation of God's presence. The result was that it sat upon each one of them; in other words, a tongue that looked like fire rested on each apostle."

<sup>26</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 133: "Luke uses the verb 'fill' (*pimplēmi*) in a variety of ways, but mostly to describe filling with certain emotions or qualities (Lk. 4:28; 5:26; 6:11; Acts 3:10; 5:17; 13:45; 19:29) or filling with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9)."

<sup>27</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 63: "The word 'tongues' means that the apostles began to speak in a language other than their own native tongue. It was a real, known, spoken language with all the rules of grammar, diction, and syntax common to all languages. It was not merely the rapid repetition of three or four syllables that is passed off as tongues today."

Alright so let's take a breath here and think this through. What's going on? Well, let me just say that this whole event in **Acts 2** is absolutely otherworldly. The disciples encountered something unmistakably divine. God showed up. God showed up in this place visibly and audibly and even verbally as they were given utterance by the Holy Spirit in foreign tongues.<sup>28</sup>

This wasn't the product of human intelligence or activity. **This wasn't an alien from outer space. This was A.I. either. This wasn't manufactured by human ingenuity.** This was an act of God. This was a taste of the divine. And God wanted the church to be birthed by this supernatural, otherworldly, divine-and-definitely-not-human event at Pentecost. **Why was the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost? To birth the church in an unmistakably supernatural manner.**

Now you might say in response to that first point, **"Why did God want to birth the church in an unmistakably supernatural manner?" "Why did God do it that way?"** Because he wanted the church to operate with his power. Because he wanted the church to accomplish *his* mission in *his* power for *his* glory. Because God wanted to differentiate the church from the other human institutions and assemblies that lack his supernatural, transcendent power.

So when 3,000 people get saved at Pentecost at the end of **Acts 2**, and when the world is turned upside down in the coming years, who gets the credit for that work? Not Peter. Not the Apostles. Not the church. God gets the credit for that.

You know when the disciples gathered around and discussed what happened here nobody said, **"Yeah, I'm pretty amazing. Don't you love how I made those tongues of fire come down on all of us!"** Peter didn't say that. The men didn't say that. The women didn't say that. The credit for this, the glory for this event, goes to God.

**Now let me be clear about something. I believe that Pentecost here in Acts 2 is a once-for-all-time event. I'm not praying for God to do the exact same thing that happened at Pentecost here in San Antonio. But I am asking God to do amazing things in our church by the power of the Holy Spirit and for his glory. And you should be asking God to do that too.**

**Listen, hear me on this. "We are not to teach the experience of the apostles; we're to experience the teaching of the apostles."<sup>29</sup> I think there's wisdom in that statement and it can help us avoid errors in the experiential realm. Let me say it again. "We are not to teach the experience of the apostles, we're to experience the teaching of the apostles." And I'm not here, as your pastor, to tell you to repeat the experience of the apostles; I'm here to relay to you the teaching of the apostles.**

**God did something at Pentecost that could only be attributed to him. The glory could only be applied to him. His imprint, his signature was unmistakable on that day. And my prayer is "Do something like that again, Lord, something that is unmistakably you. And we will glorify you and only you for it."<sup>30</sup>**

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**Here's another reason why God chose to pour out his Spirit at Pentecost. God wanted to birth the church in an unmistakably supernatural manner, and he also wanted...**

2) To launch the church with immediate **international impact** (2:5-11)

The timing of this event was extremely important. It was timed in such a way, at Pentecost, that the Holy Spirit's outpouring would have maximum international impact. Here's what Luke writes in **verse 5**.

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<sup>28</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 112: "The description of visual and audible phenomena in vv. 3-4 has been compared with the rhetorical strategy of ekphrasis which employs language that appeals as much to the eye as to the ear."

<sup>29</sup> This statement is not original to me. I've heard it at different times in my ministry. But it's difficult to identify who to attribute this saying to.

<sup>30</sup> Sproul, *Acts*, 43-4: "Archie Perish, St. Andrew's prayer mentor, said that most Christians look at the day of Pentecost as something marvelous that happened once in the past but has no current significance. He pointed out that others, such as Pentecostals, seek an almost constant renewal of Pentecost. He concluded by saying that the church fails to understand the ongoing, lasting significance of that moment... That wind, that fire, is as much for us today as it was for those gathered in the upper room. We are to be people of the Holy Spirit, as well as of the Son and the Father."

<sup>5</sup> Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.<sup>31</sup>

Like I said earlier, lots of Jews would pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Pentecost. Some would even come for Passover and then stay fifty days later for Pentecost. Luke describes these men as devout or pious men from every nation under heaven.<sup>32</sup> It was not an accident that God unleashed the power of the Holy Spirit on this day where many were gathered in Jerusalem for this sacred festival.<sup>33</sup>

At this time in history, there were as many or more Jews who lived outside the ancient boundaries of Israel as who lived inside. That wasn't always the case. In the days of David and Solomon, almost all Jews lived inside Israel's boundaries. But the landscape of Jewish life changed after the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles.

In 722 B.C. the Assyrians came to Israel and displaced all the northern Israelites. Many of those Israelites intermingled with other nations close by and became the Samaritans of Jesus's day. We'll talk more about the Samaritans in the days ahead.

In 587 B.C. the Babylonians conquered Judah and began to take Jewish exiles back to Babylon. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were a few of those exiles as well as the heir to the Davidic throne. After Babylon fell, the Persians allowed the Jews to return to Israel, but many Jews stayed in Persia or Babylon or wherever else they settled down. During the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, and the Roman Empire, Jews began to migrate all over Europe and Asia. They were called the Jewish Diaspora.

And so during the days of Jesus and the early church, there were Jews living throughout the Roman Empire. So when Paul travelled throughout the Empire, he preached the gospel in synagogues and Jewish assemblies hundreds of miles from Jerusalem.

Well on the day of Pentecost, Jewish representatives from every nation under heaven were in Jerusalem. How convenient for the spread of the gospel! So there were all these Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem, and look at **verse 6**.

<sup>6</sup> And at **this** sound the multitude came together

Maybe "this sound" is a reference to the sound of the violent rushing wind. Maybe it's a reference to the sound of 120 disciples speaking in different tongues. Maybe it's both. Whatever the case the noise of all this ruckus brought a multitude of people to the disciples.

The disciples, at some point, must have moved out of the upper room. And now they are speaking in tongues out on the street loud enough to cause a commotion. And the crowds started to gather.

and they **[the Jewish pilgrims]** were bewildered,<sup>34</sup> because each one was hearing **[these 120 disciples]** speak in his own language.

This is like a great reversal of the tower of Babel, right?<sup>35</sup> Instead of people being confused at all the different languages being spoken that they *can't* understand, they are confused at all the different languages spoken that each *can* understand in his own native tongue.<sup>36</sup> And they are bewildered by this.

**Sanja and I used to travel a lot out of O'Hare Airport in Chicago. And we would always marvel at how many languages we would hear there. We'd even try to guess sometimes what languages people were speaking. Sanja was always better than me at guessing that. And on occasion, Sanja would hear her own language being spoken, either Croatian or something close like Bosnian or Serbian. And when that**

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<sup>31</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 99: "'Under heaven' (ὕπὸ ὑποκάτω τὸν οὐρανόν, *hypo/hypokatō ton ouranon*) is a biblical phrase (Deut. 2:25; 9:14; 29:20)."

<sup>32</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 67: "The verse says that these were "devout men," which indicates that they were Old Testament type saints in the same way that Simeon was an Old Testament saint, for the same terminology was used of him in Luke 2:25."

<sup>33</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 101 sees this differently: "These devout Jews are described as 'staying' in Jerusalem. The word usually implies residency, making it unlikely that these were merely pilgrims who had come to the feast. They were rather Diaspora Jews who had returned to the city of the temple to dwell there." So also Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 135.

<sup>34</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 116: "The verb used in v. 6 (συνγέω) means 'to be amazed, surprised, excited, agitated,' and is also used in the story of the confusion of languages at Babel [Gen 11:7, LXX]."

<sup>35</sup> BEDE: "The church's humility recovers the unity of languages that the pride of Babylon had shattered." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 90–91: "In a reversal of the scattering that took place at Babel, the Jewish pilgrim festivals, like Pentecost, brought people from the far corners of the earth to worship God. What is new here is that from now on, people would not need to come back to some central place to worship God—and in the Hebrew tongue. Rather, they could go to the far corners of the earth and worship God in their own languages."

happened there was a great joy that came over her. She loved hearing people speaking in her native language, in her heart language, especially when there was this cacophony of voices and languages in the airport terminal.

I think it's hard for us in America to understand that. It's hard to really understand unless you're bilingual and have spent time in a foreign country. By the way, if someone speaks two languages their called "bilingual," right? And if they speak three languages, they're trilingual. But what if they only speak one language? What do you call that person? The answer is, American. If you speak one language you're an American.

For Jews who grew up in Persia or Babylon or Rome, that native language was their heart language. Even if they had learned Hebrew or Aramaic or Greek as well, they must have been overjoyed at the sound of their native, heart language being spoken.

But notice, Luke doesn't say "overjoyed." He says "bewildered." And if that wasn't enough, look at verse 7.

<sup>7</sup>And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?<sup>37</sup>

Galileans were stereotyped as unsophisticated "know-nothings" from the rustic backwaters of Israel.<sup>38</sup> So how in the world would "**Galileans**" be able to speak so many languages, languages that probably few of them had ever even heard before?<sup>39</sup> The answer is that this must be a miracle.<sup>40</sup> Something divine was taking place. God was trying to get their attention.

And notice too, they are speaking in discernible language. This is not a "heavenly language." And this is not unintelligible gibberish. They are speaking clearly with the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of a language they never learned, and they shouldn't know how to speak.<sup>41</sup>

Look at verse 9.

<sup>9</sup>Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome,<sup>42</sup> <sup>11</sup>both Jews and proselytes

By the way, a "proselyte" was a Gentile convert to Judaism. A Gentile male could convert to Judaism by being circumcised. So these weren't just God-fearers. These are converts. These are proselytes to Judaism. These are people who are seriously committed to the Jewish faith. And some of them are about to become serious Jesus-followers.

So, verse 11 says,

Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians<sup>43</sup> —we [that's the gathered crowd] hear them [that's the 120 disciples] telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 102: "Added in this verse is the phrase ἐν ᾗ ἐγεννήθημεν (*en hē egennēthēmen*, in which we were born) [ESV: 'his own native'] to underscore that the native language is meant. God is using for each group the most familiar linguistic means possible to make sure the message reaches to the audience in a form they can appreciate. Thus the miracle underscores the divine initiative in making possible the mission God has commissioned. In a real sense, God is bringing the message of the gospel home to those who hear it."

<sup>38</sup> CHRYSOSTOM: "He of Galilee, he of Bethsaida, he, the uncouth rustic, has overcome them all." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 25. Vickers, "Acts" in *John-Acts*, ESVEC, 354 disagrees, "Calling them out as Galileans is probably not a commentary on their educational background and therefore not connected to the council's later identification of Peter and John as "uneducated" (4:13). The surprise is that a group of people from a known place in Israel, where locals speak Aramaic and Greek, is suddenly speaking multiple other languages and dialects."

<sup>39</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 68: "They could tell by the accent of the apostles that they were all from Galilee (Mt. 26:73; Mk. 14:70; Lk. 22:59). The Galilean accent was very distinct, characterized by confusing guttural sounds."

<sup>40</sup> Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 89: "Once again God had broken earthly stereotypes of greatness and chosen people not held in high esteem in society in order to lead in a historic event (see 1 Cor. 1:26–31)."

<sup>41</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 97: "This immediate use of other languages is how Acts discusses tongues and is different from what 1 Cor. 14 describes. Paul describes a two-step ecstatic process associated with tongues speaking: step one is the utterance in the tongue, and step two is the separate gift of interpretation to be used for the edification of the church and the conviction of unbelievers. Without interpretation, tongues are not to be used in the assembly."

<sup>42</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 103: "The list mixes peoples (Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Romans, Cretans, and Arabians) with lands (Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and Libya)."

Here is a map of all the nations represented in **Acts 2**. Apart from Galilee and Jerusalem, there are sixteen geographical coordinates noted in the text. And generally speaking these coordinates are listed east to west.



**Nations Represented at Pentecost<sup>45</sup>**

There's **1) Parthia**, **2) Media**, and **3) Elam**. These are on the far east of the map in what is now modern-day Iran. **4) Mesopotamia** is west of there in what is today modern-day Iraq. **5) Judea** is west of there and includes all that is in and around Jerusalem. Northwest of there, in modern day Turkey, you can see **6) Cappadocia**, **7) Pontus**, **8) Asia**, **9) Phrygia** and **10) Pamphylia**. There were many Jews in these areas, and that's why Paul goes there for his missionary journeys later in **Acts**. **11) Egypt**, **12) Libya**, and **13) Cyrene** are south of there, across the Mediterranean in northern Africa. It's estimated that Egypt had approximately 100,000 Jews living there at this time. Jesus's parents fled to Egypt in Jesus's youth before returning to Israel (**Matt 2:13–23**). The city of Alexandria in Egypt was a prominent Jewish settlement and later became a center for Christianity. **14) Rome** is northwest of Egypt and straight west of Turkey.<sup>46</sup> There was a large population of Jews in Rome as well. **15) Crete** is there in the middle of the Mediterranean. And **16) Arabia** is south of Judea right next to Egypt.<sup>47</sup>

This list of nations is not exhaustive in terms of where Jewish populations were found. But it covers an extensive amount of Europe and Asia. Basically it covers almost every major place where a Jewish population might be found.<sup>48</sup> And Jews from all over the world were here in Jerusalem at Pentecost hearing the mighty works of God in their own, native languages. Did God have purpose in that or what? God wanted to launch the church at a time he knew there would be an immediate, international impact.

<sup>43</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 120: "The connection between Cretans and Arabs, which has puzzled many interpreters, can be explained in the context of the table of nations in Gen 10, a text which provided the basic framework for Jewish geography. Both peoples are descendants of Mizraim (Egypt) who settled in the contiguous territories of Palestine (the Caphtorim, giving rise to the Philistines) and Nabatea (the Arabs, descending from Ishmael, the son of Abraham by Hagar the Egyptian)."

<sup>44</sup> Vickers, "Acts" in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 354: "Thus both the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3) and the means of that fulfillment begin in earnest here. The nations are gathered, and each hears the 'mighty works of God' (Acts 2:11) in its native language. The ultimate 'blessing' to the nations is the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19–20; Luke 24:46–49; Gal. 3:8), a blessing carried through his people."

<sup>45</sup> Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 24, 2025. Numerical data points were added by the author.

<sup>46</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 104: "Josephus, *J.W.* 2.16.4 §§345–401; *Ant.* 12.3.1–4 §§119–53; 14.6.2–7.2 §§100–118; Philo, *Embassy* 36 §282). Bruce (1988a: 118) estimates the Jewish population of Rome to be forty to sixty thousand. That is out of about a million citizens in the city, huge by ancient and relatively modern standards (for comparison, London did not reach a million until the early nineteenth century). A proselyte is a Gentile who has received circumcision (if male) and a purifying baptism and has offered a sacrifice (in other words, a Gentile who has become a Jew). More women were proselytes than men."

<sup>47</sup> For more detail on the Jewish populations and settlements (the diaspora) in these regions, see Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 117–20.

<sup>48</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 137: "No mention is made of Greece or Macedonia or Syria, where there were also sizeable Jewish communities."

Why does he want to do that? Well, these are the firstfruits of the Great Commission. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and make disciples” (Matt 28:18–20). Jesus said, “you will be my witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).<sup>49</sup> Eventually the disciples will go to the ends of the earth. But at the birth of the church, God brings the ends of the earth to the freshly minted church in Jerusalem. It’s a telling sign of things to come.

Now I will say this. On the day of Pentecost the church experienced geographical diversity. But the church hasn’t yet experienced ethnic diversity. That comes later in Acts when the mission spreads first to Samaritans (see Acts 8:25ff). And then later when it spreads to uncircumcised Gentiles (see Acts 10:1ff). More on that later in the book of Acts.

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Now look at verse 12.

<sup>12</sup> And all were amazed and perplexed,

Were the people amazed by all this? Did you notice how many times Luke repeats a statement like that. The people were “bewildered” (2:6), “amazed” (2:7), “astonished” (2:7), “amazed” again (2:12), and also, here’s a new word, “perplexed” (2:12). Luke wants you to grasp just how awesome an event this was.

<sup>12</sup> And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup> But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Wow, that’s insulting. Actually it’s more insulting than you realize. First of all, it’s early in the morning, as Peter says later. Nobody gets drunk in the morning in this culture. Plus the reference here is to “new wine.” The Greek word here indicates cheap, only partially fermented wine. So not only are they accused of getting drunk; they are accused of getting drunk with cheap, partially fermented wine!<sup>50</sup>

And isn’t that just how it goes sometimes? Even the most miraculous events in human history have detractors. Some search for understanding in those moments. Others dismiss them with contempt. That’ll always be the case on this side of eternity. Don’t be surprised when people dismiss the supernatural. Don’t be surprised when people dismiss the gospel.<sup>51</sup> That’s been happening for centuries.<sup>52</sup>

But for most in this scene there is a longing for answers. The confusion and excitement of Pentecost leads to existential angst in their soul: “What’s the meaning of all this?” “Why is this happening?” And for those who are seriously looking for answers, God supplies them in the verses that follow.<sup>53</sup>

In verse 14 it says,

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven

Is anyone surprised here that Peter stood up to speak? Peter was born and chosen for this moment!

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup> For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

That’s a great line from Peter here. “They’re not drunk; it’s only three hours after sunrise.” Why would Peter say that? **Because nobody in ancient Israel says, “It’s five o’clock somewhere.”** That’s because nobody drinks or gets drunk in the morning.

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<sup>49</sup> Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 354: “The path from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth begins to be paved at Pentecost.”

<sup>50</sup> See Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 120–1.

<sup>51</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 106: “As is often the case when God works, many who see it have no clue what is taking place, making light of it. No one should be surprised at such a variety of reactions when God works. Some do not see what God is doing even after it is explained.”

<sup>52</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 104: “Here for the first time appears a motif that runs throughout Luke–Acts—in itself, without the element of personal faith and experience, even the most profound aspects of the good news are not self-confirming but can lead to skepticism and even rejection (cf. Luke 24:11; Acts 17:32; 26:24).”

<sup>53</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 105: “One group in the crowd does not understand what is taking place and admits it. They raise the question ‘What does this mean?’ or, in effect, ‘What might this be?’ (using an indicative for a direct question; BDF §386.1). This is a rare idiom that refers to trying to understand the meaning of an event (BDAG 448 §5; Acts 17:20). So this verse reinforces verses 7–8 and shows the audience’s inability to discern what is taking place, setting up Peter’s speech.”

No, something else is going on here. And Peter spends the next thirty verses in **Acts 2** telling them what's happening and what they need to do to find peace and reconciliation with God. In other words, he preaches the gospel!<sup>54</sup> And people get saved!

Now I'm going to stop here and pick up next week with Peter's sermon. It's a great sermon, and I want to dedicate a whole service to it next week. But let me give you a third point from our message today.

*Why was the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost?*

1) To birth the church in an unmistakably supernatural manner (2:1-4)

2) To launch the church with immediate international impact (2:5-11), and thirdly...

3) To provide the church an unavoidable **preaching opportunity** (1:12-13)

Here's what I mean by that. People are left confused, bewildered, and amazed at what just happened. What are the disciples going to do about it? Well, they can't just go back and hide out in the upper room at this point. The secret is out. God has moved in their midst. God has brought such a disturbance right into the heart of Jerusalem that the residents are crying out for an explanation. And now, empowered by the Holy Spirit, with fearless courage, and even sanctified bravado, Peter steps to the plate and preaches the gospel. **And Christian churches and Christian leaders have been preaching the gospel ever since.**

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So what do we make of this passage of Scripture? What can we say applicationally about this fascinating, confusing, and altogether extraordinary event recorded in God's Word? Let's flesh this out a little bit together.

I'm going to give you, before we close, three applications from this passage. Let's move from information to transformation. Let's move from exposition to application, and think through some ways that we can be doers of God's Word and not just hearers only.

In terms of application, write this down first.

**Application:**

1) **Marvel** at the once-for-all-time event of Pentecost

**We talked already about the once-for-all-time nature of this event. We're not asking God for a repeat of Pentecost. But we are asking him to move in our midst in a similar unmistakable way. And let's not forget to respond to this once-for-all-time event with awe and wonder. Let's praise God for the miracle of Pentecost. Let's worship him for the birth of the church in Jerusalem. Let's celebrate the way the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples in such an uncanny way.**<sup>55</sup>

**Celebrate also the testimony that was given in multiple languages to a multitude of people. Celebrate the 3,000 that came to Christ that day through Peter's preaching. Recount the Word of God to your children. Recount the work of God to your family, so that you can share together in the wonder of God. What happened at Pentecost was awesome! Let them sense your awe. Let them see the way you marvel at what God has done and what is recorded in his Word.**

**One of the things that Sanja and I worked hard at when we use to read the Bible to Alastair at night is expressing the wonder of God's Word and the marvel of God's work in our world. It can be a struggle sometimes after a long day to do that. Honestly, we've failed sometimes to convey these truths in a way that was captivating and compelling. But it's something worth fighting for, because we wanted our son to see just how awesome our God is.**

**So marvel at the once-for-all-time event of Pentecost. But also, secondly,**

2) **Ask** God to move in our church in unmistakable ways

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<sup>54</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 92: "Peter's explanation is the first missionary speech in Acts and one of the most significant because of its detailed explanatory use of the OT and its possession of the core elements of gospel preaching."

<sup>55</sup> Vickers, "Acts" in *John-Acts*, ESVEC, 351: "The apostles' experience of the Spirit is, by necessity of their era, different than it is for every succeeding generation. This is not to say their experience is totally different or unconnected to the receiving of the Spirit seen after Peter's sermon, only that this instance is a special equipping for a special group of people."

Ask God to open up avenues for evangelism for you that you couldn't open up yourself. Ask God to awaken gifts and abilities inside of you that can only be attributed to God. Ask God to bring about revival in this community that isn't dependent on someone's personality or someone's financing, but is only attributable to God moving in working in our midst.

Why is that important? Why do we want that? So that God can receive the glory for what happened when all is said and done.

Remember what I said earlier. This is a great reminder for us. Nobody patted Peter and the disciples on the back after they spoke in tongues. Nobody praised them for their miraculous activity. The very notion of that would be ludicrous. Pentecost was a God-thing. Pentecost was all about God's glory manifested in earthen, human vessels.

In fact instead of being praised, the disciples got mocked. People said they were drunk. How's that for doing God's work for God's glory! You get laughed at by some! But who cares? "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Rom 3:4). And "He must increase; I must decrease" (John 3:30). And let's pray for God to move powerfully in our church in unmistakable ways.

Thirdly. Here's a final application.

3) Ephesians 5:18 – "**Be filled** with the Holy Spirit"

Notice I'm just quoting a Scripture there with that third application point. I want to tread lightly on this third point because I know that the nature of the Holy Spirit's work in the church today is a hotly debated topic. Acts 2:1–13 is one of the most debated passages in Scripture. Christians interpret and apply these passages in very different ways.

And before I tell you about my own position on the difference between the "Baptism of the Spirit" and "Being filled with the Spirit," let me just say that this is an issue that brothers and sisters in Christ disagree about. We can agree to disagree on these issues, and still extend the right hand of fellowship to others.

Here's a great quote for you, I use it often, "**In essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, charity.**" In essential doctrinal matters like "the deity of Christ," "substitutionary atonement," "The resurrection of the saints," "authority of Scripture," "the Trinity," etc., we need unity. We need conviction without compromise.

In secondary matters like women in ministry, church governance, the use of sign gifts, and the baptism of the Spirit, we need liberty. We need the freedom to agree to disagree. And in all things, we need charity (i.e. love).

For the record, here's what I believe about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a one-time event in the life of a Christian.<sup>56</sup> When a person gets saved they are sealed with the

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<sup>56</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 64n2: "There were three specific ministries of the Holy Spirit among humanity in the Hebrew Scriptures. The first ministry was that of indwelling. The Holy Spirit was *in* some people. He did not indwell all believers, but He indwelt some, such as Joshua (Num. 27:18), Daniel (Dan. 6:3), and the prophets (1 Pet. 1:10–11). The second ministry was that the Holy Spirit came upon some people. He indwelt some, He came *upon* others. For example, He came upon Othniel (Judg. 3:9–10), Gideon (Judg. 6:34), Jephthah (Judg. 11:29), Samson (Judg. 13:24–25; 14:6, 19; 15:14), Saul (1 Sam. 10:9–10), and David (1 Sam. 16:13). The third ministry was that of *filling*. Examples of the Holy Spirit's ministry of filling people are Exodus 28:3; 31:3, and 35:30–31... There is a key distinction between the Holy Spirit's work in the New Testament and His work in the Hebrew Scriptures, which is brought out in John 7:37–39. This passage records the promise that someday the Holy Spirit would be in all believers, but Yeshua pointed out that the Spirit had not yet been given. This does not mean the Spirit had not been active, because He was active throughout the time of the Hebrew Scriptures and in the Gospels. Yet, at that time, the Holy Spirit was not doing something which He would do in the New Testament believer after the Messiah's ascension... What Yeshua meant in John 7:37–39 is explained in John 14:16–17. When Yeshua spoke these words, the Holy Spirit was *with* the believer. Later, He would be *in* the believer. That is the key distinction between the Holy Spirit's work during Old Testament times and New Testament times. As of Acts 2, the Holy Spirit indwells all believers. He did not indwell all believers prior to Acts 2, though He did indwell some, as can be seen from 2 Kings 2:9–12 (see also Num. 11:17, 25; 27:18). Those who did have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit did not necessarily have it permanently. For example, in 1 Samuel 16:14, the Holy Spirit departed from Saul. In Psalm 51:11, King David prayed: *take not your holy Spirit from me*. The Holy Spirit did indwell David, but his prayer shows that the Holy Spirit could also leave David. David's prayer was therefore a valid prayer at that time, but it is not a valid prayer for believers now. It should be noted (and will be discussed later in this

Holy Spirit. They are indwelt by the Spirit. Both of those statements are interchangeable descriptions of the baptism of the Spirit.

Now water baptism is the outward sign of an inward work. In our theological tradition, water baptism follows Spirit baptism. We are credobaptists—credo means “I believe.” Water baptism doesn’t save you; Spirit baptism saves you. And only those who have been Spirit-baptized, who have been born again, are then water baptized.<sup>57</sup>

Now, just to round out this conversation. There are some Christians, fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, who believe in a second baptism of the Spirit. This is a post-conversion filling of the Spirit that accelerates their sanctification. Sometimes that second baptism is associated with speaking in tongues. I don’t believe personally in a “second-baptism of the Spirit,” but I do believe in subsequent fillings of the Spirit after conversion.

For example look with me at **Acts 4:8** where the Bible says that Peter was “filled with the Holy Spirit” before he begins to preach again. Obviously Peter was already saved. He had already been baptized with the Spirit at this point in **Acts 2**. But God saw fit to subsequently fill him with the Spirit for the purpose of preaching. Look also in **Acts 4:31** where the Bible says that as the believers were praying for boldness they were all “filled with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>58</sup> This is also a post-conversion filling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

**Experientially I have sensed multiple times in my life a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit. Some people might call it an “anointing,” but I prefer the term “filling.” I have sensed the Holy Spirit fill me and empower me at different times in my life, and at times that has brought me to tears. Oftentimes on Sunday morning, I sense a move of God in my Spirit that I can’t even articulate. It doesn’t happen every Sunday, but it happens often enough that I cry out to God to bring it every time I preach his Word.<sup>60</sup>**

**So when Paul says “Be filled with the Spirit” in Ephesians 5:18, I believe that he means for us to be so sensitive to the leading of the Spirit that you live a flesh-killing, Spirit-controlled life on this earth. He’s not telling the Ephesian to get saved.<sup>61</sup> They are saved. He’s telling them to walk more closely in the Spirit.<sup>62</sup> And a flesh-killing, Spirit-controlled life can be accelerated and accentuated by divine encounters with God similar to what we see in the book of Acts. Nothing propels Spirit-led lifestyles like an encounter with the transcendent God of the Universe.**

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chapter) that this type of indwelling was not relevant to salvation. Unlike indwelling, salvation is directly related to the Spirit’s work of regeneration.”

<sup>57</sup> Sproul, *Acts*, 41: “When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and inquired about salvation, Jesus said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’ (John 3:5). In other words, a necessary condition for becoming a Christian is being born of the Spirit.”

<sup>58</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 134: “Someone who is already filled with or full of the Spirit can receive a further filling or enabling for a particular ministry (cf. Acts 4:31). So ‘our western logical concept that something which is full cannot be filled any further is misleading if applied to the Spirit.’”

<sup>59</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 98: “Sometimes this experience is described as a ‘baptism’ in the Spirit (1:5; 11:16). In other instances the word ‘poured out’ is used (2:17f.; 10:45) or ‘came upon’ (8:16; 10:44; 11:15) or simply ‘receive’ (2:38; 10:47). All these instances refer to new converts and point to the Spirit’s coming in various ways, not always signified by tongues, as a permanent gift to every believer. This should be distinguished from other references to ‘filling,’ where the Spirit comes upon one who is already a believer in a time of special inspiration and testimony to the faith (cf. 4:8, 31; 7:55; 13:9).”

<sup>60</sup> Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, chapter 3, Kindle: “Each time we acknowledge our inadequacy, he fills us with more of his Spirit so we can carry on his work. He will not fill our sails with the wind of the Holy Spirit unless we admit that the sails are empty. This requires humility and confession.”

<sup>61</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 390–1 makes clear that the Ephesian readers “have already been told that they have been ‘sealed’ by the Holy Spirit, and that they must not ‘grieve’ him (1:13; 4:30). Now they are bidden to be filled by the Spirit.” So obviously, Paul is not telling them to get saved.

<sup>62</sup> O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC, 392–3: “To be admonished, ‘Be filled by the Spirit’, then, means that Paul’s readers are urged to let the Spirit change them more and more into the image of God and Christ, a notion which is consistent with Pauline theology elsewhere. This explanation accords well with the parallel passage in Colossians, ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom by means of Spirit-inspired psalms, hymns and songs, singing thankfully to God with your whole being’ (Col. 3:16). It also synchronizes with the preceding context of Ephesians 5:15–17, where believers are urged to walk wisely (v. 15) and to understand what the Lord’s (i.e., Christ’s) will is.”

**So here's my exhortation to you church. "Be filled with the Spirit." Pray with a clear conscience, "God, move powerfully in our midst. Fill us anew with a fresh outpouring of your Spirit." We can pray for that together.**

Now that's my view on the Baptism of the Spirit. Jesus's disciples in the upper room had a visible infilling of the Spirit that was accompanied by tongues. Our baptism of the Spirit is like that, but it's not like that. We are indwelt by the Spirit. But we don't see visible tongues of fire indwelling us. That was a once-for-all-time event at Pentecost.

And to that, you might ask, **"What about "speaking in tongues, Pastor Tony?"** Well, we don't have time for that today. We'll come back to that at another time. Trust me it comes up again in **Acts**.

But let me just say this, wherever you land on that issue, whether you are a cessationist, or whether you're a continuationist, or whether you don't even know what those terms mean.<sup>63</sup> Wherever you land on that issue, let me reiterate, **"In essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, charity."**

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**And wherever you land on these issues, here's something that is absolutely irrefutable in Acts 2. God's heart is a global heart. The church in Acts 2 was launched with an international audience and with international intent.<sup>64</sup> Jesus wants us, as the church, to be his witnesses before the world. Jerusalem was ground zero for the nuclear event that was the launch of the church.<sup>65</sup> And we've been spreading the gospel globally ever since. And we're going to keep doing it. God help us.**

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<sup>63</sup> If you believe that "speaking in tongues" is from the devil, then you probably are going to have that belief challenged as we work through the book of Acts. If you believe that speaking in tongues is necessary for salvation, then you are likewise going to have that belief challenged in our study through Acts. Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 97: "Far too many have taken one of two extreme positions: that all Christians should practice this gift, or that no members of their group or church should practice it. We should beware of both charismania (an overemphasis on charismatic gifts) and charisphobia (a fear of charismatic gifts)."

<sup>64</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC, 137: "Many Jews lived in the imperial capital at that time, and perhaps some of the visitors present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost returned with the gospel and formed the nucleus of the church there (cf. 28:14–15)."

<sup>65</sup> Vickers, "Acts" in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 354–5: "Alexander the Great attempted in the fourth century BC to unite the world through the spread of Greek culture and language. He p 355 had some success, providentially creating a common trade language that assisted the spread of the gospel. Humanly speaking, however, the tragedy at Babylon (the Tower of Babel) could not be overcome. Yet the miracle of tongues and the proclamation of the gospel at Pentecost reunites people with a power greater than language or culture, creating a bond that transcends any such barrier. The separation of the human race by language, and all that such separation entailed, is mended by the Spirit. The gospel, empowered by the Spirit, creates one new multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural people of God."