**COMMUNITY**

**A New Jesus Community - Acts 2**

Intro: Utopian community! Yes – we can do it!

Volleyball community. Mustang cars – listening to a conversation while waiting for a appointment.

We long for community. We figure we can get there by ourselves or through our own theories.

Community is the result (not the goal) ….of Jesus among us!

Jesus Community – the fish. It lasts. It carries us into eternity. It binds us across special interest groups.

Politics is all about hearing special interest groups and coming to making the best of it.

Community of Surrey – Mayor Watts. What kind of community did she leave?

A Brand New Jesus Community

Living in Giftedness

Learning that it’s all about Jesus

Loving Jesus Together

**The Community Gets Launched with a Gift**

**Acts 1:8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**

**Acts 2:5-12At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. 6When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.**

**7They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, 8and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! 9Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia,10Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” 12They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.**

1. **In the new community I LIVE out of GIFTEDNESS**

The gift is given when I give my life to Christ

I was promised a gift – I can receive it or reject

1. **In the new community I LEARN that it’s all about JESUS**

**Acts 2;13-18But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!**

**14Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. 15These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. 16No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:**

**17‘In the last days,’ God says,
    ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
    Your young men will see visions,
    and your old men will dream dreams.
18In those days I will pour out my Spirit
    even on my servants—men and women alike—
    and they will prophesy.**

**Acts 2:25, 28**

**King David said this about him:**

**‘I see that the Lord is always with me.
    I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

28You have shown me the way of life,
    and you will fill me with the joy of your presenc**e.’

**Acts 2:37-38Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”**

**38Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

**Acts 2:41Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all**.

1. **In the new community I LOVE others TOGETHER with Jesus**

**Acts 2:46-47They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— 47all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.**

**Acts 2:44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.” NIV**

**Acts 2:42-4342They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.” NIV**

**The New Community Pattern: Learning, Loving, Living…Learning, Loving, Living…**

**Liturgy: “They devoted themselves…to the breaking of bread…”**

1. **In the new community I practice the Liturgy: Remembering that Jesus was broken for our broken community**

The Event: the coming of the Spirit 1-13

The Explanation: The Spirit’s coming shows us Jesus is Lord – Messiah 14-36

Jesus in the OT

Jesus is Joel…

Jesus is Psalm 16

Jesus is Psalm 110

The Reaction: Repent and Receive the Promised Gift 37-41

The Summary (result): Community Life 42-47

**RESEARCH NOTES**

**II.** **The Church in Acts**

If the first seven chapters describe a message that is being offered to the Jews, then where does the church, the body of Christ, fit in? The answer: the church began at Pentecost but was not fully revealed by God until later, primarily through the writings of Paul. Christ had promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18); but almost in the same breath He gave Peter the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:19). Peter used these “keys” in opening the door of faith to the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2), to the Samaritans (Acts 8), and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). In other words, there is a transition in these first seven chapters of Acts, with Israel and the kingdom moving off the scene, and the church and the Gospel of God’s grace moving onto the scene.

Christ promised the apostles a baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1:5), and this took place at Pentecost (Acts 2, see 1 Cor. 12:13) and in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:45, see Acts 11:15–17). These two events included both Jews and Gentiles, and thus the body of Christ was formed. The apostles did not know whether or not Israel would receive their kingdom offer (Acts 1:6–7), but Christ did know. Thus the church was about to take over God’s purpose because of Israel’s failure.

It is easy to see that as the action of the church begins to fill the pages of Acts, Israel becomes less and less significant in God’s program on earth. In the final chapter (28:17ff) Paul pronounced God’s judgment on the nation. As Romans 9–11 explains, God had set aside Israel so that “the fullness of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:25) might be realized through the ministry of the church. This kingdom emphasis in the first seven chapters of Acts must be recognized; otherwise, one may apply certain practices to the church today that really do not pertain anymore. For example, some well-meaning Christians go “back to Pentecost” for their spiritual ideal; but in the light of the above analysis, Pentecost (a Jewish feast) involved signs for the Jews that do not necessarily have relevance to the church today. The “Christian communism” of Acts 4:31ff is not for us today. It was a temporary evidence of the gracious working of the Spirit, a picture of kingdom blessing to come. Of course, the spiritual principles given in these chapters apply to believers in all ages; but we must beware of mixing the kingdom truth of the Old Testament with church truth and thus confusing the message and the ministry.

**IV.** **The Holy Spirit in Acts**

This book could well be called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” It is important to note the progress in the believers’ experience as the book moves from Jewish ground to church ground.

Acts 2:38—Peter tells the Jews to repent, believe, and be baptized to receive the Spirit.

Acts 8:14–15—Peter prays for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit, lays hands on them, and they receive the gift of the Spirit.

Acts 10:44—The Holy Spirit comes on the Gentiles when they believe, and Peter can only stand by in amazement! Acts 10:44 is God’s pattern for today: hear the Word, believe, receive the Spirit, and then be baptized as evidence of your faith.

**V.** **Baptism in Acts**

When Peter was offering the kingdom to the Jews, baptism was essential for their receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Baptism in the name of the rejected Messiah identified them with Him and separated them from the other Jews whom Peter termed “this perverse generation” (2:40). But the Samaritans’ baptism did not grant them the Spirit (Acts 8:12–17). They had to call on Peter and John, two Jews, who prayed for the new believers and laid hands on them; and then they received the Spirit. This was Peter’s second use of the “keys of the kingdom.” But the pattern of baptism for this age is found in Acts 10:44–48—these believers were baptized after they had already received the gift of the Spirit.

**Acts 1**

**I.** **A New Book (1:1–2)**

The “former treatise” referred to is the Gospel of Luke (see Luke. 1:1–4) in which Luke told the story of what Jesus began to do and teach while He was on earth. Acts picks up the account by telling what He continued to do and teach through the church on earth. The Gospel of Luke tells of Christ’s ministry on earth in a physical body, while Acts tells of His ministry from heaven through His spiritual body, the church. For example, in 1:24 the believers ask the ascended Christ to show them which man to elect as apostle. In 2:47 it is the Lord who adds believers to the assembly. In 13:1–3, it is Christ through His Spirit who sends out the first missionaries; and in 14:27, Paul and Barnabas relate what God did through them.

Every Christian needs to move out of Luke’s Gospel into Acts. Knowing about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ is enough for salvation but not for Spirit-empowered service. We must identify ourselves with Him as our ascended Lord and allow Him to work through us in the world. The church is not simply an organization engaged in religious work; it is a divine organism, the body of Christ on earth, through which His life and power must operate. He died for the lost world; we must live to bring that world to Christ.

**II.** **A New Experience (1:3–8)**

Christ ministered to the apostles during the forty days He was on earth after His resurrection. Luke 24:36ff should be read in connection with these verses. In both places, Christ instructed the apostles to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Spirit. They were to begin their ministry in Jerusalem.

This baptism of the Spirit had been announced by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Note that Christ said nothing about a baptism with fire, for the fire baptism refers to judgment. The coming of the Spirit would unite all the believers into one body, to be known as the church (see 1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit would also give the believers power to witness to the lost. Finally, the Spirit would enable the believers to speak in tongues and perform other miraculous deeds to awaken the Jews. (See 1 Cor. 1:22—the Jews require a sign.) There are actually two occurrences of this Spirit baptism in Acts; in chapter 2, when He baptized the Jews; and in chapter 10 (see 11:16) when He came upon the Gentile believers. According to Eph. 2:11ff, the body of Christ is composed of Jews and Gentiles, all baptized into this spiritual body. It is wrong to pray for a baptism of the Spirit; we may ask God to fill us (Eph. 5:18) or empower us for special service (Acts 10:38), but we should not pray for His baptism.

Were the apostles correct in asking Christ about the kingdom (vv. 6–8)? Yes. In Matt. 22:1–10, Christ had promised to give the nation of Israel another opportunity to receive Him and the kingdom. In Matt. 19:28 Christ promised that the apostles would sit on twelve thrones (see Luke 22:28–30). In Matt. 12:31–45, Christ stated that Israel would have another opportunity to be saved even after sinning against the Son, and He promised to give them a sign to encourage them. It was the sign of Jonah: death, burial, and resurrection. The apostles knew that their ministry would begin with Israel (see the introductory notes); now they wanted to know what Israel would do. Would the nation accept or reject their message? Christ had not told them whether it would or would not. If He had told the apostles that Israel would spurn this good news, they could not have given their people an honest offer; their ministry would have been false. What He did tell them was that they would be witnesses, starting in Jerusalem, and eventually reaching across the world.

**III.** **A New Assurance (1:9–11)**

Do not confuse the promise of v. 11 with that of the rapture of the church as given through Paul in 1 Thes. 4. The angels here are promising that Christ will return to Mt. Olivet, visibly, and in glory. Luke 21:27 and Zech. 14:4 give the same promise. Had Israel accepted the apostles’ message, Christ would have returned to Mt. Olivet (see Acts 3:19–21) and established His kingdom. The Jewish missionaries would have spread His Gospel to the ends of the earth, and Israel would have been the center of blessing for all mankind as promised in Isa. 35:1–6 and 65:19–23.

**IV.** **A New Apostle (1:12–25)**

Were the apostles correct in selecting this new man? Of course! There had to be twelve men to sit on the twelve promised thrones (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28–30) should Israel repent and receive the kingdom. Their decision was based on the Word of God (Ps. 109:8 and 69:25) and on continued prayer (vv. 14 and 24). The new choice, Matthias, was ratified by God since he, with the others, was filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Note that Peter took charge of the meeting. This is perhaps another use of his “binding and loosing” powers given by Christ in Matt. 16:19. Heaven directed them in their decision and ratified their decision after it was made.

Paul could not have been the twelfth apostle. For one thing, he did not meet the qualifications laid down in vv. 21–22; and furthermore, his special ministry had to do with the church, not the kingdom.

Everything was now in readiness for the coming of the Spirit. It was now a matter of time, and as the believers waited for the Day of Pentecost to arrive, they spent their hours in prayer and fellowship in the Upper Room.

**Acts 2**

The Feast of Pentecost took place fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits. (The word “Pentecost” means “fiftieth.”) This feast is described in Lev. 23:15–21. Just as Passover is a picture of the death of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7), and Firstfruits a picture of the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:20–23), so Pentecost pictures the coming of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). The loaves of bread with leaven were presented that day, a picture of the church composed of Jews and Gentiles. (In 1 Cor. 10:17 the church is pictured as a loaf of bread.) The leaven in the bread speaks of sin yet in the church. There are two occurrences of the Spirit’s baptism in Acts: upon the Jews in Acts 2, and upon the Gentiles in Acts 10. The two loaves presented at Pentecost foreshadow these events.

**I.** **The Miracles (2:1–13)**

The believers were waiting and praying as Christ had commanded (Luke 24:49), and at the proper time, the Spirit descended. When He did, He baptized them into one spiritual body in Christ (see Acts 1:4–5 with 1 Cor. 12:13), and He filled them with power for witnessing (2:4). The sound of rushing wind reminds us of John 3:8 and of Ezekiel’s prophecy about the dry bones (Ezek. 37). The tongues of fire symbolize the divine power that would speak for God. Do not confuse these tongues of fire with the baptism of fire mentioned in Matt. 3:11. The baptism of fire mentioned there refers to the time of Israel’s tribulation. Since every believer is baptized by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), it is not proper to pray for a baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire.

The believers spoke in tongues. They did not preach in tongues, but rather praised God in languages they did not naturally know (see 2:11). Apparently they were in the Upper Room when the Spirit descended (2:2), but must have moved out to the temple courts where a great crowd gathered. The purpose of the gift of tongues was to impress the Jews with the fact that a miracle was taking place. In 10:46, the Gentiles spoke with tongues as proof to the apostles that they had received the Spirit; and in 19:6 the Ephesian followers of John the Baptist spoke in tongues for the same reason.

**II.** **The Message (2:14–41)**

*A.* *Introduction (vv. 14–21)*.

Peter first answered their charge that the men were drunk. No Jew would eat or drink anything before 9:00 A.M. on a Sabbath or feast day, and it was then the third hour, or 9:00 A.M. Note that throughout this sermon, Peter addresses Jews only (vv. 14, 22, 29, 36). Pentecost was a Jewish feast, and there were no Gentiles involved. In this sermon, Peter addressed the Jewish nation and proved to them that their Messiah had been raised from the dead. In vv. 16–21, Peter referred the men to Joel 2:28–32 (read that passage carefully). He did not say that this was a fulfillment of the prophecy, for Joel’s words will not be fulfilled until the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns to earth. Peter does say that this is that same Spirit spoken of by Joel. Verses 17 and 18 took place at Pentecost, but vv. 19–21 did not, and will not until the end times. Between vv. 18 and 19 would unfold the entire church age.

*B.* *The Explanation (vv. 22–36)*.

Peter now proved to the Jews that Jesus Christ was alive. He used five very convincing arguments:

(1) Christ’s Person and life demand that He be raised from the dead (22–24). See John 10:17–18. He who raised others could not remain dead himself!

(2) Psalm 16:8–11 predicted the resurrection (vv. 25–31).

(3) The apostles themselves were witnesses and had seen the risen Christ (v. 32).

(4) The coming of the Spirit is proof Jesus is alive (v. 33).

(5) Psalm 110:1 promised His resurrection (vv. 33–35). Keep in mind that Peter was not preaching the Gospel of the cross as we preach it today. He was accusing Israel of a great crime (vv. 23) and warning them that they had rejected and crucified their own Messiah (v. 36). Peter was giving Israel one more opportunity to receive Christ. They had slain John the Baptist and Jesus, but God was now giving them another chance. The resurrection of Christ was the promised “sign of Jonah” that proved He was the Messiah (Matt. 12:38–40).

*C.* *The application (vv. 37–40)*.

The men were convicted and asked Peter for counsel. Peter told them to repent, believe and be baptized; in that way they would be identifying themselves with Jesus as the Christ. This is the same message John the Baptist (Mark 1:4) and Jesus (Matt 4:17) preached. To make baptism essential for salvation and the receiving of the Spirit is to deny the experience of the Gentiles in Acts 10:44–48, which is God’s pattern for today. (See the introductory notes on Acts.) The Jews in Acts 2 received the Spirit when they repented and were baptized; the Samaritans in Acts 8 received the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles’ hands; but believers today receive the Spirit when they believe, as did the Gentiles in Acts 10. There is no salvation in the waters of baptism, for salvation is by faith in Jesus.

Peter stated that the promise of the Spirit was not only for the Jews present in Jerusalem, but also for the Jews scattered abroad (v. 39, see Dan. 9:7). This verse cannot refer to Gentiles because the Gentiles did not receive any promises (Eph. 2:11–12).

**III.** **The Multitude (2:42–47)**

Note that the believers remained in the temple and gave their witness and worship. The Spirit gave them unity of heart and mind and added believers to the assembly day by day. These verses are a beautiful description of what life will be like during the kingdom age. While the church (as we know it) was then in existence in the mind of God, the full revelation of it was not given until later by Paul. Acts 2 is a message to the Jewish people, so do not read into these verses truths that were not revealed until later. The church today does not meet in the Jewish temple, nor is it required to practice communism. The kingdom offer was still open and would continue to be until the events of Acts 7, when the leaders of the nation resisted the Spirit one more time and killed Stephen.[[1]](#footnote-1)

CHAPTER TWO

**POWER FROM HEAVEN!**

*Acts 2*

We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God.”

Vance Havner made that statement and he was right. The early church had none of the things that we think are so essential for success today—buildings, money, political influence, social status—and yet the church won multitudes to Christ and saw many churches established throughout the Roman world. Why? Because the church had the power of the Holy Spirit energizing its ministry. They were a people who “were ignited by the Spirit of God.”

That same Holy Spirit power is available to us today to make us more effective witnesses for Christ. The better we understand His working at Pentecost, the better we will be able to relate to Him and experience His power. The ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life and witness of the believer (John 16:14), and that is what is important. Acts 2 helps us understand the Holy Spirit by recording four experiences in the life of the church.

**The Church Waiting for the Spirit (Acts 2:1)**

Pentecost means “fiftieth” because this feast was held fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:15–22). The calendar of Jewish feasts in Leviticus 23 is an outline of the work of Jesus Christ. Passover pictures His death as the Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7), and the Feast of Firstfruits pictures His resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20–23). Fifty days after Firstfruits is the Feast of Pentecost, which pictures the formation of the church. At Pentecost, the Jews celebrated the giving of the Law, but Christians celebrate it because of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church.

The Feast of Firstfruits took place on the day after the Sabbath following Passover, which means it was always on the first day of the week. (The Sabbath is the seventh day.) Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week and “became the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20). Now, if Pentecost was fifty days later—seven weeks plus one day—then Pentecost also took place on the first day of the week. Christians assemble and worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, because on that day our Lord arose from the dead, but it was also the day on which the Holy Spirit was given to the church.

On the Feast of Firstfruits, the priest waved a sheaf of grain before the Lord; but on Pentecost, he presented two loaves of bread. Why? Because at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit baptized the believers and united them into one body. The Jewish believers received this baptism at Pentecost, and the Gentile believers in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10). This explains the presence of two loaves of bread (see 1 Cor. 10:17). The fact that there was leaven (yeast) in the loaves indicates the presence of sin in the church on earth. The church will not be perfect until it gets to heaven.

We must not conclude that this ten-day prayer meeting brought about the miracles of Pentecost, or that we today may pray as they did and experience “another Pentecost.” Like our Lord’s death at Calvary, Pentecost was a once-for-all event that will not be repeated. The church may experience new fillings of the Spirit, and certainly patient prayer is an essential element to spiritual power, but we would not ask for another Pentecost any more than we would ask for another Calvary.

**The Church Worshiping the Lord (Acts 2:2–13)**

As we study the events of Pentecost, it is important that we separate the accidentals from the essentials. The Spirit *came* and the people heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire. The Spirit *baptized* and *filled* the believers, and then *spoke* as they praised God in various languages. The Spirit *empowered* Peter to preach, and then He *convicted* the listeners so that 3,000 of them trusted Christ and were saved. Let’s consider these ministries one by one.

***The Spirit came (vv. 2–3)*.** The Holy Spirit had been active prior to Pentecost and had worked in Creation (Gen. 1:1–2), in Old Testament history (Jud. 6:34; 1 Sam. 16:13), and in the life and ministry of Jesus (Luke 1:30–37; 4:1, 14; Acts 10:38). However, now there would be two changes: the Spirit would dwell in people and not just come on them, and His presence would be permanent, not temporary (John 14:16–17). The Spirit could not have come sooner, for it was essential that Jesus die, be raised from the dead, and return to heaven before the Spirit could be given (John 7:37–39; 16:7ff). Remember the Jewish calendar in Leviticus 23: Passover, Firstfruits, and then Pentecost.

There were three startling signs that accompanied the coming of the Spirit: the sound of a rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the believers praising God in various languages. The word *Spirit* is the same as “wind” in both the Hebrew and the Greek (John 3:8). The people did not *feel* the wind; they heard *the sound* of a mighty wind. It is likely the believers were in the temple when this occurred (Luke 24:53). The word *house* in Acts 2:2 can refer to the temple (see Acts 7:47). The tongues of fire symbolized the powerful witness of the church to the people. Campbell Morgan reminds us that our tongues can be set on fire either by heaven or by hell! (James 3:5–6) Combine wind and fire and you have—a blaze!

***The Spirit baptized (1:5)*.** The Greek word *baptizo* has two meanings, one literal and the other figurative. The word literally means “to submerge,” but the figurative meaning is “to be identified with.” The baptism of the Spirit is that act of God by which He identified believers with the exalted Head of the church, Jesus Christ, and formed the spiritual body of Christ on earth (1 Cor. 12:12–14). Historically, this took place at Pentecost; today, it takes place whenever a sinner trusts Jesus Christ and is born again.

When you read about “baptism” in the New Testament, you must exercise discernment to determine whether the word is to be interpreted literally or symbolically. For example, in Romans 6:3–4 and Galatians 3:27–28, the reference is symbolic since water baptism cannot put a sinner into Jesus Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; see Acts 10:44–48). Water baptism is a public witness of the person’s identification with Jesus Christ, while Spirit baptism is the personal and private experience that identifies the person with Christ.

It is important to note that historically, the baptism of the Spirit took place in two stages: the Jewish believers were baptized at Pentecost, and the Gentiles were baptized and added to the body in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:44–48; 11:15–17; and see Eph. 2:11–22).

***The Spirit filled (v. 4)*.** The filling of the Spirit has to do with power for witness and service (Acts 1:8). We are not exhorted to be baptized by the Spirit, for this is something God does once and for all when we trust His Son. But we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), for we need His power constantly if we are to serve God effectively. At Pentecost, the Christians were filled with the Spirit and experienced the baptism of the Spirit; but after that, they experienced many fillings (Acts 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9) but no more baptisms.

Occasionally someone says, “What difference does it make what words we use? The important thing is that we have the experience!” I doubt that they would apply that same approach to any other area of life such as medicine, cooking, or mechanics. What difference does it make if the pharmacist uses arsenic or aspirin in the prescription, just so long as you get well? Or if the mechanic installs an alternator or a carburetor, just so long as the car works?

The Holy Spirit has revealed God’s truth to us in *words* (1 Cor. 2:12–13), and these words have definite meanings that must not be changed. Regeneration must not be confused with justification, nor propitiation with adoption. Each of these words is important in God’s plan of salvation and must be defined accurately and used carefully.

The baptism of the Spirit means that I belong to His body; the fullness of the Spirit means that my body belongs to Him. The baptism is final; the fullness is repeated as we trust God for new power to witness. The baptism involves all other believers, for it makes us one in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1–6); while the fullness is personal and individual. These are two distinct experiences and they must not be confused.

***The Spirit spoke (vv. 5–13)*.** Note that the believers were praising God, not preaching the Gospel, and that they used known languages, not an “unknown tongue” (Acts 2:6, 8). Luke named fifteen different geographical locations and clearly stated that the citizens of those places heard Peter and the others declare God’s wonderful works *in languages they could understand*. The Greek word translated “language” in Acts 2:6 and “tongue” in Acts 2:8 is *dialektos* and refers to a language or dialect of some country or district (Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). Unless we are instructed otherwise in Scripture, we must assume that when “speaking in tongues” is mentioned elsewhere in Acts, or in 1 Corinthians, it refers to an identical experience: believers praising God in the Spirit in languages that are known.

Why did God do this? For one thing, Pentecost was a reversal of the judgment at the Tower of Babel when God confused man’s language (Gen. 11:1–9). God’s judgment at Babel scattered the people, but God’s blessing at Pentecost united the believers in the Spirit. At Babel, the people were unable to understand each other; but at Pentecost, men heard God’s praises and understood what was said. The Tower of Babel was a scheme designed to praise men and make a name for men, but Pentecost brought praise to God. The building of Babel was an act of rebellion, but Pentecost was a ministry of humble submission to God. What a contrast!

Another reason for this gift of tongues was to let the people know that the Gospel was for the whole world. God wants to speak to every person in his or her own language and give the saving message of salvation in Jesus Christ. The emphasis in the Book of Acts is on worldwide evangelization, “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). “The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions,” said Henry Martyn, “and the nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we must become.”

Apparently the sound of the wind drew the people to the temple where the believers were gathered, but it was the praise by the believers that really captured their attention. The careless listeners mocked and accused the believers of being drunk, but others were sincerely concerned to find out what was going on. The people were perplexed (Acts 2:6), amazed (Acts 2:7, 12), and they marveled (Acts 2:7).

It is interesting that the mockers should accuse the believers of being drunk, for wine is associated with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Paul relates the two *in contrast*, for when a man is filled with strong drink, he loses control of himself and ends up being ashamed; but when a person is filled with the Spirit, he has self-control and glorifies God. Strong drink can bring a temporary exhilaration, but the Spirit gives a deep satisfaction and a lasting joy.

**The Church Witnessing to the Lost (Acts 2:14–41)**

Peter did not preach in tongues; he addressed his audience in the everyday Aramaic that they understood. The message was given by a Jew, to Jews (Acts 2:14, 22, 29, 36), on a Jewish holy day, about the resurrection of the Jewish Messiah whom their nation had crucified. The Gentiles who were there were proselytes to the Jewish religion (Acts 2:10). Peter would not open the door of faith to the Gentiles until he visited Cornelius (Acts 10).

There are three explanations in Peter’s sermon.

***He explained what happened: the Spirit had come (vv. 14–21)*.** The joyful worship of the believers was not the result of too much wine; it was the evidence of the arrival of God’s Holy Spirit to dwell in His people. Orthodox Jews did not eat or drink before 9 a.m. on the Sabbath or on a holy day, nor did they usually drink wine except with meals.

Peter did not say that Pentecost was the *fulfillment* of the prophecy of Joel 2:28–32, because the signs and wonders predicted had not occurred. When you read Joel’s prophecy in context, you see that it deals with the nation of Israel in the end times, in connection with “the Day of the Lord.” However, Peter was led by the Spirit to see in the prophecy an application to the church. He said, “This is that same Holy Spirit that Joel wrote about. He is here!” Such an announcement would seem incredible to the Jews, because they thought God’s Spirit was given only to a few select people (see Num. 11:28–29). But here were 120 of their fellow Jews, men and women, enjoying the blessing of the same Holy Spirit that had empowered Moses, David, and the prophets.

It was indeed the dawning of a new age, the “last days” in which God would bring to completion His plan of salvation for mankind. Jesus had finished the great work of redemption and nothing more had to be done except to share the Good News with the world, beginning with the nation of Israel. The invitation is, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

***He explained how it happened: Jesus was alive (vv. 22–35)*.** News travels fast in the East; and probably most of the adults in Jerusalem, residents and visitors, knew about the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. They also had heard rumors of an “official announcement” that His followers had stolen the body of Jesus just to make people think that He had kept His word and been raised from the dead.

But Peter told them the truth: Jesus of Nazareth had indeed been raised from the dead, and the Resurrection proves that He is the Messiah! Peter gave them four proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and then he called on them to believe on Christ and be saved.

*His first proof was the person of Jesus Christ (vv. 22–24)*. Peter’s audience knew that Jesus was a real Person from the town of Nazareth and that He had performed many signs and miracles. (On “Jesus of Nazareth,” see Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9; also 24:5.) It was clear that God’s hand was on Him. They had heard Him speak and had watched His life. They had even seen Him raise the dead, yet they could find no fault in Him—and these things were not “done in a corner”! (Acts 26:26)

It was incredible that such a Man should be defeated by death. From one point of view, the crucifixion of Jesus was a terrible crime (Acts 2:23), but from another point of view it was a wonderful victory (Acts 2:24). The word translated “pains” means “birth pangs,” suggesting that the tomb was a “womb” out of which Jesus was “born” in Resurrection glory (see Acts 13:33).

*Peter’s second proof was the prophecy of David (vv. 25–31)*. He quoted Psalm 16:8–11, verses that obviously could not apply to David who was already dead and buried. Being a prophet of God, David wrote about the Messiah, that His soul would not remain in hades (the realm of the dead) or His body in the grave where it would decay.

*The third proof was the witness of the believers (v. 33)*. After His resurrection, Jesus did not appear to the world at large, but to His own followers whom He had commissioned to give witness to others that He was alive (Acts 1:3, 22). But were these people dependable witnesses? Can we trust them? We certainly can! Prior to Christ’s resurrection, the disciples did not even believe that He would be raised from the dead; and they themselves had to be convinced (Mark 16:9–14; Acts 1:3). They had nothing to gain by preaching a lie, because their message aroused official opposition and even led to the imprisonment and death of some of the believers. A few fanatics might be willing to believe and promote a lie for a time, but when thousands believe a message, and when that message is backed up by miracles, you cannot easily dismiss it. These witnesses were trustworthy.

*Peter’s fourth proof of the resurrection of Christ was the presence of the Holy Spirit (vv. 33–35)*. Follow his logic. If the Holy Spirit is in the world, then God must have sent Him. Joel promised that one day the Spirit would come, and Jesus Himself had promised to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people (Luke 24:49; John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 1:4). But if Jesus is dead, He cannot send the Spirit; therefore, He must be alive. Furthermore, He could not send the Spirit unless He had returned to heaven to the Father (John 16:7); so, Jesus has ascended to heaven! To back up this statement, Peter quoted Psalm 110:1, a verse that certainly could not be applied to David (note Matt. 22:41–46).

Peter’s conclusion was both a declaration and an accusation: Jesus is your Messiah, *but you crucified Him!* (see Acts 2:23) Peter did not present the cross as the place where the Sinless Substitute died for the world, but where Israel killed her own Messiah! They committed the greatest crime in history! Was there any hope? Yes, for Peter gave a third explanation that was good news to their hearts.

***He explained why it happened: to save sinners (vv. 36–41)*.** The Holy Spirit took Peter’s message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners. (In Acts 5:33 and 7:54, a different Greek word is used that suggests anger rather than conviction for sin.) After all, if they were guilty of crucifying their Messiah, what might God do to them! Note that they addressed their question to the other Apostles as well as to Peter, for all twelve were involved in the witness that day, and Peter was only first among equals.

Peter told them how to be saved: they had to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus Christ. They would give proof of the sincerity of their repentance and faith by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, thus identifying themselves publicly with their Messiah and Saviour. Only by repenting and believing on Christ could they receive the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 14), and this promise was for both the Jews and the “far off” Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–19).

It is unfortunate that the translation of Acts 2:38 in the *King James Version* suggests that people must be baptized in order to be saved, because this is not what the Bible teaches. The Greek word *eis* (which is translated “for” in the phrase “for the remission of sins”) can mean “on account of” or “on the basis of.” In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist baptized on the basis that people had repented. Acts 2:38 should not be used to teach salvation by baptism. If baptism is essential for salvation, it seems strange that Peter said nothing about baptism in his other sermons (Acts 3:12–26; 5:29–32; 10:34–43). In fact, the people in the home of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit *before they were baptized!* (Acts 10:44–48) Since believers are commanded to be baptized, it is important that we have a clean conscience by obeying (1 Peter 3:21), but we must not think that baptism is a part of salvation. If so, then nobody in Hebrews 11 was saved because none of them was ever baptized.

Acts 2:40 indicates that the Apostles continued to share the Word and to urge the people to trust Jesus Christ. They looked on the nation of Israel as a “crooked generation” that was under condemnation (Matt. 16:4; 17:17; Phil. 2:15). Actually, the nation would have about forty years before Rome would come and destroy the city and the temple and scatter the people. History was repeating itself. During the forty years in the wilderness, the new generation “saved itself” from the older generation that rebelled against God. Now, God would give His people another forty years of grace; and on that day, 3,000 people repented, believed, and were saved.

**The Church Walking in the Spirit (Acts 2:42–47)**

The believers continued to use the temple for their place of assembly and ministry, but they also met in various homes. The 3,000 new converts needed instruction in the Word and fellowship with God’s people if they were to grow and become effective witnesses. The early church did more than make converts; they also made *disciples* (Matt. 28:19–20).

Two phrases in Acts 2:42 may need explanation. “Breaking of bread” probably refers to their regular meals, but at the close of each meal, they probably paused to remember the Lord by observing what we call “the Lord’s Supper.” Bread and wine were the common fare at a Jewish table. The word *fellowship* means much more than “being together.” It means “having in common” and probably refers to the sharing of material goods that was practiced in the early church. This was certainly not a form of modern communism, for the program was totally voluntary, temporary (Acts 11:27–30), and motivated by love.

The church was unified (Acts 2:44), magnified (Acts 2:47a), and multiplied (Acts 2:47b). It had a powerful testimony among the unsaved Jews, not only because of the miracles done by the Apostles (Acts 2:43), but also because of the way the members of the fellowship loved each other and served the Lord. The risen Lord continued to work with them (Mark 16:20) and people continued to be saved. What a church!

The Christians you meet in the Book of Acts were not content to meet once a week for “services as usual.” They met daily (Acts 2:46), cared daily (Acts 6:1), won souls daily (Acts 2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5). Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once-a-week routine. Why? Because the risen Christ was a living reality to them, and His resurrection power was at work in their lives through the Spirit.

The promise is still good: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). Have you called? Have you trusted Jesus Christ to save you?[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (276–283). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Ac 1:5–Ac 2). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)