



The Book of Acts - Chapter Two

I. Acts 1:1-2:13 - Preparation for Witness (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Two

When the day of Pentecost came, the church was meeting in the upper room. Suddenly, a violent wind struck the house, displaying itself as if it were tongues of fire. The noise was so great that it attracted a great crowd from the surrounding area.

This wind was the Holy Spirit being poured out, in an abundant, stream upon all the disciples who immediately were enabled to proclaim the Gospel truth to the crowd in their own native languages, something that really grabbed their attention.

Peter then gave an excellent discourse, probably to those who spoke Aramaic, with the other disciples proclaiming the same message in other languages, explaining what this phenomenon was and what it meant for them.

Peter used a well-known Scripture from the prophet Joel to explain what had happened, and from Davidic Psalms to say why it had happened. He gave convincing proofs that Jesus was the Christ, that they, the people of Jerusalem, had been guilty by supporting the authorities in crucifying Jesus but that he had overcome death because God had raised him back to life, and in accordance with the scriptures, he was now at the right hand of God, with authority over everything in heaven and on the earth.

He also let them know that, despite their guilt, salvation and forgiveness were still open to them through the risen Lord. Peter concluded his message by stating eternal salvation was not just for the Jews but for Gentiles too.

The men who heard this were convinced and cut to the heart at what they had done. They believed the message, repented of their sins and were baptised.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the early church, telling of their unity, generosity and genuine love for one another, through a determined effort to share all they had with each other. As a result, God grew the church.

I.c Luke 2:1-13 - The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost

The Spirit Descends at Pentecost. The promise of the Spirit (Acts 1:5; Joel 2:28-32 and Matthew 3:11) is fulfilled at the feast of Pentecost. The event is narrated in two parts: the coming of the Spirit on the believers (Acts 2:1-4), and the reaction of the Jewish crowd to the Spirit-filled Christians (vv.5-13).

The Spirit was given on the first day of the week (Sunday) in the same way that Christ was risen from the dead on that day. Thus many Christians have accepted it as a holy day.

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Acts 2:1

Pentecost was the second of the annual harvest festivals, coming 50 days after Passover. Pentecost is held fifty days after Nisan 15, which was the day of Passover and marked the start of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Pentecost is the Jewish Festival of Weeks, which is defined in Numbers 28:26-31.

All most likely included the entire 120 assembled in the upper room (Acts 1:15).

Together. Not just in body but are now to become united with each other in spirit. The unity of the church is established through faith in Christ and is a key aspect of his teaching.

² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:2

Jesus had compared the Holy Spirit's work to the wind: *<<The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit>>* (John 3:8), but here the Holy Spirit is coming in greatly increased power, and it was appropriate that this event be accompanied by a sound that was not like a gentle breeze but like the blowing of a violent wind.

The house where they were sitting probably was the upper room (see Acts 1:13), which may have been located close to the temple grounds, close enough to where the crowd the noise attracted would have been.

Wind, spirit and breath are the same word in Hebrew (ruah) and Greek (pneuma). We see them used when God gave Ezekiel a vision of the dead bones coming back to life through the Spirit: <<God said to me, Mortal man, prophesy to the wind. Tell the wind that the Sovereign Lord commands it to come from every direction, to breathe into these dead bodies, and to bring them back to life>> (Ezekiel 37:9 - Good News Bible).

God has spoken out of the wind before: <<Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind>> (Job 38:1a - KJV), and sometimes he comes in a gentle whisper or in a still, small voice, as in some translations: *<<The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by'. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper>>* (1 Kings 19:11-12).

³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

Acts 2:3

The tongues of fire that separated were not literal flames, for Luke says 'what seemed', but looked enough like fire for this to be the best description that could be given. Fire in the OT often indicates the presence of God, especially in his burning holiness and purity, consuming everything that is impure, see Exodus 3:2, 13:21, 19:18 and 40:38; Isaiah 4:5 and Ezekiel 1:4. These tongues may therefore portray both the purity and the power of the speech of these disciples, as they proclaimed 'the wonders of God' (v.11), as well as the holy presence of God.

Jesus had said: <<I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!>> (Luke 12:49).

Came to rest on each of them. The Spirit indwells each believer individually.

⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:4

Filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the fulfilment of what John the Baptist had proclaimed in the Jordan valley: <<*I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit*>> (Mark 1:8), and Jesus had promised: <<*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*>> (Acts 1:8). It had also been said of Jesus: <<*By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified*>> (John 7:39). It does not mean that the Holy Spirit was completely inactive prior to this time, for the Spirit of God was active in the world from Genesis 1:2 onward, but now the Spirit was coming to people in a new, more powerful way, signifying the beginning of the new covenant era i.e. the time from Christ's death until he returns at some point in the future.

To speak in other tongues. The word translated tongues, Greek *glōssa*, is plural and can also be translated as languages. That is the sense it has in this verse. In this case the other languages were understood by various people who were present in Jerusalem, but Paul expects that no one present in the church at Corinth will understand the languages being spoken 'in tongues' (see 1 Corinthians 14:2). 1 Corinthians and Acts are probably not speaking of different types of spiritual gift, but different manifestations of the same gift, used for different audiences and purposes. People who understood the languages on this occasion were in Jerusalem for the festival, and also because it was anticipated that the Messiah should have come by this time according to Daniel's prophecy, see Daniel 9:20-27.

The proclamation of the Gospel in their own languages was a sign to them of the authenticity of the Gospel message. At other times, people are given the gift of a heavenly language, that is probably a direct communication between a person and God, although if the message given is in a public place and intended for wider understanding, then someone present, usually other than the speaker in tongues, will have been given the gift to interpret the message so that others could understand it. Paul writes: <<*I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified*>> (1 Corinthians 14:5). On this occasion, it is clearly a miracle of speaking, not of hearing, for the disciples begin 'to speak in other tongues'.

As the Spirit enabled them indicates that the Holy Spirit was directing the syllables they spoke. Speaking in tongues in this way also seems to be the phenomenon experienced by those at Cornelius' house (Acts 10:45-46), and by the disciples of John in Ephesus (Acts 19:6).

Jesus had equipped them for greater work (John 14:12) but there is no record of him having spoken anything other than Aramaic, Hebrew when reading scripture and possibly in Greek to Pilate.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

Acts 2:5

The presence of the crowd indicates that the setting must be close to the temple grounds, the only place in Jerusalem that could accommodate more than 3,000 people (see v.41). The fact that they were staying in Jerusalem suggests not only Jewish pilgrims but local residents as well.

⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

Acts 2:6

Heard this sound. They spoke the ‘wonders of God’ (v.11), the language of praise.

⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Aren’t all these who are speaking Galilæans?’⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

Acts 2:7-8

Aren’t all these who are speaking Galilæans? Galilæans would normally speak Aramaic but may have some knowledge of basic Greek, as this had been introduced into the region by Alexandra the Great and the Hellenised Empires that followed him. They would almost certainly have been brought up to read the Septuagint or LXX, the Greek version of the OT.

Galilæans had a distinctive accent, as confirmed during the dialogue at the time of Peter’s denial of Jesus: <<*After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, ‘Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away’*>> (Matthew 26:73). They also had the reputation of being poorly educated: <<*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus*>> (Acts 4:13).

Each of us hears them in our native language. The Spirit had clearly given them the gift to speak fluently in foreign languages, just as Isaiah had prophesied: <<*The fearful heart will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear*>> (Isaiah 32:4), that is, the languages of the men from the countries listed next.

⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judæa and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs - we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’

Acts 2:9-11

The long list of nations covers most of the 1st Century Roman world, particularly areas where Jewish communities existed, see the following map. It provides one of the most comprehensive ancient catalogues of the Jewish Diaspora. That is, Jews living outside Palestine due primarily to historic exiles, and is confirmed by other ancient lists, especially Philo, Embassy to Gaius 281-284, by early Jewish archaeological remains, and by many ancient literary sources. Philo and Josephus both comment that there is not a land where the Jews do not live.

It is only natural that 1st Century Jerusalem would be filled with devout Jews ‘from every nation under heaven’ (v.5). The list also demonstrates that, already at Pentecost, the Christians were starting their worldwide witness. At this point, the converts were mainly Jewish. The only Gentiles at Pentecost were proselytes (v.11), that is, Gentiles who had become full converts to Judaism.



The Map of the Nations referenced in vv.9-11

¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’

Acts 2:12

Amazed and perplexed. Their confusion is understandable but Peter would soon give a clear explanation to answer their question, ‘What does this mean?’

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’

Acts 2:13

They have had too much wine. Being filled with an alcoholic spirit bears no relation whatsoever to the feeling of empowerment given by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

II. Acts 2:14-5:42 - The Witness in Jerusalem

Beginning with Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, and continuing through to Chapter 5, the witness of the believers is confined to the city of Jerusalem and restricted to Jews.

II.a Acts 2:14-41 - Peter addresses the crowd

Peter’s message is the first in a series of speeches and discourses in Acts.

	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Recipients</u>	<u>Orator</u>
1.	Acts 2:14-36	Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost	Peter
2.	Acts 3:11-26	Jews in the Temple	Peter
3.	Acts 7:1-53	Before the Sanhedrin	Stephen
4.	Acts 10:34-43	Gentiles in Cornelius’ House	Peter
5.	Acts 13:16-47	Jews in Pisidian Antioch	Paul
6.	Acts 17:22-31	Greeks in Athens	Paul
7.	Acts 20:18-35	Ephesian Church leaders in Miletus	Paul
8.	Acts 22:1-21	Jews in Jerusalem following Paul’s arrest	Paul
9.	Acts 24:10-21	Felix and his court	Paul
10.	Acts 26:1-29	Festus, King Agrippa II and their court	Paul

As a message to Jews, it consists primarily of scriptural proofs: vv.14-21 interpret the miracle of tongues as a fulfilment of Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:22-36 represents Christ as the Messiah in fulfilment of Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110:1; and Acts 2:37-41 concludes the discourse with a call to repentance and baptism. There is also an allusion to Psalm 132:10, which itself points to 2 Samuel 7:6-16 <<*I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.*

Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"
'Now then, tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people shall not oppress them any more, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. "The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: when your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever"'">>.

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

Acts 2:14

Again, it is Peter who is the spokesman, see comments on Acts 1:15. It would appear that he had not been given the role of speaking in a foreign language and was addressing the Jews who lived in Jerusalem and spoke the local language. It is probable that all the disciples were proclaiming the same message through the Spirit, just in different languages and dialects.

¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

Acts 2:15

Nine in the morning is not a time Jews would normally eat or drink especially on a Sabbath, although this was a Sunday. The exception would be those who seek solace in alcohol: <<When will I wake up so I can find another drink?>> (Proverbs 23:35b). We have no reason to even consider that these disciples had turned to drink!

¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

Acts 2:17

The last days are not just in the distant future but were inaugurated at Pentecost, see 1 Corinthians 10:11, 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3 and 2 Peter 3:3, and will continue until Christ's return. They are the last days in that the coming of the Messiah, long predicted in the OT, had now occurred. His saving death and resurrection have been accomplished, and now the work of the Holy Spirit, in building the church, is a key event in the history of salvation that needs to occur before Christ returns.

A time of judgement was upon those who had perpetrated the killing of the Messiah: <<*You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!*>> (James 5:8-9). Initially, the great Day of the Lord, the destruction of the temple in AD70, put an end to the Mosaic economy, the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law. A time further in the future is also in mind with these passages.

Most rabbis believed that the Spirit had ceased speaking through human prophets with the last of the OT prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Joel's prophecy of an outpouring of the Spirit on all people was understood as referring to a new messianic age. It had been said of God: <<*You gave your good Spirit to instruct them*>> (Nehemiah 9:20a).

Daughters. The women in the upper room participated in the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, giving further confirmation to Joel's prophecy.

18 **Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.**

Acts 2:18

Both men and women. The Holy Spirit makes no distinction, which was the same attitude shown by Jesus in his teaching. And it has been so since the dawning of time: <<*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them*>> (Genesis 1:27). The gifts were clearly given to women. For example, the daughters of the evangelist Philip: <<*He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied*>> (Acts 21:9). The Jewish leaders had long taught that the Holy Spirit was a gift given only to wealthy Jewish men, such as themselves. But Peter would later show otherwise for he spoke of his witness to the Gentiles: <<*So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?*>> (Acts 11:17). However, the apostle Paul seemed, at times, to hold on to the Jewish tradition. Although he clearly recognises that women are part of the kingdom: <<*What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up*>> (1 Corinthians 14:26), but he also says: <<*Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says*>> (1 Corinthians 14:34), which seems to indicate they should not use their gifts publically.

Church tradition has it that Paul was actually referring to women who 'chatter' or 'gossip' in church rather than those who are displaying the spiritual gifts they have been given as indicated in 1 Corinthians 14:26. For if such women did not bring their gifts to the church it could not be edified in the way Paul wanted. This would also seem more in line with Jesus' attitude to women such as encouraging Martha to join Mary at his feet to hear the word of God spoken, see Luke 10:38-42.

19 **I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.**

20 **The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.**

21 **And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

Acts 2:19-21

The darkened sun and bloody moon, whether literal or symbolic, indicate the final consummation of the earth. Peter included the full prophecy even though not all of it was yet fulfilled. Peter's quotation from Joel ended with the key verse (Joel 2:32), which assures that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Although the audience would have thought the God of Israel is meant, for Peter the 'name of the Lord' that saves is Jesus (see v.36 and Acts 4:12). Peter's use of the title Lord for Jesus points to his deity.

In the preface to his work on the Jewish wars, Josephus speaks of signs and prodigies that prefaced the destruction of Jerusalem: thunder, lightening, earthquakes, an apparent fiery comet that hung over the city for a year, with its light shining on the temple day and night, shaped like a sword pointing downwards in judgement of the people, who had participated in or approved of the crucifixion of God's only beloved son.

²² 'Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

Acts 2:22

As you yourselves know indicates that many in the audience had witnessed Jesus miraculous works and heard his teachings for themselves but had rejected it.

²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Acts 2:23

Peter combines a clear affirmation of God's sovereignty over world events and human responsibility for evil deeds. Although Jesus was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, showing that God had both foreknown and foreordained that Jesus would be crucified, it still did not absolve the people of responsibility who contributed to his death, for Peter goes on to say, <<*whom you crucified*>> (v.36). Though one may not understand fully how God's sovereign ordination of events can be compatible with human responsibility for evil, both are clearly affirmed here, and in many other passages of scripture.

With the help of wicked men. Peter also places responsibility on the Gentile officials and soldiers who actually crucified Jesus.

²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Acts 2:24

But God raised him from the dead. The people were well aware of the stories that Jesus had risen from the dead. It was prophesied by David: <<*When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious - that you, Lord God, might dwell there*>> (Psalm 68:18), and by Jesus, talking of himself, said: <<*They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life*>> (Matthew 17:23).

Proof of the Christ.

The following list gives an insight to just some of the proofs that Jesus is the Christ:

1. The miracles he performed in public, to which Peter's audience were either eye-witnesses or had second-hand knowledge of.
2. The miracles bore witness to God's approval of Jesus, <<Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him'>> (John 3:1-2), and, as the man born blind and then healed by Jesus said to the Jewish leaders who were interrogating him: <<If this man were not from God, he could do nothing>> (John 9:33). The reasoning is as strong as the evidence that he is both the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.
3. His death, resurrection and ascension are all ordained by and the work of God. It was also clear reasoning that God had delivered him up for death: <<He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?>> (Romans 8:32), and he was apparently but not actually abandoned by God as atonement for all peoples on the Cross: <<And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')>> (Mark 15:34).

²⁵ David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.”

²⁹ ‘Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.

Acts 2:25-31

Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11 as a text pointing to the resurrection of Jesus, noting that David spoke of God not abandoning him to death. He then reasoned that, because David died, the psalm must have been speaking about one of his descendants. Since Jesus is the only one who conquered death and is a descendant of David, he must be the promised Messiah whom David foresaw.

David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. Both the OT (1 Kings 2:10 and Nehemiah 3:16), and early Jewish tradition locate David's tomb on the south side of Jerusalem. The traditional tomb location is marked today by medieval Islamic and Christian

buildings. Some suggest that this is where the earliest church met (e.g. Acts 2:44-45). Thus Peter may be referring to an earlier traditional tomb not far from where he was speaking.



David's Tomb in Jerusalem

Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah. Peter affirms that David, who was not only a king but also a prophet (v.30), was able to foresee that Christ would be raised from the dead. Throughout the OT, God was leading his prophets to predict the events of Christ's earthly life (see Luke 24:25-27, Acts 3:18 and 1 Peter 1:18-20). Vv.30-31 look back to the citation in v.27 and then forward to the arrival of Jesus in heaven, indicated by v.34, linking Peter's argument together by an allusion to Psalm 132 and God's promise to David.

³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Acts 2:32-33

The interactive and differentiated relationship among the persons of the Trinity is clearly evident in this verse. Thus God the Father first gave the promise that the Holy Spirit would come in a greater, more powerful way to accomplish his work in people's lives, as indicated in Peter's quote from Joel Chapter 2 in vv.17-19. Then, when Christ's work on earth was accomplished: <<*Jesus said, 'It is finished.'* *With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit*>> (John 19:30b), Christ was exalted to the second highest position of authority in the universe, namely, at the right hand of God: <<*After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God*>> (Mark 16:19), with ruling power delegated to him by God the Father: <<*Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*>> (Matthew 28:18). Then Christ received authority from the Father to send the Holy Spirit in this new fullness. Finally, on the day of Pentecost, Jesus himself poured out the Holy Spirit on the disciples in a new and more powerful way (vv.1-11); the image of pouring suggests overflowing abundance and fullness.

The giving of the Holy Spirit also confirms the judgements foretold by Jesus in Matthew Chapter 24, on his arrival in Jerusalem, see Luke 19:41, and at his death, as recorded in Luke 23:29.

³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:
‘Sit at my right hand
³⁵ until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.’”

Acts 2:34-35

When Peter says that David did not ascend into heaven, he is referring to his body, not his spirit.

³⁶ ‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.’

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’

Acts 2:36-37

Whom you crucified. Despite being charged as accessories to murder: <<*who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone*>> (1 Thessalonians 2:15), these men, rather than becoming aggressive towards Peter or trying to defend their own actions, were cut to the heart. It is clear that the Spirit has been at work in them and they are now feeling genuine remorse: <<*My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise*>> (Psalm 51:17).

Brothers, what shall we do? This is a good question that we have seen before: <<*John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe has been laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.’ ‘What should we do then?’ the crowd asked*>> (Luke 3:7-10), and in the Parable of the Rich Ruler: <<*A certain ruler asked him, ‘Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’*>> (Luke 18:18).

It is interesting that the crowd turned to Peter and the disciples for support and mentoring, rather than to the elders, chief priests and Teachers of the Law.

³⁸ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’

Acts 2:38

Repent and be baptised. This does not imply that people can be saved without having faith in Christ as Saviour because the need to believe is implied both in the command to repent and also in the command to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. The willingness to submit to baptism is an outward expression of inward faith in Christ: <<*and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*>> (1 Peter 3:21).

To be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ is no different from being baptised: <<*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*>> (Matthew 28:19b). Even though different words are used here in Acts, the meaning is the same because, in biblical usage, a

person's name represents the person's character, everything that is true about the person. The name, i.e. character and attributes, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same as the name, i.e. character and attributes, of Jesus Christ. In fact, in Matthew 28:19 the word name, the Greek word *onoma*, is singular, indicating that Father, Son and Holy Spirit share one name, i.e. one character and set of attributes. To be baptised into that name is a sign of identifying with that name, and therefore taking on Christ's character, as well as committing to live one's life, from that point on, as a representative of that name and character.

The Gospel can be summarised in different ways. Sometimes faith alone is named as the one thing necessary for salvation, (see John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9 and Ephesians 2:8-9); other times repentance alone is named, (e.g. Luke 24:47, Acts 3:19, 5:31, and 17:30, and 2 Corinthians 7:10), and sometimes both are named, e.g. Acts 20:21. Genuine faith always involves repentance and vice versa. Repentance includes a change of mindset that ends up trusting God, i.e. having faith.

To repent, or change one's mindset in the OT, called for a change in a person's attitude towards God that impacted one's actions and life choices; it involved the idea of turning, that is, from one way of thinking and living to a different way. Common external signs of repentance included prayers of remorse and confession, and the renouncing of sin.

The gift of the Holy Spirit does not mean some specific spiritual gift as in 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14, but rather the gift of the Holy Spirit himself, coming to indwell the believer.

³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.'

Acts 2:39

Peter's word that the promise was not just for the Jews, who were listening, but for all who are far off implies the inclusion of Gentiles: <<*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit*>> (Ephesians 2:13-18).

For all whom the Lord our God will call to himself, indicates that salvation is ultimately God's work, and comes to those whom the Lord effectively calls into personal relationship with himself.

We have examples such as Cornelius and his household, Acts 10:23b-48, and the Philippi jailer and his family in Acts 16:30. God said: <<*I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice*>> (Ezekiel 34:16).

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'

Acts 2:40

Many other words. Luke found it necessary to provide only part of Peter's message but we can be assured all the important elements were included for us.

Save yourselves from this corrupt generation is more likely 'separate and distinguish yourself' from this generation. As David cried out: <<*Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God!*>> (Psalm 119:115).

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 2:41

The three thousand converts at Pentecost were added to the initial body of 120 believers.

II.b. Luke 2:42-47 - The fellowship of the believers

This is the first extensive summary in Acts. It depicts a number of activities characteristic of the embryonic church.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:42

The early church was devoted to the apostles' teaching, which would have included Jesus' earthly teaching plus what he taught the apostles in his 40 days of post-resurrection appearances.

Fellowship, the Greek word *koinōnia*, which means participation or sharing, included the sharing of material goods (v.44), and the breaking of bread (v.42 and v.46), which likely covers both the Lord's Supper and a larger fellowship meal. The apostle John writes: <<*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete*>> (1 John 1:1-4).

Prayer was central during the meeting in houses and probably also at the temple as well (v.42 and v.46).

⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

Acts 2:43

The church experienced awe or reverent fear in response to miracles or wonders, which served as signs of the Spirit's power and presence among them (v.43). Miracles were occurring regularly (many ... were being performed), many more than the few that Luke records in detail.

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common.

Acts 2:44

Everything in common. Although some people have referred to this situation as early communism, this is clearly not the case, since:

1. The giving was voluntary and not compelled by the government.

2. People still had personal possessions, because they still met in their homes (v.46) and many other Christians after this still owned homes (see Acts 12:12, 17:5, 18:7, 20:20, 21:8 and 21:16; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2 and 2 John 10). Further, Peter told Ananias and Sapphira that they did not have any obligation to sell their property and give away the money (Acts 5:4).

In contrast to communist theory, the abolition of private property is not commanded or implied here. Paul writes: *<<Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life>>* (1 Timothy 6:17-19). However, this followed the warning: *<<But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs>>* (1 Timothy 6:6-10). On the other hand, there is a voluntary generosity in sharing possessions that is seen as commendable.

⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Acts 2:45

This verse underpins the attitude believers should have uppermost in their hearts and minds.

However, giving to the Lord's work must be voluntary and not compelled. And when it is truly voluntary, it brings so much blessing. Paul confirms there is no compulsion or pressure to give what you cannot afford: *<<For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have>>* (2 Corinthians 8:12). In the same letter, Paul demonstrates the generosity of the Macedonians to encourage the Corinthians and now, through scripture, to all believers to give with joy and thanksgiving in our hearts: *<<for God loves a cheerful giver>>* (2 Corinthians 9:7b).

Christ miraculously fed thousands (5,000 in Matthew Chapter 14, Mark Chapter 6, Luke Chapter 9 and John Chapter 6; 4,000 in Matthew Chapter 15 and Mark Chapter 8), but here people gave to meet the needs of others by the miracle of grace.

⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47

Praising God. One of the characteristics of true revival is a desire to spend much time in worship.

And the Lord added to their number is again an affirmation of God's sovereignty in salvation, since he alone can change the human heart to enable true repentance and faith.

Note that it was the Lord that added to the church daily, not the disciples.

A real attraction to the faith was that the disciples reached out in love and acceptance to those who were once part of the cruel mob that had shouted 'crucify him'.