

Sunday, April 13, 2025 | Filled

Week 4 | Acts 2:1-13 | “Pentecost”

Last week, we saw the Church in its earliest form. Though it was a long way from being an adult, this baby church had three hallmark characteristics: collective prayer, spiritual deferment, and apostolic authority. Through those characteristics, we gleaned three takeaways: **the Christian faith is inherently a communal faith, the word of God illuminates the way of life, and, lastly, first-hand experience with Jesus makes a first-rate spokesman for Jesus.**

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**READ:** Acts 2:1-13 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup> And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup> both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” <sup>12</sup> And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup> But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Many institutions have humble beginnings. Apple started out in a garage. Mattel didn’t begin by selling toys but picture frames. The first Starbucks was a small café in 1971, and now the company has over 40,000 locations in 43 countries. Before he got into the gum business, William Wrigley Jr. was initially a soap salesman.

Likewise, the Church initially began with 120 people in Jerusalem. Today, there are an estimated 2.4 billion Christians worldwide. As we’ll see today, this explosive growth isn’t the result of human effort but is directly connected to the Holy Spirit. Over 2,000 years ago, God

the Spirit descended on a handful of people, changing their lives forever. And from that humble beginning, the gospel spreads to the four corners of the world.

I want to notice two things:

**i. Vs. 1-4 – The Birth of the Church**

**Vs. 1** – Chronologically speaking, Luke jumps to “the day of Pentecost.” The mention of Pentecost is significant for two reasons:

First, Pentecost was a Jewish festival that took place fifty days after Passover; it was the culmination of the Feast of Weeks (cf. Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10). Alongside Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths, Pentecost was a pilgrim festival. Jews from outside of Israel were required to return to their homeland to celebrate. As such, it served to unite the nation scattered abroad throughout the four corners of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Second, as was the case with the other pilgrim feasts, a central part of celebrating Pentecost was offering a particular crop. During Passover, Jews would give the first fruits of the barley harvest. They’d give the first fruits of the olive/grape harvest during Tabernacles. Pentecost marked the end of the wheat harvest. A “first fruit” is a small portion of a larger crop given to God as a show of thanksgiving; it’s a symbolic gesture wherein a part represents the whole. As such, depending on the size of the overall crop, the size of the first fruit offering would vary. But, whether small or large, the point remains: first fruits were indicative of a larger harvest. As such, it was a sign of abundance.

Remember these two factoids; they’ll become extremely relevant in a moment.

The 120 disciples (cf. 1:15), men and women (cf. 1:14), “were all together in one place.” This is not the Temple. If it was, Luke would’ve used a different Greek word.<sup>2</sup> Given the group’s size, this is likely a large mansion. Such houses were common in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

**Vs. 2-4** – Things happen in quick succession:

- 1) Luke says a “sound” came “from heaven.” And he likened it to “a mighty rushing wind.” This phrasing isn’t found anywhere else in the OT or NT. However, it is clearly reminiscent of times when God makes his presence known (cf. Ex. 19:18-19; 1 Ki. 19:11-

<sup>1</sup> Elwell, Walter A., “Pentecost,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 2001), p. 899.

<sup>2</sup> **ἑρόν** (hieron); cf. Acts. 2:46; 3:1

<sup>3</sup> Bock, Darrell L., *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 2007), p. 94.

12; Job 37:10; Ezek. 13:13). When describing Israel's deliverance from Egypt, David said, "Then the channels of the sea were seen; the foundations of the world were laid bare, at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils" (2 Sam. 22:16).

- 2) This sound-like-a-mighty-rushing-wind then "filled the entire house where they were sitting." On Mount Sinai, the cloud of God's presence covered the top (cf. Ex. 24:15). And at both the dedication of the Tabernacle and the Temple, God's glory filled the structures (cf. Ex. 40:34; 2 Chron. 5:14).
- 3) Luke says that "divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them." The term "tongue" isn't being used metaphorically; it literally refers to the organ in a mouth.<sup>4</sup> The reason that such an unusual thing occurs will be clear in a moment.

Luke uses the term "divided" when describing the distribution of the communion elements (cf. Lu. 22:17) and again when describing how the Roman soldiers "divided" Jesus' garments during the crucifixion (cf. Lu. 23:34). This word is used again in Acts 2:45, where it describes the distribution of supplies to needy families. So, when Luke says these tongues are "divided," he means they distributed themselves to every believer.

The phrase "as of fire" is a simile. These tongues weren't on fire; instead, they looked *as if* they were on fire, shining *like* a flame. It is hard to say exactly in what way these tongues were like a fire. However, what fire represents in the Scriptures is more important than what this actually looked like. Like with the "mighty rushing wind," the element of "fire" is also something attributed to God (cf. Ex. 3:1-6; 13:21-22; 19:18; 24:17; 40:38; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Isa. 66:15; Ezek. 1:13-14, 27; Heb. 12:29; Rev. 1:14; 19:12).

Not to be overlooked is the fact that these fiery tongues "rested on each one of them." All 120 male and female disciples were given this great gift. During their meeting, they "each" received an equal portion of God's holy fire.

- 4) Afterward, these 120 disciples "were all filled with the Holy Spirit." As the Lord filled the house with a mighty wind, so he filled each believer with his Holy Spirit. At this moment, the Church officially began. Indwelt by the Spirit of God, the Church of God was given everything it needed for life and godliness (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3).

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<sup>4</sup> γλῶσσα (*glōssa*), cf. Lu. 1:64; 16:24

- 5) Finally, after all these things, the Christians “[began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.](#)” Burning Tongues distributed themselves to the disciples because God wanted to give them the ability to speak in foreign languages. Luke says, “[As the Spirit gave them utterance,](#)” so they could talk. They could not do this on their own. They’d need to rely on the Spirit’s prompting.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is a major facet of the Book of Acts. In 4:8, Peter will be said to be “[filled with the Holy Spirit](#)” as he preaches, and his audience will be “[all filled with the Holy Spirit](#)” (4:31). Likewise, part of the requirements of the deacons is that they’d be “[full of the Spirit](#)” (6:3). As Stephen was being stoned, he was said to be “[full of the Holy Spirit](#)” (7:55). Once the Samaritans received the gospel and the apostles prayed and laid hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit (cf. 8:17). God promised not only to restore Saul’s sight but to fill him with the Holy Spirit (cf. 9:17) and, by 13:9, he has it. While Peter was preaching to a bunch of non-Jews, “[the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word](#)” (10:44). Barnabas is described as a “[good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith](#)” (11:24). When Paul and Barnabas are rejected in Iconium they’ll shake off the dust of their feet, being “[filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit](#)” (13:52).

**So, what’s the takeaway?** All [believers](#) of God are filled with the [Spirit](#) of God.

But the filling of the Holy Spirit still takes place today. Speaking to the Church in Ephesus, Paul says, “[When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, \[you\] were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory](#)” (Eph. 1:13-14). As Christians in Acts were filled with the Holy Spirit, every believer has been filled with the Holy Spirit since then. Moses once exclaimed to Joshua in Num. 11:29, “[Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!](#)”

**READ:** Ezekiel 36:25-27 (ESV)

“I will sprinkle [clean](#) water on you, and you shall be [clean](#) from all your [uncleannesses](#), and from all your idols I will [cleanse](#) you. And I will give you a [new heart](#), and a [new spirit](#) I will put within you. And I will remove the [heart of stone](#) from your flesh and give you a [heart of flesh](#). And I will put [my Spirit](#) within you, and cause you to walk in [my statutes](#) and be careful to obey [my rules](#)”

Is the gift of tongues in operation today? I consider myself a *soft* cessationist. While I affirm that miracles still occur in the modern era, I believe that some spiritual gifts, like tongues, are no longer in operation today.<sup>5</sup> But I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that not everyone agrees with me. There are people I love and respect, some of whom are far smarter than me, who hold a continuationist viewpoint.<sup>6</sup> That is to say, that they believe that all of the spiritual gifts are for today.

I hold this view for **three** reasons.

First, if the office of apostles ceased after the apostles' death (cf. Ac. 12:2), then it presupposes that the other charismatic gifts may also have an expiration date. In fact, when we look at church history, all of the church Fathers (Justin Martyr, Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine) affirm that the practice was nearly nonexistent outside the apostolic era. Admittedly, there are still instances in which so-called "tongues" pop up. But they're widely regarded as heretical (e.g., the Montanist Movement), even by those who hold to a continuationist viewpoint. As such, these rare instances cannot be used to support the view that tongues were in operation outside the apostolic era.

Second, sign miracles, like speaking in tongues, served a specific purpose. Among other things, it demonstrated to Israel that God's salvation was now offered to Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor. 14:21-22; Isa. 28:11-12), and tongues and other miraculous gifts were intended to authenticate the apostles' authority (cf. Heb. 2:3-4). Since those two objectives have been accomplished, it is likely that tongues have little to no relevance today.

Lastly, what is often referred to as "tongues" today is not the same thing as what we find in the NT. Modern usage of the term almost universally refers to ecstatic incoherent speech—i.e., gibberish. In contrast, speaking in tongues in the first century ***always*** meant speaking in an ***intelligible*** language. This is apparent when you look up the Greek word translated as "tongues" and discover that there are only two possible meanings: (1) it literally refers to the organ inside a person's mouth (cf. Mar. 7:33; Lu. 1:64; Ja. 1:26; etc.), or, idiomatically, it refers to intelligible language/speech (cf. 1 Cor. 14:21;

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<sup>5</sup> Notable cessationists include Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, RC Sproul, Tim Keller, John MacArthur, and Thomas Schreiner.

<sup>6</sup> Storms, Sam, "Why I Am a Continuationist," January 22, 2014, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/continuationist/>, [accessed April 11, 2025]. Other notable continuationists include D. A. Carson, Andreas Köstenberger, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, Craig Keener, and Gavin Ortlund.

Rev. 5:9; 7:9; etc.). As Thomas Schreiner explains, “The word tongues (glōssa) denotes a linguistic code, a structured language, not random and free vocalization.”<sup>7</sup>

I freely admit that I may be wrong in this area, and I reserve the right to change my mind in the future. In fact, my continuationist friends have answers for each of the reasons I listed above.

Ultimately, I hold no ill will towards those who disagree with me, and neither will I separate myself from those who are continuationist. The law is love (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13-14:1). As the motto of the Moravians puts it, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, love." One's view on spiritual gifts is not unimportant but not nearly as important as others. For instance, Gavin Ortlund, himself a continuationist, places one's views on spiritual gifts as third-rank doctrine, and I would agree. There is much more that cessationists and continuationists agree about than disagree.

## **ii. Vs. 5-13 – The Boldness of the Church**

**Vs. 5-6** – Luke says that this filling of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues made such a racket that it drew a crowd. Specifically, he says that a “multitude came together.” And this “multitude” was an ethnically diverse group. Luke says this gathering comprised of “devout men from every nation under heaven.” Why was such a diverse group in Jerusalem? As we discussed, Pentecost was one of the three pilgrim festivals in Judaism.

The people who heard this commotion “were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.” As anyone who’s ever traveled abroad can attest, if you run into someone who speaks your native language, you cannot help but notice. But this wasn't a single individual. This was 120 people, all speaking different languages. Such an occurrence is bound to draw a crowd.

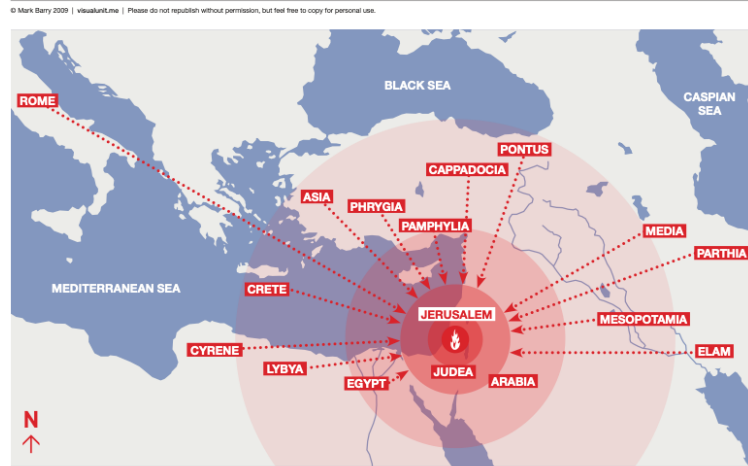
<sup>7</sup>

Schreiner, Thomas, “Why I Am a Cessationist,” January 22, 2014, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cessationist/>, [accessed April 11, 2025].

**Vs. 7-11** – Luke says these bystanders “were amazed and astonished.” It was obvious to them that they were “Galileans,” yet they all heard them speak their “own native language.” And then Luke gives us a list of 15 different parts of the world: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Cyrene, Rome, Cretans and

Arabians. This group was comprised of “Jews and proselytes.” “Proselytes” were non-Israelites people who converted to Judaism.

#### THE NATIONS OF PENTECOST ACTS 2:9-11



What were the disciples saying? The people said they heard “them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” Given Peter’s sermon, Jesus’ resurrection and ascension were a part of the things they said. Also, they likely explained that their ability to speak in different languages was a result of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling.

**Vs. 12-13** – Luke tells us the reception was mixed. Though there were those who were “amazed and perplexed,” wondering aloud, “What does this mean?” There were others who mocked this moment, dismissing the miracle by saying, “They are filled with new wine.” That is to say, they thought the people were drunk.

Both reactions illustrate that miracles in and of themselves are not convincing.<sup>8</sup> For signs to be effective, an explanation must accompany them. This is why Peter will soon stand up and give the greatest sermon of his life.

**So, what’s the takeaway?** The realm, reach, and range of the gospel is universal.

**READ:** Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup>After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup>and

<sup>8</sup> Peterson, David G., *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), p. 138.

crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"



### **Video Description:**

#### **Filled | Week 4 | “Pentecost” (Acts 2:1-13)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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### **Sermon Manuscript:**

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Grace Pointe Baptist Church

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: [info@GracePointeLife.com](mailto:info@GracePointeLife.com)

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