

Research for Acts 2 Dr. Pierre Cannings

. The Miracle at Pentecost (2:1–13)

Everything in chap. 1 is preparatory to the great outburst of the Spirit who poured upon the praying band of believers at Pentecost. Over a period of forty days they had listened to the teaching of their Lord (1:3). They had received his commission to be worldwide witnesses, and they had been given his promise that the Holy Spirit would be granted them as empowerment for that mission (1:5; 1:8). With the Lord's final departure in his ascension, nothing was left to do but to wait and pray for the fulfillment of that promise (1:14). In chap. 2 their prayer was answered in a mighty way.

Pentecost has often been referred to as "the birth of the church." 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.⁶¹⁸ Perhaps even more striking was the prominent role of the Spirit in equipping Jesus for his ministry. The Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism "in bodily form" (Luke 3:22). Likewise in its "baptism" of the Spirit (Acts 1:5), the church received the Spirit in visible form (2:3). Endowed with the Spirit (Luke 4:1, 14), Jesus delivered his "inaugural address" at Nazareth, the keynote speech that set the pattern for his entire ministry (4:18).⁶²⁹ The Nazareth sermon announced the fulfillment in his own ministry of the messianic prophecies and, with its examples from Elijah and Elisha, pointed beyond the boundaries of Israel to the worldwide scope of his messianic mission. With this point the congregation at Nazareth was enraged and rejected him. The "inaugural address" at Pentecost was Peter's speech (Acts 2:14–40). It too was delivered through the power of the Spirit, which had just come upon him. It too dealt with the fulfillment of the messianic times. It too assumed a worldwide outreach (2:39), and it too would be rejected by a large part of the Jewish community according to the unfolding story of Acts.

Acts 2 forms a unity around the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. It falls into three main parts: (1) the miracle at Pentecost (vv. 1–13), (2) Peter's sermon and its tremendous results (vv. 14–41), and (3) a picture of the life held in common by the greatly enlarged community of believers in Jerusalem (vv. 42–47). The first segment falls into two main

¹⁶⁸ Carver, *Acts*, 23.

²⁶⁹ There are many interesting points of contact between the initial sermons of Jesus (Luke 4), Peter (Acts 2), and Paul (Acts 13). For a thorough comparison, see R. I. Garrett, Jr., "The Inaugural Addresses of Luke-Acts," Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1980.

parts: (a) the coming of the gift of the Spirit on the band of believers (2:1–4) and (b) the manifestation of this gift to the Jewish crowd (2:5–13).

(1) The Gift of the Spirit (2:1–4)

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

The Setting (2:1)

2:1 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 (1:4f.).⁷³⁰ The time of waiting was over. Luke was much more vague in his reference to the place. They were all together “in one place” (*epi to auto*). The next verse specifies that it was a “house” in which they were sitting. But where was the house? Was it a room in the temple? That would certainly explain how a large crowd could have been so quickly attracted to the scene. Luke, however, usually referred to the temple by the normal designation *hieron*, never by the word “house”; and there was really no room in the temple where a gathering of laypeople could “sit.” The most likely place for the gathering is the upper room where they had been praying. Perhaps it was near the temple, where large crowds would assemble on a feast day.

Who were the people gathered in the upper room? On whom did the Spirit descend?

Was it the 120 mentioned in 1:15 or only the Twelve apostles? In 2:14 Luke mentioned only the Twelve, but there it probably was to connect them with Peter’s speech, which appealed to their special role as eyewitnesses to the resurrection (2:32). The presence of the large crowd testifying to the witness of the Spirit-filled Christians (2:6–11) would indicate that the full 120 were involved, as would the text Peter quoted from Joel that refers to women as well as men prophesying (2:17–18).

Pentecost was the second of the three great harvest festivals of Judaism, coming between Passover and Tabernacles. In the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor 16:8) it is referred to as “Pentecost,” which means *fiftieth* in Greek. In the Old Testament it is referred to as the Festival of Weeks or of the Firstfruits, the first term referring to its coming a “week of weeks” after Passover, the second to the fact that an offering of two loaves prepared from the wheat harvest was made on this day. Although there was a difference among the Sadducees and the Pharisees over the precise reckoning of the day, the Pharisaic procedure seems to have been followed in the period prior to a.d. 70 in which Pentecost was reckoned as coming exactly fifty days after the first day of the Passover.⁷⁴¹ It was a day of “solemn assembly,” and all work ceased. It was also one of the most popular

³⁷⁰ Compare Luke 9:51, where the same construction marks an important stage in salvation history. The time had come for Jesus to go to Jerusalem and face his destiny there. See E. Lohse, “Die Bedeutung des Pfingstberichtes im Rahmen des lukanischen Geschichtswerkes,” *EvTh* (1958): 422–36.

⁴⁷¹ For a full discussion, see E. Lohse, “πεντηκοστή” *TDNT* 6:44–53.

pilgrim festivals, even more so than Passover, which was likely due to the improved weather conditions by the time of Pentecost.

The Event (2:2–4)

2:2 The coming of the Spirit is described in three carefully constructed parallel statements, each pointing to an aspect of the event: a *sound* came ... and it filled the house (v. 2); *tongues* appeared ... and one sat on each of them (v. 3); they were filled with the Holy Spirit ... and *began to speak* in other tongues (v. 4). The emphasis is on the objectivity of the event. It was audible, visible, and manifested itself in an outward demonstration of inspired speech. The audible manifestation is described as coming suddenly from heaven. The picture is of a blowing blast of wind, like the roar of a tornado.⁷⁵² Wind phenomena often accompany an appearance by God in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Kgs 19:11; Isa 66:15).⁷⁶³ In Greek *pneuma* has the double connotation of both wind and Spirit, and that connection is to be seen here. As in Ezekiel the wind, the breath of Yahweh, is God's Spirit, which brings life in the vision of the dry bones (Ezek 37:9–14).

2:3 The same sort of double meaning is found in v. 3 in the reference to the “tongues.” Much as in English, the Greek word *glōssa* can refer to the physical organ of the tongue. It also has the metaphorical meaning of what is spoken by the tongue, spoken *language*. So here, the lapping flames that had the visible likeness to tongues enabled the believers to speak in inspired language. Again it was a question of a heavenly manifestation. Throughout the Old Testament fire phenomena are used to depict the presence of God (cf. Exod 3:2; 19:18; 1 Kgs 18:38–39; Ezek 1:27). Here the fire is described as “separated.” The picture is that of one great flame representing the Spirit, which separates into many tongues of flame with one resting on each individual.⁷⁷⁴ Luke was well aware that he was using metaphorical language in these verses by carefully employing adverbs of comparison: “like the blowing of a violent wind” (v. 2), “what seemed to be tongues” (literally, “tongues as of fire,” v. 3). He was dealing with the transcendent, that which is beyond ordinary human experience and can only be expressed in earthly analogies.

2:4 Verse 4 gives the result of the Spirit's coming on those gathered in the upper room. They were “filled with the Holy Spirit,” and this led them to “speak in other tongues.” From this point on in Acts, the gift of the Spirit became a normative concomitant of becoming a Christian believer (2:38). The expression of this differs; in 9:17 Saul is said to have been “filled” with the Spirit, as here. 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

⁵⁷² Robertson, *WP* 3:20.

⁶⁷³ Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:248.

⁷⁷⁴ There is a curious shift of number in v. 3 from plural (“separated tongues”) to singular “it sat.” The NIV obscures any shift: “tongues ... separated and came.” The missing singular antecedent is surely *ad sensum*: “tongues of flame, and [one] sat on each of them.”

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).

What is one to make of their speaking in “other tongues”? Does this refer to their speaking in languages other than their own native tongue, or does it refer to the phenomenon of glossolalia, speaking in tongues, the ecstatic “Spirit language” Paul dealt with in 1 Cor 12–14? Or does it refer to a miracle of hearing as well? A good case can be made for each of these views. Those who consider the miracle to be speaking in tongues can point to its being a well-attested, early Christian phenomenon (1 Cor 12–14) as well as to its seeming appearance elsewhere in Acts (10:46; 19:6). It is described as “declaring the wonders of God” in v. 11, and this could be likened to Paul’s description of tongue-speaking as speaking to God and speaking mysteries in the Spirit (1 Cor 14:2). Above all, the charge of some of the bystanders that the Christians were “drunk” could be linked to the ecstatic nature of tongue-speaking. Paul likewise worried that outsiders might consider the Corinthian tongue-speakers to be “out of [their] mind” (1 Cor 14:23).⁷⁸⁵

There are strong reasons, however, for questioning whether the Pentecost experience could have been the sort of ecstatic language Paul dealt with at Corinth. From Paul’s treatment the glossolalia there was clearly not rational discourse but an ecstatic “praise language,” edifying to the individual tongue-speaker, but not to the church (1 Cor 14:1–5). It was as meaningless to others as indistinct musical notes or a language totally foreign to them (1 Cor 14:6–12). For the church Paul preferred to speak “five intelligible words” (“with my mind,” RSV) than ten thousand “in tongues” (1 Cor 14:19). The Pentecost experience did seem to involve intelligible communication to those in the Jewish crowd.

The word “tongue” may be ambiguous in v. 4, but the word “dialect,” or “language” (*dialektos*), in vv. 6, 8 is not. It can only refer to a known language or dialect. Luke used the expression “to speak in other [*heteros*, “different”] tongues [languages]” in v. 4, thus making a distinction from tongue-speaking (which he did know and referred to in 10:46). Likewise, in v. 4b he used an uncommon Greek word in the phrase “as the Spirit enabled them.” This rare word means *to utter, to declare, to speak with gravity* and is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for prophesying (cf. 1 Chr 25:1; Ezek 13:9; Mic 5:12). Finally, the long list of nations in vv. 9–11 is sandwiched between references to people who marvel at hearing the Christians in their own language (vv. 8,

⁷⁸⁵ For the view that Pentecost involved glossolalia, see I. J. Martin III, “Glossolalia in the Apostolic Church,” *JBL* 63 (1944): 123–30; W. Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 73; C. S. C. Williams, *Acts*, 63. There are many modifications to this view such as that of Bruce, *Acts*: NIC, 56–58, who sees it as the sort of glossolalia that contains many foreign phrases, as attested by Pentecostals. Unlikely is the theory of W. S. Thomson that the Christians repeated the ecstatic praise language of the pilgrims, whom they had earlier heard worshiping in the temple: “Tongues at Pentecost,” *ExpTim* 38 (1926–27): 284–86.

11b). The list obviously illustrates the breadth of the languages that were spoken.⁷⁹⁶ Awareness of this has led some scholars to postulate a miracle of “hearing.” The usual form of this view assumes that the Christians experienced glossolalia, but the crowd understood this as their own language through a miracle of hearing. This would emphasize the word “hear” in vv. 6, 11b: “each one heard them speaking in his own language.”⁷¹⁰⁷ The major problem with this view is that it presupposes the reception of the Spirit on the part of the crowd. Indeed, if the miracle was in the crowd’s hearing rather than in the believers’ speaking, one wonders why it was even necessary for Luke to tell of the Spirit’s coming so powerfully upon them.

When one’s attention is focused on Luke’s story of Pentecost, the flow of the narrative does seem to favor the view of a miracle of foreign speech. Filled with the Spirit, the Christians began to speak in tongues different from their own (v. 4). A crowd was attracted and utterly amazed to hear these Galileans speaking their languages (v. 7), a crowd that represented the greater portion of the entire Jewish Diaspora (vv. 9–11). Certainly it was an ecstatic experience. The disciples were brim-full of the Spirit. They praised God; they magnified his name (v. 11);⁷¹¹⁸ they prophesied (v. 17). The members of the crowd were bewildered. It had to be a sign, but what did it mean (v. 12)? As in every crowd, there were scoffers (v. 13). Still the inspired speech of the Christians demonstrated the spiritual power present that day. All were prepared to hear Peter’s explanation.

(2) *The Witness to the Spirit (2:5–13)*

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

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

The Gathering of the Crowd (2:5–8)

⁹⁷⁶ Exemplary of many who argue for a foreign language phenomenon is E. F. Harrison, *Interpreting Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 59–62. A modification of this view found in the more radical critics is that Luke was responsible for the foreign language motif, having altered an original experience of glossolalia, e.g., Conzelmann, *Acts*, 15–16.

¹⁰⁷⁷ This was suggested by Lake, *Beginnings* 5:111–21. A somewhat modified view that involves the ecstatic utterance of Scripture is that of R. O. P. Taylor, “The Tongues of Pentecost,” *ExpTim* 40 (1928–29): 300–03.

¹¹⁷⁸ Several scholars who see the miracle as one of speaking in foreign languages emphasize that it probably consisted primarily of praise. See Dupont, *Salvation of Gentiles*, 48–50; Kremer, *Pfingstbericht*, 122.

2:5 The constituency of the Pentecost crowd is given in v. 5. They were pious Jews “from every nation under heaven.” The NIV describes them as “God-fearing,” but “pious” would be a less confusing translation. “God-fearing” is a term used elsewhere in Acts for Gentiles who, like Cornelius (10:2), worshiped God and supported the synagogue but had not become full converts to Judaism. The word used here is *eulabeis*, which means *pious* and in Luke-Acts is always used of Jews, never of Gentiles (cf. Luke 2:25; Acts 8:2; 22:12). These devout Jews are described as “staying” (or “dwelling,” RSV) 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. A large contingency of these in Jerusalem has been well documented from inscriptions and excavated graves.⁷¹²⁹ The “Synagogue of the Freedmen” in which Stephen debated was likely comprised of them (6:9). A few manuscripts omit the reference to Jews in v. 5, and some scholars opt for so doing who want to see here the beginning of the Gentile mission.⁸¹³⁰ It is most unlikely that the omission is the correct reading and even more unlikely that the Gentile mission began here. The Gentile mission was a hard-won battle in Acts and only began in earnest with Peter’s witness to Cornelius (chap. 10).

Some have objected that to see these as Jews living in Jerusalem would render meaningless the witness of the Christians in foreign tongues, since they would surely have some proficiency in the Aramaic dialect spoken in Jerusalem. That, however, is to miss altogether the point of the speech miracle. The miracle was a demonstration of the Spirit’s power and presence: these Diaspora Jews heard their own tongue spoken (not Aramaic or Greek) and realized that this should have been impossible for the “Galileans.” This “sign” prepared them for Peter’s speech, which probably was in Aramaic and which they indeed understood. The note that they represented “every nation under heaven” is perhaps a bit of poetic license but a not altogether inaccurate description of the extent of the Jewish Diaspora.

2:6–8 The crowd is said to have come together at the “sound.” What sound, that of the rushing wind or that coming from the Spirit-filled Christians? One cannot be certain, since Luke left out more detail than he told. The inspired Christians doubtless left the upper room and rushed forth, most likely to the temple precincts. Only there would be found sufficient room for a crowd of 3,000 plus. There also the crowds were to be found, assembled for the Pentecost festivities. Most likely the inspired cries of the Christians attracted the onlookers.⁸¹⁴¹ Certainly the inspired speech perplexed them “because each one heard them speaking in his own language.” Luke heaped up words to describe the crowd’s perplexity. They were “utterly amazed” (“astounded and amazed,” author’s translation, v. 7), not at what the Christians said but that such simple Galileans would know their languages. The label “Galilean” need not imply that all 120 were from Galilee, though a sizable band of disciples had accompanied Jesus from there to

¹²⁷⁹ Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:251.

¹³⁸⁰ For example, Lake, *Beginnings* 5:111–21.

¹⁴⁸¹ Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text*, 3rd ed., rev. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 165. (Hereafter referred to as *Acts*: GT.)

Jerusalem (cf. Luke 8:1–3; 10:1–17; also see 23:49).⁸¹⁵² Verse 8 basically repeats v. 6, with the added note that it was in their “native” tongue, the language group into which they were born, that they were hearing these “Galileans.” This prepares for vv. 9–11, which list the various areas of the Diaspora represented.

The Composition of the Crowd (2:9–11a)

2:9–11a Verses 9–11a are a part of the direct discourse spoken by the crowd, but likely they are a note from Luke enumerating the various nationalities present. The list has long intrigued scholars. It begins in what is present-day Iran (Parthia) and then proceeds across the Middle East (Mesopotamia), then southward to Judea, then north to central Turkey (Cappadocia), to northern Turkey (Pontus), eastward to the Aegean coast of Turkey (Asia), inland to Phrygia, then south to the Mediterranean coast of Turkey (Pamphylia). To this point, with the exception of Judea, which seems strangely out of place, the progress is a more-or-less regular curve, from southeast to north to southwest. After Pamphylia no real pattern is discernible. The catalog covers North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Cyrenaica), then north and west all the way to Rome, then southeast to the Mediterranean island of Crete, and finally much farther east and southward to Arabia. There are some striking omissions, areas of particular prominence in Acts, like Syria, Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia. Then there are the “problem” references, such as Judea. From ancient times interpreters have emended the text to give a more natural reference than the Judeans, who were scarcely foreigners in Jerusalem. Tertullian suggested Armenia, for example, and Chrysostom India.⁸¹⁶³ The most natural explanation would be that Judea is included in the widest sense as the extent of the Davidic Empire, from the Euphrates to Egypt. It would thus come naturally after Mesopotamia and would include Syria as well.⁸¹⁷⁴ Reference is often made to an astrological chart of the fourth century a.d. from Paulus Alexandrinus that links various nations to the signs of the Zodiac. A number of scholars have argued that Luke used an

¹⁵⁸² Bruce notes that Galilean diction was quite distinct by “its confusion or loss of laryngals and aspirates,” *Acts: NIC*, 59, n. 15.

¹⁶⁸³ G. D. Kilpatrick, “A Jewish Background to Acts 2:9–11?” *JJS* 26 (1975): 48–49. Kilpatrick’s own suggestion is that the list came from the Jewish community of Rome and enumerated the places of origin of its members, which would explain the presence of Judea as well as its ending with the resident Jews and proselytes of Rome. Another suggestion is that Judea should be emended to Iberia, the ancient name for modern Georgia: J. M. Ross, “‘Judaea’ in Acts 2:9,” *ExpTim* 96 (1985): 217. Reicke, *Glaube und Leben*, 35–36, sees the list as originating in Antioch, which would explain both the presence of Judea as well as the absence of Syria.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Bruce, *Acts: NIC*, 62.

earlier form of Paulus's list in his catalog.⁸¹⁸⁵ B. Metzger has shown rather convincingly that Luke's list has little in common with Paulus's chart.⁸¹⁹⁶

Most attempts at uncovering the source of the Lukan list have either been unconvincing or demanded radical surgery, such as the elimination of Judea or Rome or Cretans and Arabians, often with the desire to end up with a neat list of twelve (one for each apostle or one for each sign of the Zodiac). It seems prudent to stick with the list as it is and view it in line with Luke's purposes in providing it. The territories Luke listed all had extensive Jewish communities.⁸²⁰⁷ Parthia, Medea, Elam, Mesopotamia had large groups of Jews from the time of the exile on. There was a large Jewish contingent in North Africa, Philo noting that two of the five wards of Alexandria were comprised of Jews. Acts witnesses to the Jewish representation in Phrygia and Asia, and their presence in Pontus and Cappadocia is amply evidenced. The Jewish population in Rome is well-known. The single exception to the resident Jews at Pentecost may be the Romans, who are described as "visitors" in verse 10b.⁸²¹⁸ The verse division at v. 11 is somewhat disconcerting. The phrase "both Jews and converts to Judaism" probably refers to Roman Jews and Gentiles who converted to Judaism by embracing circumcision and the Jewish law, as well as by providing for a sacrifice in the temple.⁸²²⁹ The reference to Cretans and Arabians comes at the end of the list, almost as an afterthought. There were Jewish communities on Crete as well as in Arabia, which most likely refers to the Nabatean kingdom that extended the length of the Arabian peninsula from the Red Sea to the Euphrates. Perhaps the mention of these two locales was Luke's way of rounding off his list—not only mainlanders but islanders and desert dwellers as well. In all he gave a rather representative picture of the Jewish Diaspora and its presence at Pentecost.

¹⁸⁸⁵ This has been argued in an article by S. Weinstock (*JRS* 38 [1948]: 43–46), and it has been more recently advanced by J. A. Brinkman, "The Literary Background of the 'Catalogue of Nations' (Acts 2:9–11)," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 418–27. A very different approach is advocated by E. Guting, "Der geographische Horizont der sogenannten Volkerliste des Lukas (Acta 2:9–11)," *ZNW* 66 (1975): 149–69. Guting sees Luke as responsible for composing the list, which was based on the languages of his day along the lines of a similar linguistic enumeration in Strabo.

¹⁹⁸⁶ B. Metzger, "Ancient Astrological Geography and Acts 2:9–11," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. Gasque and R. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 123–33. Metzger shows that at most there are five agreements between the lists, which is no more than coincidence.

²⁰⁸⁷ For an excellent summary of the evidence for Jewish settlement in these regions, see D. J. Williams, *Acts*, 28–29.

²¹⁸⁸ "Romans" possibly refers to Roman citizens of the wider empire, such as Paul, as Cadbury and Lake argue in *Beginnings* 4:20. In the context of this list, however, it more likely is a geographical reference to actual residents of the city of Rome.

²²⁸⁹ Possibly also by undergoing proselyte baptism, although this practice is not documented with certainty before the second century A.D. See G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 1:327–38.

The Response of the Crowd (2:11b–13)

2:11b–13 Verse 11b picks up the narrative, once again expressing the amazement of the Jewish crowd.⁹²³⁰ This time the content of the Christians' speaking is given, the only hint in the entire narrative about what they were saying. They were declaring the "wonders" of God. Their testimony was the language of praise. They may even have burst forth in song, for such can be a natural expression when one is filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18–19). They were "utterly amazed" (cf. v. 7a) and wondered, "What does this mean?" (v. 12). They had observed the miracle of the Christians speaking in their own language, but there had as yet been no interpretation about the meaning of this sign. They were thus prepared for the explanation Peter would soon provide. Others, however, were more skeptical—"no spiritual power here, just people who've had too much to drink" (author's paraphrase, v. 13).⁹²⁴¹ 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). *Overview.* Before turning to Peter's speech, it would be well to take a last overview of the Pentecost narrative and summarize its major themes. One of the most commonly cited interpretive keys for understanding Acts 2:1–13 has been to compare it with the giving of the law at Sinai. This comparison is based on rabbinic sources which show that later Judaism celebrated the giving of the law at Sinai as a part of their Pentecost liturgy. If this was so, we can conclude that Luke wanted to show that the Spirit, not the law, is the mark of the new dispensation in Christ.⁹²⁵² Two problems exist with this view. The first is the lateness of the sources. Although it is beyond dispute that second-century Judaism celebrated the giving of the Torah as part of its Pentecost

²³⁹⁰ The Western text understood vv. 9–11 as Luke's comment and so reads "they hear" instead of "we hear" in 11, to make this clear.

²⁴⁹¹ The word used for wine here is γλευκός, which usually refers to "new wine." Following the usual chronology of Pentecost, there would have been no "new wine" available, the grape harvest still being nearly two months in the future. Most interpreters deal with this by observing that new wine was often kept fresh (and thus "new" or "sweet") for as long as a year by immersing it in water. An interesting suggestion is that Qumran seems to have kept three "Pentecosts," each separated by fifty days, to celebrate the wheat, wine, and oil harvests, respectively. The association here would thus be with the second, wine Pentecost, which came 100 days after Passover. See J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Ascension of Christ and Pentecost," *TS* 45 (1984): 434–36.

²⁵⁹² For a "classic" presentation of this view, see W. L. Knox, *The Acts*, NCB (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 80–84. See also N. Snaith, "Pentecost, the Day of Power," *ExpTim* 43 (1931–32): 379–80.

liturgy, no clear first-century references support such a connection.⁹²⁶³ More important is that Luke himself did not make any such connection explicit. The superiority of the Spirit over the law is certainly a major Pauline theme (cf. 2 Cor 3:6–18), but nowhere in Luke’s account of Pentecost is any allusion made to the Torah: not in the narrative and not in Peter’s speech. Luke’s emphases lay along different paths.

Another common interpretation sees Acts 2:1–13 as depicting the “reversal of Babel.”⁹²⁷⁴ This view sees the disunity of humanity that resulted from the many languages of Babel being overcome by a new language of the Spirit, which brings a new unity. Jewish tradition maintained that all people, and even the animals, spoke one common language in Eden. It was lost by the animals in Eden and by humans at Babel but will be restored at the end time.⁹²⁸⁵ Certainly the reversal-of-Babel understanding is an attractive, and to some extent legitimate, interpretation of Pentecost. Luke, however, did not seem to have made the connection. Nothing in the text of Acts 2 recalls Gen 11:1–9. When Luke saw connections with an Old Testament tradition, he usually gave echoes from the Old Testament text, and these are lacking here. This is not to say that it is illegitimate to make such an application when expounding on the miracle at Pentecost. It is certainly not contrary to the meaning of the event. The Spirit does unify humanity around the lordship of Christ, and that is a major message of Acts and even of this immediate context (cf. 2:41–47). One thing should be kept in mind when expounding this theme, however. It would be contrary to the text to speak of the Spirit giving a new common language. The opposite is rather the case. The Spirit gave the Christians many languages, all the languages represented by the nationalities listed in vv. 9–11. And is this not how the Spirit continues to work? He empowers Christian witnesses to take the gospel to the many different languages of the world to create a worldwide people of God, united by a common confession in the lordship of Christ.⁹²⁹⁶

²⁶⁹³ Often cited is a tradition in Philo (*De Dec.*, 9.11) of a speech miracle at Sinai where the Torah is said to have rested on the Israelites in the form of fiery tongues and endowed them with a gift of speech. Philo, however, never connected Sinai with Pentecost, nor did any other first-century source. See Lohse “πεντηκοστή,” *TDNT* 6:48–49. Some evidence in *Jub.* and 1QS suggests that some Jewish sectarian circles celebrated Pentecost as a covenant renewal, but whether they also connected this with the giving of the Torah is uncertain. See I. H. Marshall, “The Significance of Pentecost,” *SJT* 30 (1977): 347–69. Dupont, *Salvation of the Gentiles*, 34–45, has attempted to link Acts 2:1–13 by pointing to the number of words it has in common with the LXX text of Exod 19. Most of the parallel vocabulary, however, consists of stock theophany terminology rather than any dependence of Acts on the Sinai text: Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:246.

²⁷⁹⁴ For representatives of this view, see J. G. Davies, “Pentecost and Glossolalia,” *JTS*, n.s. 3 (1952): 228–31; Rackham, *Acts*, 19. Rackham considered the list of nations in Gen 10, followed by the account of Babel in Gen 11:1–9, as “most obvious” evidence that Luke intended to connect his account with Babel.

²⁸⁹⁵ This tradition is found in Josephus (*Ant.* 1.1.4), in Philo (*De Confus. Ling.* 3.405), and in other first-century sources. See *Beginnings* 5:115–16.

²⁹⁹⁶ Dupont, *Nouvelles Etudes*, 196–98.

What, then, are the emphases Luke expounded in his treatment of Pentecost? First, his major emphasis doubtless was that the church has now been empowered for its mission. Everything in chap. 1 has anticipated this event (1:5, 8). With the coming of the Spirit, the witness began. It began with the enthusiastic praise of the Spirit-filled Christians and the inspired sermon of Peter, and it resulted in the immediate harvest of 3,000 converts to Christ (2:41). And there is certainly a second, closely related theme of the text. Just as Pentecost was the festival of the firstfruits, so these are the “firstfruits” of the harvest in the Spirit.⁹³⁰⁷ 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. The worldwide scope of the Christian witness is anticipated at Pentecost in the roll call of nations (vv. 9–11). To be sure, it was a question of only Jews and Jewish proselytes at this point, but they were Diaspora Jews and represented “every nation under heaven” (v. 5). Already the national barrier had been overcome. The racial barriers would be overcome, and the gospel would be shared with “every *people* under heaven” (alternate rendering of the Greek *ethnos*). Pentecost foreshadowed the worldwide mission. Finally, the pouring out of the Spirit has eschatological significance. It inaugurated the final period in God’s plan of salvation. He acted decisively and definitely in Jesus Christ to create a people for his own. The Spirit is the sign of these final times. This central emphasis comprised a major part of Peter’s sermon.

8. Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost (2:14–41)

Peter’s sermon comprised the first of the “missionary addresses” of Acts. C. H. Dodd popularized the view that these addresses, such as the one here and those in chaps. 10 and 13, represented the early “kerygma” of the church, the primitive form of gospel preaching, usually consisting of scriptural proofs concerning the Messiah, some reference to Jesus’ ministry, an emphasis on his death and resurrection, and a call to repentance.⁹³¹⁸ Although Dodd’s structure may be too “pat”—there is considerable variance in pattern among the speeches—nonetheless he has isolated the major recurring elements in the missionary addresses to Jews in Acts.

In this, Peter’s first sermon, the element of scriptural proof dominates. Three major texts form the framework of the speech: Joel 2:28–32; Ps 16:8–11; 110:1. Echoes of other texts and Old Testament traditions occur as well. The sermon falls into three main divisions. First, the full citation of the Joel text serves to connect the sermon with the immediate occasion of the Spirit-filled Christians (2:14–21). The central section of the speech establishes that Jesus is the Messiah, with Ps 16:8–11 pointing to his

³⁰⁹⁷ Fitzmyer, “Ascension and Pentecost,” 439. See also the useful summary of the themes in the Pentecost narrative by A. T. Lincoln, “Theology and History in the Interpretation of Luke’s Pentecost,” *ExpTim* 96 (1985): 204–09.

³¹⁹⁸ C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936). Many recent critics have challenged the primitive nature of these Acts speeches, seeing them as more reflective of Luke’s own Christology; e.g., R. F. Zehnle, *Peter’s Pentecost Discourse: Tradition and Lukan Reinterpretation in Peter’s Speeches of Acts 2–3*, SBLMS 15 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971).

resurrection and Ps 110:1 to his exaltation (2:22–36). Finally, there is a call to repentance, with a final allusion to the text of Joel to “round off” the sermon and a report of the response of the Jewish crowd (2:37–41).⁹³²⁹

(1) Scriptural Proof Concerning the Pentecost Experience (2:14–21)

¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁵These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, 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.

¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

¹⁹I will show wonders in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ ”

2:14–16 Verses 14–16 form the introduction to Peter’s sermon, marking the transition from the Spirit-filled utterance of the Christians to Peter’s explanation of the event. Peter stood up along with the eleven other apostles. The eleven are not incidental to the narrative. As the Twelve, the apostles were the witnesses to the resurrection, which would be the central subject of Peter’s sermon. As always in the early chapters of Acts, Peter was their representative, the spokesman for the testimony of all Twelve. Peter “raised his voice,” a common Semitic expression for beginning to speak. He “addressed” the crowd. The verb means *to speak seriously, with gravity*, a word often used for prophetic, inspired utterance.¹⁰³³⁰ He most likely spoke in the Aramaic dialect used in Jerusalem, which all these residents of Jerusalem would have understood (cf. 2:5, *katoikountes*, “residents” [author’s translation]). “Fellow Jews” and “all of you who live in Jerusalem” refer to the same group. Such parallel expression typifies Semitic style, as also the expression “give ear to my words” (NIV: “listen carefully to what I

³²⁹⁹ There are many variations on this outline, with many scholars separating vv. 22–36 into two sections: vv. 22–28 giving the scriptural proof of the resurrection, and vv. 29–36 the connection of this to Pentecost; e.g., Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:265 (cf. Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:116). A rather original chiasmic structure is suggested by G. Krodel, *Acts*, ACNT (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 83.

³³¹⁰⁰ Ἀποφθέγγομαι: The same word used of the Spirit-filled Christians in 2:4.

say”). Luke’s writing skill is apparent by his preservation of the Semitic flavor of Peter’s language.

Nine a.m. (v. 15) was a customary prayer hour (literally, “the third hour”), and Jews would only eat after that—at the fourth hour.¹⁰³⁴¹ Probably this is an example of the sort of humor that runs throughout Acts: “Folks don’t get drunk first thing in the morning ... that comes later in the day” (author’s paraphrase). That would be especially true of a solemn feast day like Pentecost when the celebrating would only begin in earnest in the evening. Often the speeches in Acts begin with a correction of a misunderstanding (cf. 3:12; 14:15), a natural attention-getting device. Here, after having obtained the crowd’s attention, Peter explained the real basis behind all the ecstatic behavior at Pentecost: the outpouring of the Spirit predicted by the prophet Joel (v. 16).¹⁰³⁵²

2:17–21 Peter gave the relevant passage in Joel in full. Luke reproduced this for his readers in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. The Septuagint of Joel 2:28–32 (LXX, 3:1–5) is followed faithfully with only a few minor, though perhaps significant, differences. Joel’s prophecy was originally given after a locust plague had ravaged the land, creating a severe famine. Joel called the people to repentance, promising the restoration of their prosperity and going on to foresee the coming of the Day of the Lord, the dawn of the messianic age, when the Spirit would be poured out on all of Israel.

Peter could not miss its applicability to Pentecost. Joel began his prophecy by saying “and afterward.” Peter’s version refers more specifically to “in the last days,” reflecting his conviction that the messianic age had already dawned in the resurrection of Christ, that we are indeed already living in the final days of God’s saving history. Peter’s conviction was very much in keeping with the rabbinic consensus that the Spirit no longer rested on all Israel but would return as a universal gift at the end time. For Peter the universal pouring out of the Spirit on the whole Christian group was demonstration that the end time had come. Perhaps the clearest indication that the entire 120 received the Spirit at Pentecost is Joel’s inclusion of daughters as well as sons—all were prophesying. Joel undoubtedly had seen the Spirit’s outpouring only as a gift to Israel, and perhaps many of those Jewish-Christians at Pentecost saw it the same way. The remainder of Acts clarifies that the promise applies to the Gentiles as well: it is indeed poured out on “all people.”

Verse 18 is probably best understood as being parallel to v. 17. “My servants, both men and women” are the same as the sons and daughters, young and old of v. 17, with the added refinement that those who received God’s gift of the Spirit are indeed his servants.¹⁰³⁶³ The final phrase in v. 18 expands the text of Joel, reiterating the point made in v. 17, “They will prophesy.” Whatever the actual phenomenon at Pentecost, Peter emphasized here that it was prophecy, inspired utterance from the Lord.

³⁴¹⁰¹ That Jews were required to pray three times a day is well-established. There is some question, however, whether the hours were set at definite times in the first century. See Haenchen, *Acts*, 178, n. 8.

³⁵¹⁰² The Western text lacks the specific reference to Joel, and some commentators would follow that reading; e.g., *Beginnings* 4:21.

³⁶¹⁰³ D. C. Arichea, Jr., “Some Notes on Acts 2:17–21,” *BT* 35 (1984): 442–43.

The signs referred to in vv. 19–20 have often perplexed interpreters. Did Peter see them as having transpired at Pentecost, or did he relegate them to the final times, to the period of the second coming? Did he perhaps include them only in order to get to the crucial v. 21 with its reference to salvation, which would become the final appeal of his sermon? A key may perhaps be found in the little words “above” and “below,” which have been added to the Septuagint of Joel. D. Arichea has suggested that we may have a chiastic *a-b-b-a* pattern here with *a* comprising the signs above: the darkened sun, the blood-colored moon. The signs below are the blood, fire, and thick smoke, which could more easily be related to the events in Jesus’ passion and at Pentecost.¹⁰³⁷⁴ In any event the signs in v. 19 are standard apocalyptic language and almost certainly refer to the final cosmic events preceding the Parousia.

Verse 21 was the most important verse for Peter: “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” For Peter the “Lord” in the context of this sermon was Jesus Christ. Everything that followed in the sermon—Christ’s death, his resurrection, his exaltation—pointed in the same direction. Whoever calls on his name, whoever confesses him as Lord, will be saved. Appropriately, Peter concluded his appeal with this same theme of calling (v. 39).¹⁰³⁸⁵

(2) Scriptural Proof Concerning Christ’s Messiahship (2:22–36)

²²“Men of Israel, 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. ²³This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But 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.

²⁵David said about him:

“ ‘I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

²⁶Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will live in hope,

²⁷because you will not abandon me to the grave,

nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

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

you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. ³²God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³Exalted to the right hand

³⁷¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁸¹⁰⁵ The text of Joel seems to have influenced the entire text of Acts 2:1–16 to some extent. See C. A. Evans, “The Prophetic Setting of the Pentecost Sermon,” *ZNW* 74 (1983): 148–50.

of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

³⁵until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.’ ”

³⁶“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Acts 2:22–36 is the heart of Peter’s sermon. It begins with an introductory summary of God’s action in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ (vv. 22–24). A scriptural proof from Ps 16:8–11 then shows that Christ is indeed the expected Messiah, as his resurrection proves (vv. 25–31). A further scriptural proof from Ps 110:1 depicts how the risen Christ is now both Messiah and Lord exalted to the right hand of the Father (vv. 32–36).

Many interpreters feel that these verses incorporate the most primitive form of the Christian kerygma, in which the death of Christ is closely linked to his resurrection. The basic form of this confession is found throughout Acts and runs: “Jesus of Nazareth whom you killed ... but God raised.”¹⁰³⁹⁶ Here Peter expanded on the basic kerygmatic formula by referring briefly to the earthly ministry of Jesus.

2:22 Jesus is introduced as “Jesus of Nazareth,” a designation found frequently in Acts, which merely identifies Jesus by naming his hometown.¹⁰⁴⁰⁷ Jesus is further identified as “a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him” (v. 22). Here perhaps is found a very early Jewish-Christian Christology in which Jesus is depicted as the Messiah-designate. Undue stress should probably not be placed on the term “man,” which merely stresses his personhood rather than betraying a primitive adoptionism.¹⁰⁴¹⁸ The key term is “accredited” (*apodedeigmenon*), a semitechnical term often found in Greek papyri and inscriptions for office holders. It can either be used of those who already hold office or for those who have received appointment but have not yet entered into active service in the office. The latter sense seems to fit the context here. Peter depicted Jesus in his earthly ministry as being designated by God as Messiah but as only entering into the active function of that role upon his death and resurrection.¹⁰⁴²⁹

³⁹¹⁰⁶ Compare Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39–40; 13:28–30. See Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:271.

⁴⁰¹⁰⁷ There have been many attempts to find messianic links to the term “Nazarene,” such as deriving it from the Hebrew *nazer* for “root, shoot”; but it was a common Jewish practice to designate persons by means of their place of origin. That seems to be the function of “Nazarene” in connection with Jesus throughout Acts (cf. Acts 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9; Luke 18:37). The sole exception is Acts 24:5, where the term is used of the Christian group as a whole, the sect of the Nazarenes (i.e., those connected with Jesus). See *Beginnings* 5:356–57.

⁴¹¹⁰⁸ H. K. Mouton, “Acts 2:22, ‘Jesus, a man approved by God?’” *BT* 30 (1979): 344–45.

⁴²¹⁰⁹ *Beginnings* 4:23.

The proof that Jesus was God's appointed Messiah is to be seen in the "miracles, signs, and wonders" he performed during his earthly ministry. The dominant word is "miracles" (*dynameis*), the "mighty acts" of Jesus, the characteristic term used in the Gospels to depict his miracles. These are further defined as "wonders" (*terata*) and "signs" (*sēmeia*), things that point beyond themselves to a deeper reality. Throughout Acts the term "wonders" only occurs in conjunction with "signs," a testimony to the fact that mere marvels have no value in themselves except as they point beyond themselves to the divine power behind them and so lead to faith.¹¹⁴³⁰ Peter stressed that the Jerusalem Jews should have read the meaning of these signs and recognized Jesus as the appointed Messiah: "You yourselves know these things; you witnessed Jesus' miracles" (author's paraphrase, v. 22b). This portion of Peter's speech established the guilt of the Jewish crowd, put them under conviction, and so led them to repentance and faith.

2:23 Far from seeing in Jesus God's designated Messiah, they rejected him and gave him over to "wicked men" to be crucified (v. 23). All of this was, however, according to God's plan and foreknowledge. Peter carefully balanced the elements of God's divine purposes and the human responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus.¹¹⁴⁴¹ In the paradox of divine sovereignty and human freedom, Jesus died as the result of deliberate human decision made in the exercise of their God-given freedom of choice. The Jewish crowd at Pentecost could not avoid their responsibility in Jesus' death. Nonetheless, in the mystery of the divine will, God was working in these events of willful human rebellion to bring about his eternal purposes, bringing out of the tragedy of the cross the triumph of the resurrection. The Jews were not alone in their responsibility for Jesus' death, however. They worked through the agency of "lawless men" ("wicked," NIV), a term used by Jews to designate Gentiles. Jesus died on a Roman cross,¹¹⁴⁵² Gentiles too shared the guilt. Peter carefully balanced all the participants in the drama of Jesus' death—the guilt of Jew and Gentile alike, the triumphal sovereignty of God.

2:24 Verse 24 supplies the second member of the early Christian kerygma. True, humans nailed Jesus to a cross, but God raised him from the dead. This is further defined in an unusual manner: literally, "loosing him from the birth pangs [*ōdinas*] of death" ("freeing him from the agony of death"). "Birth pangs" seems an unusual metaphor to apply to death, and there may be a Hebrew translation variant behind the text here, with an original meaning of "cords, bonds," which would go naturally with loosing: Jesus was loosed from the cords of death that bound him.¹¹⁴⁶³ Still, one could

⁴³¹¹⁰ Carter and Earle, *Acts*, 36.

⁴⁴¹¹¹ This double dimension of divine purpose and human responsibility runs throughout Luke-Acts. On the one hand, Jesus' death follows the divine purpose: Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:37; 24:26; 24:44, 46; Acts 17:3. On the other, guilt of the people is strongly emphasized in the passion narrative: Luke 23:2, 4–5, 20–23, 25, 51.

⁴⁵¹¹² At v. 23b the Greek text reads simply "nailing him." Obviously the reference is to the cross, which must be supplied. See Robertson, *WP* 3:29.

⁴⁶¹¹³ The variation would be due to a confusion of הַבָּל ("pangs") with הַבֵּל ("cord"). Such a variant is found in Ps 18:5, where the Hebrew text has "cords of death" but which was translated "pangs of death" in the Septuagint. See Marshall, *Acts*, 75f.

perhaps see some appropriateness in the metaphor of “birth pangs,” since resurrection in a real sense is a new birth from death.¹¹⁴⁷⁴

2:25–28 Having set forth the basic Christian confession that Jesus is God’s appointed Messiah, Peter sought to support this with scriptural proof from Ps 16:8–11. Luke reproduced the psalm exactly as it appears in the Septuagint (vv. 25–28). The attribution of the psalm to David is particularly important in this instance, since its application to Jesus is based on the Davidic descent of the Messiah.¹¹⁴⁸⁵ Originally the psalm seems to have been a plea of the psalmist that God would vindicate him and that he might escape death and Sheol. Peter applied the psalm messianically, seeing in it a prophecy of David that could not ultimately apply to himself.¹¹⁴⁹⁶ Verse 27 is the key, in which David is seen to have expressed his confidence that he would not be abandoned to the grave, that God would not allow his holy one to suffer decay. The phrases are parallel, both expressing David’s hope that God would not abandon him to death. The NIV has wisely translated the Greek word *Hades* as “the grave.” The reference is to *Sheol*, the realm of the dead, and thus to death; and this is the sense in which Peter applied it.¹¹⁵⁰⁷ “Holy One” could apply to David as the anointed king, but for Peter it was even more appropriate as a designation for Christ. Verse 28 continues the quotation with v. 11 of Ps 16. One wonders why Peter included it since it adds nothing to his argument about the resurrection. Perhaps it was because of the reference to the “paths of life.” Christ is the “author of life” (cf. Acts 3:15), the leader in the path to new life by virtue of his resurrection.

In vv. 29–31 Peter applied the psalm to Christ. His reasoning was straightforward. It is well known that David died, so the psalm could not apply to him (v. 29). The psalm is thus a prophecy of David intended for a descendant who would sit on the Davidic throne (v. 30). The psalm applies to Christ, who indeed has risen and is thus the messianic descendant of whom David spoke (v. 31). The psalm is not used to prove the resurrection but rather the messianic status of Jesus. The proof of the resurrection is the eyewitness report of the disciples (v. 32). The psalm depicts David’s vision that the Messiah would not be bound by death. Since Christ alone has burst the bonds of death by virtue of his resurrection, then he alone is the Messiah whom David foresaw.¹¹⁵¹⁸

2:29 Some unusual ascriptions are given to David in these verses. “Patriarch” (v. 29) was a term generally reserved for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons; but

⁴⁷¹¹⁴ D. J. Williams, *Acts*, 34; Rackham, *Acts*, 29.

⁴⁸¹¹⁵ In first-century Judaism all the psalms were attributed to David, and this understanding is followed faithfully throughout Acts (cf. 1:16; 2:34).

⁴⁹¹¹⁶ The Septuagintal form of the psalm has a decidedly eschatological slant. Such variants from the Hebrew text as the reading “in hope” (v. 26) instead of “securely” and “to see corruption” (v. 27) instead of “decay” allow an interpretation in terms of resurrection and immortality. See A. Schmitt, “Ps. 16, 8–11 *als Zeugnis der Auferstehung in der Apg.*,” *BZ* 17 (1973): 229–48.

⁵⁰¹¹⁷ Some have wanted to see a reference to Christ’s descent into hell here, but Hades cannot bear that meaning and in this context simply means *death*. See Robertson, *WP* 3:31.

⁵¹¹¹⁸ Dupont, *Salvation of the Gentiles*, 106–10.

there is some evidence that by Peter's day the term had been extended to include David and others.¹¹⁵²⁹ Equally unusual is the inclusion of David among the prophets in v. 30, but again there is first-century evidence that the term was occasionally applied to him.¹²⁵³⁰ The site of David's tomb mentioned in v. 29 is no longer certain but was probably on the south side of the southeast hill of Jerusalem near the pool of Siloam. Josephus said that John Hyrcanus looted the tomb of 3,000 talents of silver during the siege of Jerusalem in 135/134 b.c. and that Herod attempted the same. According to Josephus, Herod's attempt was thwarted when two of his men were killed by a sudden burst of flame upon entering the tomb. Having second thoughts, Herod abandoned the project and built a white marble portico over the tomb.¹²⁵⁴¹

2:30–31 Behind the oath referred to in v. 30 stands Nathan's prophecy (Ps 132:11; 2 Sam 7:12–13) that God would establish an eternal kingdom with one of David's descendants, a prophecy that had come to be understood messianically.¹²⁵⁵² Peter's application of the original Davidic psalm to Christ may seem somewhat strained but was very much in line with Hebrew thought, which saw a close link between individuals and their descendants. The Greek expresses this concept quite graphically with the phrase "from the fruit of his loins" ("one of his descendants," NIV).¹²⁵⁶³ Since David died, Peter had to have been speaking of a descendant, a descendant who fulfilled the words of David by not being abandoned in the grave or suffering the decay of death (v. 31). Only one has ever conquered the grave, so David must have foreseen the resurrection of the Messiah. Jesus' resurrection links him to David's prophecy. It follows that Jesus is the Messiah.

2:32–35 From resurrection Peter then proceeded to the exaltation of Christ. Christ is indeed the Messiah, for God has raised him, fulfilling the prophecy of David. The proof of Jesus' resurrection is the eyewitness report of the apostles (v. 32). The exaltation has already been implicitly mentioned by the reference to the enthronement of David's descendant in v. 30. Now it becomes explicit in v. 33. God has exalted Christ to his right hand and given him the gift of the Holy Spirit, which has now been poured out. Just as the apostles were witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, so the Jewish crowd itself was witness to the exaltation of Christ as they had witnessed the gift of the outpoured Spirit at Pentecost.¹²⁵⁷⁴ Only the one exalted to God's right hand can dispense the Spirit.

⁵²¹¹⁹ Pesch, 1:123, cites Sir 47 as an example of the broader usage.

⁵³¹²⁰ Josephus (*Ant.* 6.8.2) describes David as "prophesying," as does 11QPss. See J. A. Fitzmyer, "David, 'Being Therefore a Prophet' ... (Acts 2:30)," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 332–39.

⁵⁴¹²¹ *Antiquities* 13.249 and *War* 1.61. See *Beginnings* 4:24.

⁵⁵¹²² There is evidence from the Qumran writings (4QFlor) that 2 Sam 7:10–16 was interpreted messianically. See Marshall, *Acts*, 77.

⁵⁶¹²³ Compare the same line of reasoning in Heb 7:9–10.

⁵⁷¹²⁴ A connection between the exaltation of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit is found by many exegetes by appealing to an early Christian use of Ps 68:18 in the form found in Eph 4:8. See J. Dupont, "Ascension du Christ et don de l'Esprit d'après Actes 2, 33," *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament*, 219–28. Allusions to Ps 68:18, however, are simply not apparent in Acts 2:33.

The Spirit has been poured out, as “you now see and hear.” It follows that the Christ has been exalted. But again Peter used a scriptural proof to back up this assertion, again a psalm of David (Ps 110:1). The reasoning is much the same as before. David spoke of one being exalted to God’s right hand. David did not ascend into heaven, so he could not have been speaking of himself. It follows, implicitly this time, that David must have spoken of his messianic descendant. The conclusion is the same as before. The outpouring of the Spirit testifies to the ascent of the Messiah since David predicted this ascent. Thus Christ is Messiah.

Psalm 110:1 was a favorite text for the early church. According to Mark 12:35–37, it was first used of the Messiah by Jesus himself to attack the usual political understanding of a Davidic Messiah. It reappears throughout the New Testament, in 1 Cor 15:25; Heb 1:13; 10:13 and with strong allusions in Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20, 22; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22. Originally it may have been an enthronement psalm acknowledging the earthly king as God’s representative. For the early Christians it became the basis for the affirmation that Jesus has been exalted to God’s right hand. For Peter it served as a natural transition from the confession of Jesus as Messiah, the dominant concept to this point, to the ultimate confession that Jesus is Lord.

2:36 Verse 36 provides the climax to Peter’s sermon and returns full circle to its beginning point, the affirmation of Jesus as Lord (v. 21). In fact, every point to this conclusion of the sermon harks back to its beginning. “God has made this Jesus ... Lord and Christ” is reminiscent of the Messiah-designate language of v. 22. “Whom you crucified” returns to the theme of the Jewish guilt in Jesus’ death (v. 23). Peter’s whole use of the psalms had been to establish the messianic status of Jesus for his Jewish audience. Now, with the prompting of Ps 110:1, he moved them to call upon the name that is above every name (Phil 2:9) and confess Jesus as Lord, leading back to his original text of Joel 2:32.¹²⁵⁸⁵

(3) Invitation and Response (2:37–41)

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

³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, 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. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

⁵⁸¹²⁵ In the original context of Joel 2:32, κύριος refers to Yahweh. Very early it came to apply to Christ as well, which reflects a high Christology. Although it has often been argued that κύριος came into Christian usage via Hellenistic cults (e.g., W. Bousset, *Kurios Christos* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1921]), the occurrence of the Aramaic phrase marana-tha (“Lord, come”) in 1 Cor 16:22 and in *Did.* 10:6 (also *translated* in Rev 22:20) points more in the direction of an early Jewish-Christian application of the normal appellation for God to Jesus as well.

2:37–39 Peter’s Jewish crowd got his point. They were guilty of rejecting, even crucifying, the Messiah. Luke said they were “cut to the heart,” an uncommon word Homer used to depict horses stamping the earth with their hooves (v. 37).¹²⁵⁹⁶ Peter’s response was almost programmatic in that he presented them with four essentials of the conversion experience (v. 38): repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins, and receipt of the Spirit.¹²⁶⁰⁷ These four generally form a single complex throughout Luke-Acts. They are the normative ingredients of conversion. There is no set, mechanistic pattern by which the various components come into play, particularly baptism and the receipt of the Spirit. The connection of the Spirit with baptism is depicted in various sequences through Acts. Here the Spirit seems to be promised immediately following or as a concomitant of baptism, whereas in 10:44–48 the coming of the Spirit seems to have preceded water baptism. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized, but receipt of the Spirit was not mentioned (8:38), though his resulting joy was a gift of the Spirit. Baptism and the gift of the Spirit are separated by some interval of time for the Samaritans (8:12, 17). The disciples of John at Ephesus were rebaptized and immediately received the Spirit (19:5–6). The Spirit cannot be tied down to a set pattern. Clearly, however, both baptism and receipt of the Spirit are normative to the experience of becoming a Christian believer.¹²⁶¹⁸

The connection of baptism with the forgiveness of sins in v. 38 has often been a matter of controversy. A literal rendering of the verse runs: “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *for/on the basis of* the forgiveness of your sins.” The disputed word is the preposition *eis*, which could indicate purpose and thus be taken to mean that baptism is the prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins. There is ample evidence in the New Testament, however, that *eis* can also mean *on the ground of, on the basis of*, which would indicate the opposite relationship—that the forgiveness of sins is the basis, the grounds for being baptized.¹²⁶²⁹ Perhaps more significant, however, is that the usual connection of the forgiveness of sins in Luke-Acts is with repentance and not with baptism at all (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31).¹³⁶³⁰ In fact, in no other passage of Acts is baptism presented as bringing about the forgiveness of sins. If not linked with repentance, forgiveness is connected with faith (cf. 10:43; 13:38f.; 26:18).¹³⁶⁴¹ The dominant idea in 2:38 thus seems to be repentance, with the other elements following. Repentance leads to baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of

⁵⁹¹²⁶ Robertson, *WP* 3:34.

⁶⁰¹²⁷ For the view that these form a complex of associated ideas that appear in various formulations, see S. New, in *Beginnings* 5:121–40. The same viewpoint is argued by J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Spirit*.

⁶¹¹²⁸ For a comprehensive survey of research in Acts on the connection between baptism and the Spirit, see M. Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l’Esprit: Baptême et Esprit Saint dans les Actes des Apôtres*, *Lectio divina* 120 (Paris: Cerf, 1985).

⁶²¹²⁹ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (New York: Doran, 1914), 592; also *WP* 3:35.

⁶³¹³⁰ See *Beginnings* 4:26.

⁶⁴¹³¹ B. Sauvagnat, “*Se repentir, être baptisé, recevoir l’Esprit: Actes 2:37ss.*,” *Foi et Vie* 80 (1981): 77–89.

the Spirit. The essential response Peter called from the Jewish crowd is the complete turnabout that comprises true repentance, to turn away from their rejection of the Messiah and to call upon his name,¹³⁶⁵² receive baptism into his community, and share the gift of the Spirit they had just witnessed so powerfully at work in the Christians at Pentecost. Peter concluded his appeal with a promise, the promise of Joel 2:32 (cf. v. 21): “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” The universal scope of the promise is emphasized. Salvation is not only for the group of Jews present at Pentecost but for future generations (“your children”) as well. It is not only for Jews but for Gentiles, for those “who are far off.”¹³⁶⁶³

2:40–41 Luke’s note that Peter warned them “with many other words” was his way of indicating that he had only been able to give a portion of Peter’s sermon. His reference to a “corrupt generation” (*skolias*, “crooked, perverse”) is Old Testament language for a generation that is stubborn and rebellious and not faithful to God (Ps 78:8; cf. Deut 32:5; Phil 2:15). The Jews at Pentecost were part of such a generation, a generation that witnessed the coming of the Messiah and rejected him.¹³⁶⁷⁴ So Peter’s final word was an appeal to “save” themselves from the lot of such a generation. And they were saved; about 3,000 accepted Peter’s invitation that day, were baptized, and were added to the 120.¹³⁶⁸⁵

9. The Common Life of the Community (2:42–47)

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

⁶⁵¹³² There seems to be no distinction between the prepositions ἐπί, ἐν, and εἰς in the baptismal formulas of Acts. The meaning seems to be the same in every case: calling upon the name is to invoke the power of Jesus and commit oneself to his rule.

⁶⁶¹³³ The allusion is probably to Isa 57:19, which Paul also employed with reference to God’s inclusion of the Gentiles (Eph 2:14, 17).

⁶⁷¹³⁴ Often Jesus used the term “this generation” with reference to the stubbornness and refusal to heed his words on the part of those who witnessed his ministry: Mark 8:12, 38; Luke 9:41; 11:29–32, 50f.; 17:25; Matt 16:4.

⁶⁸¹³⁵ Some have fretted about numbers—3,000 would have been too many in proportion to the small population of Jerusalem, would have necessitated too many baptisms in the arid Judean climate, would have been too large a crowd for the temple area to accommodate. None of these presents insurmountable problems. Jerusalem had an ample water supply, the temple area was vast and would accommodate 200,000 or more (so Harrison, *Acts*, 72), and the resident population of Jerusalem has been estimated at 55,000, swelling to 180,000 during pilgrim festivals: J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus*, trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 83.

2:42 This section comprises the first extensive “summary” in Acts.¹³⁶⁹⁶ Luke perhaps provided two summaries here: v. 42 pictures the community life in itself and has much in common with the more extensive treatment beginning in v. 43. Quite possibly v. 42 should be viewed separately, as a conclusion to the Pentecost narrative.¹³⁷⁰⁷ Thus viewed, it provides a glimpse into the manner in which the new converts were incorporated into the believing community. Verses 43–46 thus would appear to introduce a new section that deals with the life of the whole Christian community and to prepare for the narratives of the witness in Jerusalem that follow in chaps. 3–5. That this is so is supported by the fact that the latter summary begins with a reference to the apostolic miracles (v. 43), one of which follows immediately after the summary (3:1–10). In v. 42 the believers are said to have “devoted themselves” to four practices in their new life together. First was the teaching of the apostles. Just as the apostles had been instructed by Jesus, so they passed along that instruction to the new Christians. In keeping with Jesus’ teaching to them (chap. 1), this would have included such subjects as his resurrection, the Old Testament Scriptures, the Christian witness, and surely their own reminiscences of Jesus’ earthly ministry and teachings.¹³⁷¹⁸ The second activity to which they devoted themselves was “the fellowship.” The Greek word used here (*koinōnia*) is one Paul often employed, but it appears only here in all of Luke-Acts. Its basic meaning is “association, communion, fellowship, close relationship.”¹³⁷²⁹ In secular Greek it could involve the sharing of goods, and Paul seems to have used it this way in 2 Cor 9:13. It was also used of communion with a god, especially in the context of a sacred meal; and Paul used it in that sense in 1 Cor 10:16.¹⁴⁷³⁰ Since it appears in a list in Acts 2:42, it is not easy to determine its exact nuance in this context. The key may be to see the terms “breaking of bread” and “prayer” in apposition to “fellowship.” The meaning would then be that they devoted themselves to a fellowship that was expressed in their mutual meals and in their prayer life together.¹⁴⁷⁴¹ If this is so, then the meaning of the third element, “the breaking of bread,” would be further clarified. Joined with fellowship, it would likely carry the cultic sense of sharing a meal with the

⁶⁹¹³⁶ For the Lukan summaries, see comments on 1:14.

⁷⁰¹³⁷ This division is suggested by Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:287. Pesch (*Apostelgeschichte* 1:180) also argues for two summaries but sees the first as including both vv. 42 and 43 and built around the subject of “apostles,” with the second summary (vv. 44–47) built around the phrase ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό.

⁷¹¹³⁸ Harrison, *Acts*, 73, suggests that it may also have included instruction in ethics, interpersonal relationships, facing persecution, and the other types of material covered in the paraenetic portion of the NT epistles.

⁷²¹³⁹ BAGD, 439.

⁷³¹⁴⁰ F. Hauck, “κοίνης, κ.τ.λ.,” *TDNT* 3:805.

⁷⁴¹⁴¹ Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte* 1:130.

Lord, participating in the Lord's Supper.¹⁴⁷⁵² It probably also involved as well their participation in a main *agapē* meal together.¹⁴⁷⁶³ The fourth and final element of their life together, another expression of their fellowship, was "the prayers" (RSV). The presence of the article in the Greek text before prayers has led some interpreters to see this as a reference to their keeping the formal prayer hours of Judaism in the temple.¹⁴⁷⁷⁴ They may well have done so to some extent, for their faithfulness in attending temple worship is noted in 2:46 and 3:1. The reference, however, is probably much broader and involves primarily their sharing in prayer together in their private house worship.

2:43 The longer summary gives a fuller description of the life of the entire Christian community. It begins in v. 43 by referring to the miracles performed by the apostles. The miracles are described with the characteristic combination "signs" and "wonders."¹⁴⁷⁸⁵

The same phrase continues to be used of the apostles' miracle-working in 4:30 and 5:12 and is applied to others as well: Jesus (2:22), Stephen (6:8), Moses (7:36), Philip (8:13), and Paul and Barnabas (14:3; 15:12). It is interesting to note that the phrase is no longer used after chap. 15, although Paul continued to work miracles.¹⁴⁷⁹⁶

An example of one such miraculous sign is given in 3:1–10. Luke's summary statement would indicate that this healing story is only one example of many miracles worked by the apostles in this early stage of their ministry. The response of the people is a reverent fear (*phobos*, "awe," NIV). "Everyone" probably refers to those outside the Christian community who were awed by apostolic miracles (cf. 5:12–13).

2:44–45 Verse 44 elaborates on the fellowship enjoyed by the Christians. The word *koinōnia* is not used, but other terms express the same reality. First, they are said to have been "together" (*epi to auto*). This Greek phrase is notoriously difficult to translate, occurring five times in Acts (1:15; 2:1, 44, 47; 4:26). It seems to depict the gathered community, with a strong emphasis on their unity.¹⁴⁸⁰⁷ This unity is further expressed by

⁷⁵¹⁴² It is often debated whether "breaking of bread" (κλάσις) is a technical term for the eucharist in Luke-Acts. The noun form only occurs here and in Luke 24:35, but the verbal expression "to break bread" is more frequent (cf. Luke 22:19; 24:30; Acts 2:46; 20:7, 11; 27:35). Bruce argues that the symbolism of broken bread in connection with Christ's body would definitely point to eucharistic associations (*Acts*: NIC, 79).

⁷⁶¹⁴³ For a good discussion of the association of eucharist with an *agapē* meal, see R. Michiels, "The 'Model of Church' in the First Christian Community of Jerusalem: Ideal and Reality," *LouvSt* 10 (1985): 309–10.

⁷⁷¹⁴⁴ Basing his argument on a technical usage of προσκατεροῦντες (devoting themselves) in synagogue inscriptions with the meaning of worship, Jeremias claimed that 2:42 depicts the four elements of the formal worship service for the early Christians: (1) teaching, (2) table fellowship, (3) Eucharist, and (4) prayers. See *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. N. Perrin (London: SCM, 1966), 118–21.

⁷⁸¹⁴⁵ For the relationship between these two words, see comments on 2:22.

⁷⁹¹⁴⁶ Perhaps this is reflective of Luke's subtlety as a writer. "Signs and wonders" is a common OT phrase and so is employed in the earlier chapters of Acts, where the witness was primarily to Jews. In the later portions of Acts, with their Greek setting, Paul used less "biblical" terminology (cf. 19:11).

⁸⁰¹⁴⁷ For a full treatment of the phrase see J. Dupont, *Nouvelles Etudes*, 308–09.

their holding “everything in common” (which is described in v. 45 as selling their goods for the benefit of others whenever a need arose).

Here two ideals for a community of goods seem to be combined. First is the Greek ideal of a community in which everything is held in common and shared equally. It is a basically utopian concept, which can be traced as far back as the Pythagorean communities and is often expressed by the same phrase Luke employed in v. 44, “holding all in common” (*echein hapanta koina*).¹⁴⁸¹⁸ Verse 45, however, speaks against the early Christian community adopting a practice of community ownership. The imperfect tense is used, indicating that this was a recurrent, continuing practice: their practice was to sell their property and goods¹⁴⁸²⁹ and apportion the proceeds whenever a need arose.¹⁵⁸³⁰ This is much more in keeping with the Old Testament ideal of community equality, of sharing with the needy so that “there will be no poor among you” (Deut 15:4f.).

2:46–47 Verse 46 sets forth the dual locale of their life together. They remained faithful to their Jewish worship, devoting themselves “with one accord” (“together”) in the temple. The word translated “with one accord” (*homothymadon*) is commonly used in Acts to express unity of purpose and particularly applies to the “one heart and mind” (4:32) of the Christian fellowship (cf. 1:14; 2:1; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25). F. Stagg, however, points out that single-mindedness is not always a good thing. The same word is used of the angry mobs that rushed upon Stephen (7:57) and Paul (19:29).¹⁵⁸⁴¹ For the Christian community, fellowship and unity of purpose are salutary only when rooted in fellowship with Christ and in the unity of his Spirit. The structure of Acts should remind us of this—the unity of the Christian community derives from and is guided by the gift of the Spirit that lies at the heart of its life together.

The Christian presence in the temple testifies not only to their remaining faithful to their Jewish heritage but also evidences their zeal for witness. In Jerusalem the temple was the primary place where crowds would be found, and there the Christians went to bear their witness (3:11–12; 5:21, 42). If the temple was the place of witness, homes were the place for fellowship.¹⁵⁸⁵² In the intimacy of the home setting, a common meal was

⁸¹¹⁴⁸ For references in the Hellenistic literature, see P. W. van der Horst, “Hellenistic Parallels to the Acts of the Apostles (2:1–47),” *JSNT* 25 (1985): 59–60. For a comparison with the community of goods practiced at Qumran, see the comments on Acts 4:32–35 and J. Downey, “The Early Jerusalem Christians,” *TBT* 91 (1977): 1295–1303.

⁸²¹⁴⁹ Two types of property are probably to be seen in v. 45, possessions in general (ὑπάρξεις) and real estate (κτήματα).

⁸³¹⁵⁰ This practice is described in greater detail in 4:32–35. See the comments on that passage.

⁸⁴¹⁵¹ F. Stagg, *The Book of Acts: The Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman, 1955), 67–70.

⁸⁵¹⁵² The Greek phrase κατ’ οἶκον can be translated “at home” or “from house to house.” The latter is probably preferable, depicting the Christians as individually opening their homes to the larger fellowship. With such a large membership, the picture is probably that of a number of home fellowships.

shared together, probably including the Lord's Supper as well. It was a time marked by rejoicing in their fellowship with one another and with the Spirit and by their own openness and sincerity (*aphelotēs*). On the giving end, they expressed their joy by praising God for his presence in their life together (v. 47). On the receiving end, they experienced the favor of the nonbelieving Jewish community in Jerusalem.¹⁵⁸⁶³ God responded to their faith and blessed the young community, adding new converts daily.¹⁵⁸⁷⁴ Indeed, as with the young Jesus, so it was for the growing church—favor with God and favor with humanity (Luke 2:52).¹⁵⁸⁸⁵

Verses 43–46 give an ideal portrait of the young Christian community, witnessing the Spirit's presence in the miracles of the apostles, sharing their possessions with the needy among them, sharing their witness in the temple, sharing themselves in the intimacy of their table fellowship. Their common life was marked by praise of God, joy in the faith, and sincerity of heart. And in it all they experienced the favor of the nonbelievers and continual blessings of God-given growth. It was an ideal, almost blissful time marked by the joy of their life together and the warmth of the Spirit's presence among them. It could almost be described as the young church's "age of innocence." The subsequent narrative of Acts will show that it did not always remain so. Sincerity sometimes gave way to dishonesty, joy was blotched by rifts in the fellowship, and the favor of the people was overshadowed by persecutions from the Jewish officials. Luke's summaries present an ideal for the Christian community which it must always strive for, constantly return to, and discover anew if it is to have that unity of spirit and purpose essential for an effective witness.⁸⁹

⁸⁶¹⁵³ Λαός refers to the Jewish people as a whole, just as in the normal usage of the Septuagint.

⁸⁷¹⁵⁴ The present participle σωζομένους should not be seen as referring to a gradual process of salvation for the believers but rather as a reference to the gradual process of God's addition of new converts to the community: *Beginnings* 4:30. Robertson summarizes the picture as being "a continuous revival, day by day" (*WP* 3:40).

⁸⁸¹⁵⁵ The most troublesome appearance of ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό occurs at the end of v. 47. After "And the Lord added those who were being saved day by day," the Greek phrase is ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό. The NIV translates it "to their number." The "unity" emphasis of the phrase would favor a translation such as "to the fellowship/unity of the existing community." See E. Delebecque, "*Trois simples mots, chargés d'une lumière neuve*," *RevThom* 80 (1980): 75–85. The scribes had trouble with the phrase. Some added the words "to the church" in v. 47, while others moved ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό to the next verse, thus reading "Peter and John together."

⁸⁹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 95–122.

2:1. **The day of Pentecost** was an annual feast that followed the Feast of Firstfruits by a week of weeks (i.e., seven weeks, or 49 days) and therefore also was called the Feast of Weeks (cf. Lev. 23:15–22). The name “Pentecost,” of Greek derivation, means 50 because it was the 50th day after the Firstfruits feast (Lev. 23:16).

Where the followers of Christ were gathered at this time is not definitely known. Luke simply wrote, **They were all together in one place**. Perhaps they were in the temple precincts. However, the place is called a “house” (Acts 2:2), an unlikely designation for the temple, though it may be referred to as a house (cf. 7:47). If they were not assembled at the temple, they must have been near it (cf. 2:6).

2:2–3. The references to “wind” and “fire” are significant. The word for “Spirit” (*pneuma*) is related to *pnoe*, the word translated “wind” here. It also means breath. Both nouns—“spirit” and “wind” or “breath”—are from the verb *pneō*, “to blow, to breathe.” The **sound like the blowing of a violent wind ... from heaven** points to the power of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of His coming.

The **tongues of fire** portray the presence of God. Several times in the Old Testament God displayed Himself in the form of flames (Gen. 15:17; Ex. 3:2–6; 13:21–22; 19:18; 40:38; cf. Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16).

No believer there was exempt from this experience, for the flames **separated and came to rest on each of them**.

2:4. The filling **with the Holy Spirit** is separate from the baptism of the Spirit. The Spirit's baptism occurs once for each believer at the moment of salvation (cf. 11:15–16; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:12), but the Spirit's filling may occur not only at salvation but also on a number of occasions after salvation (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 52).

An evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was **other tongues** (*heterais glōssais*; cf. 11:15–16). These were undoubtedly spoken living languages; the word used in 2:6, 8 is *dialektō*, which means “language” and not ecstatic utterance. This gives insight into what is meant by “tongues” in chapters 2; 10; 19; and in 1 Corinthians 12–14.

This event marked the beginning of the church. Up to this point the church was anticipated (Matt. 16:18). The church is constituted a body by means of Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). The first occurrence of the baptism of the Spirit therefore must indicate the inauguration of the church. Of course Acts 2:1–4 does not state that Spirit baptism took place at Pentecost. However, 1:5 anticipates it and 11:15–16 refers back to it as having occurred at Pentecost. The church, therefore, came into existence then.

2:5–13. **Jews** of the “diaspora” (dispersion; cf. James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1) **were ... in Jerusalem** for the feast. Perhaps they were bilingual, speaking both Greek and their native languages. They were dumbfounded to hear Jews from Galilee speaking the languages of peoples surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

It is a question whether only the Twelve spoke in **tongues** or all 120. Several factors support the idea of only the Twelve being involved in this phenomenon: (1) They are referred to as **Galileans** (Acts 2:7; cf. 1:11–13). (2) Peter stood up with “the Eleven” (2:14). (3) The nearest antecedent of “they” in verse 1 is the “apostles” in 1:26. However, a problem with this view is that the number of languages listed in 2:9–11 is more than 12. But one apostle could have spoken more than one language, in sequence. Still it is possible that all 120 spoke in tongues. Since the majority of them were from Galilee they could have been called Galileans. The references to the Twelve would have indicated they were the leaders of the 120.

The topic the people discussed in all these languages was **the wonders of God**. It seems they were praising God. Their message was not one of repentance; it was not the gospel.

Unable to explain this miracle away, the Jewish unbelievers were puzzled, and some resorted to scoffing and asserted, **They have had too much wine**. The word “wine” (*gleukous*) means new sweet wine.

b. *The discourse of Peter (2:14–40)*

This sermon has basically one theme: Jesus is the Messiah and Lord (v. 36). Peter's discourse may be outlined as follows:

OUTLINE

I. This is the fulfillment of prophecy (vv. 15–21)

- A. A defense (v. 15)
- B. An explanation (vv. 16–21)
- II. Jesus is the Messiah (vv. 22–32)
 - A. His works attest that He is the Messiah (v. 22)
 - B. His resurrection attests that He is the Messiah (vv. 23–32)
- III. Jesus, the glorified Messiah, poured forth the Holy Spirit (vv. 33–36)
- IV. Application (vv. 37–40)

2:14–15. **Peter** began with a rebuttal of their accusation of drunkenness. **It was only 9 in the morning** (lit., “the third hour of the day”; days began at 6 a.m.), far too early for a group of revelers to be inebriated!

2:16–21. Instead of being drunk the believers were experiencing what was described in Joel 2. In Peter’s words, **This is what was spoken by the Prophet Joel**. This clause does not mean, “This is *like* that”; it means Pentecost fulfilled what Joel had described. However, the prophecies of Joel quoted in Acts 2:19–20 were not fulfilled. The implication is that the remainder would be fulfilled if Israel would repent. This aspect of contingency is discussed more fully in the comments on 3:19–23.

2:22. Jesus’ **miracles**, Peter said, were God’s way of verifying Jesus’ claims **to you**, the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22; 14:22).

2:23. The point of this verse is clear: the Crucifixion was no accident. It was in **God’s set purpose** (*boulē*, “plan”) and was God’s determined will, not merely His inclination. It was a divine necessity (cf. 4:28). When Peter referred to **you**, he meant Jews; and by **wicked men** he perhaps meant Gentiles because the word “wicked” means lawless (*anomōn*). Both Gentiles and Jews were implicated in Christ’s **death**. Many times the apostles accused the Jews of crucifying Jesus (2:23, 36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:28), though the apostles also held the Gentiles culpable (2:23; 4:27; cf. Luke 23:24–25).

2:24. The resurrection of the Lord is a basic doctrine in Acts (v. 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33–34, 37; 17:31; 26:23). Here is another indication that He is the Messiah for **it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him** (John 20:9).

2:25–35. These verses include four proofs of the Lord’s resurrection and Ascension: (a) The prophecy of Psalm 16:8–11 and the presence of David’s **tomb** (Acts 2:25–31), (b) the witnesses of the Resurrection (v. 32), (c) the supernatural events of Pentecost (v. 33), and (d) the Ascension of David’s greater Son (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:34–35).

The word translated **grave** in verses 27 and 31 is *hadēs*, which means either the grave (as here) or the underworld of departed spirits.

Peter’s point is that since **David**, the **patriarch** and prophet **was** dead and **buried**, he could not have been referring to himself in Psalm 16:8–11; hence he was writing about **the Christ** (“Messiah”) and His **resurrection**. The **oath** (Acts 2:30) looks back to Psalm 132:11 (cf. 2 Sam. 7:15–16). **God ... raised ... Jesus to life**, and **exalted** Him (cf. Acts 3:13; Phil. 2:9) **to the Father’s right hand** (cf. Acts 5:30–31; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). Thus Jesus had the authority to send **the promised Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:5, 8; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), whose presence was evidenced by what they saw (“tongues of fire,” Acts 2:3) and heard (“a violent wind,” v. 2), and the apostles speaking in other languages (vv. 4, 6, 8, 11).

Just as David was not speaking of himself in Psalm 16:8–11, so in Psalm 110:1 he was not speaking of himself. David was not resurrected (Acts 2:29, 31) nor **did he ascend to heaven** (v. 34). **The Lord** is Yahweh God who spoke **to my** (David's) **Lord**, who is Christ, God's Son.

On five occasions in Acts some of the apostles said they were **witnesses of** the resurrected Christ (v. 32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39–41; 13:30–31). They knew whereof they spoke!

2:36. Here is the conclusion of Peter's argument. The noun **Lord**, referring to **Christ**, probably is a reference to Yahweh. The same word *kyrios* is used of **God** in verses 21, 34, and 39 (cf. Phil. 2:9). This is a strong affirmation of Christ's deity.

2:37. Verses 37–40 contain the application of Peter's sermon. The verb **cut** (*katenygēsan*) means "to strike or prick violently, to stun." The convicting work of the Spirit (cf. John 16:8–11) in their hearts was great.

Their question had a ring of desperation about it (cf. Acts 16:30). If the Jews had crucified their Messiah and He was now exalted, what was left for them to do? **What could and must they do?**

2:38–39. Peter's answer was forthright. First they were to **repent**. This verb (*metanoēsate*) means "change your outlook," or "have a change of heart; reverse the direction of your life." This obviously results in a change of conduct, but the emphasis is on the mind or outlook. The Jews had rejected Jesus; now they were to trust in Him. Repentance was repeatedly part of the apostles' message in Acts (v. 38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20).

A problem revolves around the command "be baptized" and its connection with the remainder of 2:38. There are several views: (1) One is that both repentance and baptism result in remission of sins. In this view, baptism is essential for salvation. The problem with this interpretation is that elsewhere in Scripture forgiveness of sins is based on faith alone (John 3:16, 36; Rom. 4:1–17; 11:6; Gal. 3:8–9; Eph. 2:8–9; etc.). Furthermore Peter, the same speaker, later promised forgiveness of sins on the basis of faith alone (Acts 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18).

(2) A second interpretation translates 2:38, "Be baptized ... on the basis of the remission of your sins." The preposition used here is *eis* which, with the accusative case, may mean "on account of, on the basis of." It is used in this way in Matthew 3:11; 12:41; and Mark 1:4. Though it is possible for this construction to mean "on the basis of," this is not its normal meaning; *eis* with the accusative case usually describes purpose or direction.

(3) A third view takes the clause **and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ** as parenthetical. Several factors support this interpretation: (a) The verb makes a distinction between singular and plural verbs and nouns. The verb "repent" is plural and so is the pronoun "your" in the clause **so that your sins may be forgiven** (lit., "unto the remission of your sins," *eis aphesin tōn hamartiōn hymōn*). Therefore the verb "repent" must go with the purpose of forgiveness of sins. On the other hand the imperative "be baptized" is singular, setting it off from the rest of the sentence. (b) This concept fits with Peter's proclamation in Acts 10:43 in which the same expression "sins may be forgiven" (*aphesin hamartiōn*) occurs. There it is granted on the basis of faith

alone. (c) In Luke 24:47 and Acts 5:31 the same writer, Luke, indicates that repentance results in remission of sins.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's **promise** (cf. 1:5, 8; 2:33) to those who turn to the Lord, including Jews and their descendants and those **who are far off**, that is, Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:13, 17, 19). Acts 2:38–39 put together the human side of salvation (“repent”) and the divine side (**call** means “to elect”; cf. Rom. 8:28–30).

2:40. Peter's **words** in this verse look back to verses 23 and 36. Israel was guilty of a horrendous sin; individual Jews could be spared from God's judgment on that **generation** if they would repent (cf. Matt. 21:41–44; 22:7; 23:34–24:2). They would be set apart to Christ and His church if only they would be disassociated from Israel.

c. *The description of the first church (2:41–47).*

2:41. **Three thousand** who believed **were baptized**, thus displaying their identification with Christ. This group of people immediately joined the fellowship of believers.

2:42. The activity of this early church was twofold. The believers first continued steadfastly (*proskarterountes*, “persisting in or continuing in”; cf. 1:14; 2:46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7; Rom. 12:12; 13:6; Col. 4:2) in **the apostles' teaching** or doctrine. The second was **fellowship**, which is defined as **the breaking of bread and ... prayer**. The omission of “and” between “fellowship” and “to the breaking of bread and to prayer” indicates the last two activities are appositional to fellowship.

Perhaps the breaking of bread included both the Lord's Table and a common meal (cf. Acts 2:46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23–25; Jude 12).

2:43. **Wonders** (*terata*, “miracles evoking awe”) and **miraculous signs** (*sēmeia*, “miracles pointing to a divine truth”) authenticated the veracity of **the apostles** (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4). The apostles performed many such “signs and wonders” (Acts 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12). Christ too had performed many “wonders” and “signs”—and also “miracles” (*dynameis*, “works of power”).

2:44–45. The **selling** of property and the common possession of the proceeds may imply that the early church expected the Lord to return soon and establish His kingdom. This may explain why the practice was not continued. Holding **everything in common** was not socialism or communism because it was voluntary (cf. 4:32, 34–35; 5:4). Also their goods were not evenly distributed but were given to meet needs as they arose.

2:46–47. The activities described in verses 42–47 would tend to separate the church from traditional Judaism even though **every day** (cf. v. 47) **they continued** (*proskarterountes*; cf. v. 42) **to meet together in the temple courts**.

One of the subthemes of Acts is joy, because a victorious church is a joyful one. This is seen in verses 46–47 and numerous other times (5:41; 8:8, 39; 11:23; 12:14; 13:48, 52; 14:17; 15:3, 31; 16:34; 21:17). In their fellowship **they broke bread in their homes and ate together** (cf. 2:42) with joy. (The word **praising** [*ainountes*] is used only nine times in the NT, seven of them by Luke: Luke 2:13, 20; 19:37; 24:53; Acts 2:47; 3:8–9; Rom. 15:11; Rev. 19:5).

With the first of seven summary progress reports (cf. Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30–31) Luke brought this section of Acts to a close: each day others **were being saved**. The church grew rapidly right from the start!⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Stanley D. Toussaint, [“Acts.”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 357–360.