

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate the study of Acts 2:1-13 as a supplement to the sermon. It is based on my (Michael's) study and meditation on the passage. This handout can be used for personal study or community group conversation. (I hope you join a group!)

ACTS 1:1-5 ESV

1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

STRUCTURE

- I. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Harvest (2:1-4)
 - a. Setup for the baptism of the Spirit: together in one place (2:1)
 - b. God's presence in His new temple: wind fills the house (2:2)
 - c. God's presence in His new temple: divided tongues on each (2:3)
 - d. God's presence in His new temple: filled with the Spirit and new languages (2:4)
- II. Mixed Reaction of the Jewish diaspora (2:5-13)
 - a. Confusion: reminding us of Babel (2:5-6)
 - b. Amazement: reminding us of God's promises to regather Israel (2:7-12)
 - i. Amazement at the miracle of tongues (2:7-8)
 - ii. Fulfillment of God's promises to regather Israel (2:9-12)
 - c. Ridicule: reminding us that God mocks the mockers with His "new wine" (2:13).

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Jesus told them to wait for the promise of the Father (1:4), and now that promise is fulfilled—on no less of a day than the Feast of Pentecost, which is a Feast of Harvest. By day's end, 3000 Jews will confess Jesus as Lord, testifying to the harvest of souls wrought by the Spirit's work on Pentecost.

Luke sets us up for this outpouring by telling us they were all "together in one place" (2:1)—a "house" (2:2)—which was probably the "upper room" where they gathered to pray (1:13). Jesus began the work of renewing His leadership team (twelve) and community (one hundred twenty), and now that work will extend through the baptism of the Spirit. But none of this happens without prayer. The same is true of any fresh outpouring we ever might enjoy.

In the following verses, the Spirit manifests Himself in a variety of ways: through wind (2:2), divided tongues of fire (2:3), and speaking in tongues (2:4). The first two—sound and sight—appear throughout Scripture to testify about God's presence. Speaking in tongues was new, but it undoubtedly reminds us of Babel, of which Pentecost was a reversal (see below). Taken together, this section reveals that God by His Spirit is establishing His new temple: the people of God. Rather than manifesting in a manmade house—like Herod's Temple or the Tower of Babel—the Spirit gushes forth in an unspecified home among mostly unnamed people. The randomness and ordinariness magnifies the marvel. The Spirit is breaking out of confinement, out from the pomp and circumstance of Jewish liturgy, out from every man-centered attempt to reach heaven, and He is filling the earth through Spirit-filled people who embody Jesus. We, the church, are God's new temple.

Three words characterize the reaction of the Jewish diaspora who gathered for Pentecost: confusion, amazement, and ridicule. Their confusion reminds us again of Babel, where God confused their languages; only this time, He unscrambles them. A work of grace replaces one of judgment, as God's work of redemption unfolds from Babel to the upper room.

Their amazement notifies us that this is truly a work of God. Luke typically uses this word to speak of the awe that God alone inspires. The audience is amazed that Galileans speak fluently in their native tongues (2:7-8), but in quoting the long list of nations from the north, south, east, and west (2:9-12), Luke inspires awe in his readers over something even greater—the meaning of the miracle—that God is regathering His people from the four corners of the earth. The many promises made to the prophets have begun their fulfillment on Pentecost, and Luke wants us to feel the amazement.

The final word that captures the reactions of the moment is, "ridicule." We learn in verse 13 that some of the onlookers mocked the tongue-speakers as being "filled with new wine." Through their evaluation, God evaluates them. In classic form, He mocks the mocker by placing truth in their mouths, but not knowledge. The truth was that these disciples had indeed been filled with new wine, but not the kind you purchase at Walmart. It was the kind that Jesus purchased with His own blood: the wine of the Spirit. Because of the work of Jesus, He inaugurated a new age that would be characterized by the Holy Spirit. That same "new wine" was available to them, but to their eternal shame, they did not recognize it.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

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

—Jesus had not told them to wait till the day of Pentecost. Rather, he said to "not depart from Jerusalem," and "to wait for the promise of the Father... the Holy Spirit" which would be given "not many days from now" (1:4-5).

—Thus, they knew the Spirit would soon be granted, but they did not know how soon. They probably had some level of expectation regarding Pentecost because it was so near, and since it was one of three major Jewish feasts requiring a pilgrimage (Passover, Weeks/Pentecost, Booths), and since God had ordained Christ's crucifixion over the prior feast, Passover.

—Just as Christ's crucifixion over Passover was symbolic (Jhn. 19:36; 1 Cor. 5:7; cf. Ex. 12:46), we should expect that Pentecost likewise holds symbolic significance. What is that symbolism?

- Pentecost was basically a Jewish Thanksgiving—a feast of harvest. Grain harvesting began on Passover but was completed at Pentecost. By means of the Spirit, God would expand His harvest field to the ends of the earth. The salvation of three thousand in a single day was a firstfruits of that global harvest.
- Pentecost also became an occasion in Israel for celebrating the giving of the Law. Since the Spirit marks the New Covenant—as opposed to the Law that marked the Old—it also makes sense for the Spirit to have been given on Pentecost. Symbolically, God communicated that He was writing His law not on tablets of stones, but on tablets of human hearts, by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3).

—"They were all together in one place":

- We might naturally assume that this "one place" (2:1) was the "upper room, where they were staying" (1:14), and where "with one accord [they] were devoting themselves to prayer" (1:16). But the text never tells us directly if it is the same room. We do know it was a "house" (2:2), and my guess is it was the upper room of Acts 1:14.
- If they did start out in the upper room, they most likely went to a more public venue when the supernatural manifestations began, since the upper room could not possibly have contained the three thousand who were saved (2:41). If they went to the temple, it would have contained up to 75,000 people.
- Regardless of the venue, Luke's gloss points to his emphasis: their spiritual unity. Together in one place, they had devoted themselves to prayerful waiting for many days. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is directly tied to this.
- Regardless of one's interpretation of the baptism of the Spirit, we are wise to pray together for more of God. We are furthermore wise to ask specifically for more of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:11-13). Luke is our New Testament theologian on prayer. Churches that desire the power of the early church should follow the model of the early church. They devoted themselves (among other things) to corporate prayer (Acts 2:42).

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

—"suddenly": when you wait on God it can seem like forever, but when He moves, it can come suddenly.

—"there came from heaven":

- The last time we saw the word, "heaven," it was in 1:10-11, where it burst like firecrackers, four times: *"And while they were gazing into **heaven**, behold two men stood by them in white robes and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into **heaven**? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into **heaven**, will come in the same way as you saw him go into **heaven**.'"*
- The four-fold repetition emphasized that (1) Jesus had ascended to heaven, (2) Jesus will return from heaven, and (3) You have work to do in the meantime.
- What Luke intimates here becomes clear in 2:29-34: Jesus ascended not just to the place called heaven, but to the throne of David, from which He reigns, and from where He pours out the Holy Spirit upon the church.
- That the Holy Spirit "came from heaven" means that He came from Jesus who went to heaven. Because of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, He was able to pour out the Holy Spirit upon the church and empower us for witness. Just like John promised, One was coming after him who would baptize in the Holy Spirit (Lk. 3:16). Until Jesus returns from heaven (Acts 1:11), the church has work to do; because of the Spirit, we have power to do it.
- There is another connection also. We will address this in detail later, but the gift of tongues on Pentecost is portrayed by Luke as a reversal of Babel, where tongues were confused, and God came down "from heaven" to judge. At Pentecost, in contrast, tongues are "unscrambled," as it were, and God comes down "from heaven" to bless.
- Schreiner, quoting Ferguson: "All that is taken up to God in the ascension of Jesus... is brought down again to man by the outpouring of the Spirit."

—"a sound like a mighty rushing wind... divided tongues of fire appeared":

- There were both sights and sounds, each typical of a theophany—an appearance of God. The incarnation of Christ was a big, long, theophany, but usually theophanies were dramatic, short-lived experiences.
- These particular theophanies remind us of Sinai, where there were similar sights and sounds: fire descending the mount (Ex. 19:18) and loud sounds (19:16-19). These similarities suggest an intentional link between the giving of the Law at Sinai and the giving of the Spirit—who writes God's law on our hearts—on Pentecost.
- Schnabel: "Just as Moses climbed Mount Sinai and received God's law, which he passed on to Israel, accompanied by visible signs of God's presence, Jesus ascended to God's right hand and poured out the gift of God's Spirit on the people of the new covenant."
- Schnabel: "Jewish exegesis concluded from Exod. 19:1-4 that the day of the giving of the law was the same day as the Feast of Weeks; it was, therefore, the feast of covenant renewal."
- Schreiner: "It was called Pentecost in Greek following the historical account in Exod. 19:1-3 of Israel's arrival at Sinai fifty days after the Passover. Therefore, the Spirit comes at Pentecost to fulfill Sinai and reconstitute the people of God (Isa. 44:1-4)."
- Schreiner: "Moses ascended the mountain, the Lord descended in fire, a great storm surrounded Sinai, and the law was given to Moses so that Israel can be a kingdom of priests. The parallels with Pentecost are abundant. God's people are regathering. Wind and fire fall, signaling the law is not written on stone but on their hearts. They are now empowered to follow the Torah from their cores. They will reclaim their land, but their land has become all creation."
- Also, Schreiner, who has loads of insights on this: "At Mount Sinai the people rebel and three thousand die. At Pentecost the gospel is proclaimed and three thousand are cut to the heart. Judas's fate was in the desolate place, but the Spirit will make desolate places into gardens (Isa. 32:15)."
- As a smoking firepot to Abraham, as a burning bush to Moses, as a pillar of fire in the wilderness, and as a flaming mountain at Sinai, God consistently reveals Himself to us as "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). Likewise, the typical Greek word for "wind" (pneuma) also means, "S/spirit." As Jesus portrays in His conversation with Nicodemus, the Spirit is a wind who blows wherever He pleases (John 3:8). Such is the disciples' experience at Pentecost.
- We are reminded of John's statement that we will be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Lk. 3:16). The broader context of John's statement suggests the fire speaks of judgment.
 - Lk. 3:16 *"John answered them all, saying, 'I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'"*

- If the fire speaks of judgment, then the tongues of fire would communicate that everyone who rejects “the wonders of God” they proclaim will be held guilty.
- Schreiner: “At Pentecost the fire divides and does not consume (Luke 3:16)... In the OT people are not fit for the fire of God to dwell on them, but now they have the ascended priest interceding for them and pleading their cases and thereby become the priestly prophets like Moses.”
- The fire does not only speak of judgment, however. That they are “tongues” of fire must connect to the “tongues” they spoke. (Note: “tongues of fire” does not mean that fire-shaped human tongues appeared over their heads; this was Jewish idiom for describing the shape of a normal flame.) The tongues they spoke were a blessing that marked the coming of the Spirit, and a new age, where the Gospel would reach the ends of the earth. Thus, the “tongues of fire” communicate not only judgment, but also empowerment (cf. 1:8).
- But I believe there is still more. In an apocryphal book which would have been widely circulated and is quoted in the New Testament (I am not suggesting that apocryphal books are inspired or authoritative; I only suggest that they inform us about first century context), Enoch has a vision of ascending to a heavenly temple, where the wall of the outer court was “surrounded by tongues of fire” (1 Enoch 14:9-10). The holy of holies is likewise “built with tongues of fire” (14:15). And in a later vision, Enoch observes a temple “built of crystals; and between those crystals tongues of living fire” (71:5). Commenting on the above passages, G.K. Beale observes, “In the light of this Enoch text, could it be that the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ‘from heaven’ in the form of ‘tongues of fire’ is to be conceived as the descent of God’s tabernacling presence from his heavenly temple? Since the heavenly temple is partly pictured by ‘tongues of fire’, it might be appropriate that the descent of that temple would be pictured with the same thing. Thus, it may be perceivable that, just as the heavenly temple was constructed of ‘tongues of fire’, the new temple on earth (God’s people vivified by the Spirit) that had descended from heaven was beginning to be built with the same fiery image.” (See *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A biblical theology of the dwelling place of God*.)
- Beale also makes another fascinating connection: “The Dead Sea scrolls interpret the Urim and Thummim stones to have shone gloriously with ‘tongues of fire’ (1Q29).” These stones would have been used by a priest in the temple to cast lots and receive a prophetic answer between two alternatives. Considering the casting of lots in Acts 1, what are we to make of this, namely, that tongues of fire were associated in Jewish culture with both the casting of lots and the temple? We cannot say with certainty the degree to which Luke was thinking of this connection. But if it was in his mind, he would be communicating: “No longer is God’s presence and revelation mediated through Old Covenant fixtures like the casting of lots, priests, and temples; now God’s presence and revelation are mediated through the Holy Spirit, poured out on His new temple—the church.”

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

—“they were all”:

- Throughout Israel’s history, the filling of the Holy Spirit happened only to some people, like Bezalel (Ex. 31:30). But here “they were all” filled. This would be the 120 in the upper room—an unprecedented number.
- The closest match in the Old Testament was in Numbers 11, where Moses complained about the burden of his leadership task. God told him to call a meeting for Israel’s elders, where God would place the Spirit that was on him, on the leaders. The Spirit came upon 70 of them, but 2 leaders failed to make the meeting—and yet the Spirit fell on them also. This was made visible in the way they, like the 70 others, prophesied. When Moses was told about the leaders who played hooky, yet still received the Spirit, he was in no way offended. Rather, he responded, “Would not that all of God’s people were prophets?”
- The story from Numbers plays out here, but with greater numbers. Now, at last, Moses’ longing is fulfilled! All of God’s people are given the Spirit. Not just “leaders and elders” as in Numbers 11. As we see later, in Acts 2:17-18, the Spirit is poured out on all flesh, and they prophesy. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prophecy. Now, because of Jesus, the whole church receives the Spirit of prophecy by which we can hear from God. This does not mean we are all gifted prophets (1 Cor. 12), but it does mean that we can all hear from God in dreams, visions, and through other prophetic phenomena.

—“filled with the Holy Spirit”:

- The language of 1:5 is “baptized with the Holy Spirit”; 1:8 speaks of “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”; here, it is “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

- Because of the interchangeability of these terms in the opening narrative of Acts, many have concluded that the filling and baptism of the Holy Spirit are the same—but this can't be. True, at times, they can occur simultaneously. And they are closely related. But to say they are the same is to commit a categorical error.
- The filling of the Spirit is the temporary, repeatable, empowerment of the Holy Spirit for bearing prophetic testimony to Jesus. The baptism of the Spirit is, in contrast, a one-time experience, which occurs at conversion. It is the promise of the Father, by the work of the Son, to immerse new believers in the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of incorporating them into Christ's body. See 1 Cor. 12:13: "For we were all baptized in one Spirit into the body of Christ." Also, see last week's sermon and study guide. PS—there's grace to disagree with me on this!

—"began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance":

- As the subsequent context reveals, these were human languages (2:6), requiring no interpreter. This appears to be different from the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14, where people spoke "to God" (14:2), and an "interpreter" needed to be present. If people in Corinth spoke in human languages, no interpreter would have been necessary. In fact, "interpretation" would not be a spiritual gift, but rather a natural ability, based on knowledge of earthly languages. Thus, it seems, that there are two kinds of "tongues" portrayed in the New Testament: one where people speak in human languages readily recognized by hearers, and one where people speak in heavenly languages that are only recognized by those with a gift of interpretation.
- I noted above the connections between Babel and Pentecost. At Babel, man impinges on God's domain in heaven; at Pentecost, God invades man's domain on earth. At Babel, man unites against God; at Pentecost, God unites His church with the baptism of the Spirit. At Babel, God judges the nations by scrambling their speech; at Pentecost, God pours out grace by unscrambling speech. At Babel, God disperses the nations; at Pentecost, God disperses us to disciple nations.
- In the story of redemption, Babel is where God turned the nations over to their respective "gods" in judgment and adopts just Israel (Deut. 32:8-9; cf. 4:19-20), but Pentecost is where God initiates a reversal of this judgment. Now in Jesus, Israel's God has secured the inheritance, not only of Israel, but of all nations (Matt. 28:18). And through the church, His aim is to "repossess" them by winning their heart's allegiance to His Lordship (28:19-20). If this is all new, read Dr. Michael Heiser's, *Unseen Realm*.
- Some denominations teach, based on this passage and others in Acts, that the gift of the Spirit necessarily comes with "initial physical evidence" of speaking in tongues. As I have noted before, however, Acts existed in a historical time warp and we need to be careful about normalizing 100% of their experiences for today. While we should still expect the empowerment of the Spirit for signs and wonders and tongues and prophecy, we should not violate Scripture in the way we articulate these things. 1 Corinthians 12:30 teaches that not all speak in tongues. It is a wonderful gift, but just because people received it en masse in the Book of Acts, this does not mean it was intended to be the experience for all believers in all places and all times. Rather, as the baptism of the Spirit spread to all people groups, the early church needed "initial physical evidence" to confirm the reception of the Spirit. This is, in fact, the way Peter knew that even Gentiles could be baptized in the Spirit (Acts 10, 11, 15).
- In saying this, however, we should not swing the pendulum too far in the other direction. Granted, tongues is not always the "initial physical evidence" for reception of the Spirit. And granted, the Book of Acts reflected a unique time warp in redemptive history. At the same time, if nobody in our churches ever experiences tongues or prophecy or any evidence of Spirit-baptism, we should wonder about whether or not we are really modeling our lives after Scripture.
- "as the Spirit gave them utterance": both here and in 1 Corinthians 14, the gift of tongues is portrayed as Spirit-enabled. The point here is that reception of the Spirit is clearly marked by tongue-speech. These were not multilingual individuals who just started spouting what they had learned. The speakers were unaware of what their hearers so clearly understood in their own tongues.
- The relationship between the tongue-speech and the Spirit is further strengthened by the physical manifestation of "tongues of fire."
- Schreiner: "Notably Pentecost does not impose a homogenous, single language... The Spirit affirms ethnolinguistic diversity. The Jews may have expected a purification of the languages into Hebrew, but the Spirit affirms the pluralization of the languages and also unites them. Multiple languages and cultures remain intact, but the Spirit breaks down barriers of comprehension. The inauguration of the new age does not force uniformity. It glories in diversity—but destitute of misperception and antagonism (Rev. 5:9; 7:9)."

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

—"dwelling": there is some debate about whether these Jews lived in Jerusalem or were temporarily "dwelling" there because of the feast. It seems to be the latter. Jerusalem would swell by a million people during Pentecost, according to some scholars.

—"Jews, devout men": we will soon see there are mixed reactions among them, but the word "devout" in Luke elsewhere refers to genuine faith (Lk. 2:25; Acts 8:2; 22:12). It seems to me that the critical opinions arise from the "multitude" who "came together" at the "sound" of tongues and of the rushing wind (2:6).

—"from every nation under heaven":

- Luke is about to list many of those nations, which find their origin in the table of nations of Genesis 10.
- No sooner than the Spirit is poured out than God reaches "every nation under heaven" with the good news. O, how we need the Spirit to reach the nations!

—Having heard the sound of wind and tongues, the multitude came together, responding in three ways. They were "bewildered... amazed and astonished". What do each of these mean?

- "bewildered" (Gk. *syncheo*):
 - this word is used 5 times in Acts (2:6; 9:22; 19:32; 21:27, 31), and is often translated as "confused".
 - It is the same word used in the Greek Old Testament to describe how God "confused" the languages at Babel. Luke is again hyperlinking that story to show how God is now reversing it.
 - But if God was reversing Babel, wouldn't the people no longer be confused, but instead, enlightened? The situation is more complicated than that. Each "bewildered" person "was hearing them speak in his own language," so the problem was not understanding the words, as at Babel; it was understanding the significance. In like manner, the globe-reaching Gospel is intelligible enough to be understood even by children, but not all receive spiritual understanding. Pentecost is a reversal of Babel, but not in the sense that universal confusion becomes universal enlightenment. Rather, it is a reversal of Babel in the sense that grace, rather than judgment, has visited the nations. All who repent and believe experience that grace; those who refuse remain bewildered, as if Babel's judgment remains over their heads.
- "amazed" (Gk. *exestemi*): this word normally has more positive connotations. It is 8 times in Acts, including once more in this chapter (2:12). People are "amazed" at Paul's repentance (9:21) and at the gift of the Spirit being poured out on Gentiles (10:45) and at Peter's miraculous release from prison (12:16). In perhaps a more negative connotation, Simon "amazed" people with his magic arts (8:9, 11), although by way of contrast, Simon was "amazed" at the miracles performed in Philip's ministry (8:13). The word is translated in 2 Cor. 5:13 as "lost our minds". The word basically means to have your mind blown. Your mind can be blown over the work of God or the work of Satan. That these peoples' minds are blown in Acts 2 is a good thing; their minds *should* be blown.
- "astonished" (Gk. *thumazo*): this word is used 13 times in Luke and 5 in Acts, and it appears to merely be a synonym for "amazed." The Greek dictionary defines it as "to wonder at, to marvel."

—The reason these folks were confused is that they heard men speaking in their native tongue; the reason they were amazed is that they were all Galileans. These two reasons are one. They expected Galileans to speak Aramaic or Greek. Perhaps even Latin. But they did not expect them to speak in the native dialects of their respective regions.

9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

—Each of these comes from the east, west, south, and north (in that order). From every point on the compass. After hearing Jesus' exhortation to reach "the ends of the earth," with the Gospel, we receive the impression here that it is already happening.

—Many scholars point out that Luke has offered a selective smattering of the table of nations from Genesis 10, which again hyperlinks Pentecost with Babel.

—This also seems to be the beginning fulfillment of many ancient promises that God would gather His people from the north, south, east, and west—the diaspora Jews—returning them to their land, and more importantly, restoring them to Himself.

- I understand Israel's long-promised "regathering" as beginning in earnest, here at Pentecost. This appears to be Luke's point in reciting the "table of nations" (Gen. 10) from four points of the compass at the giving of the Spirit during a feast of harvest.

—"we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God":

- A minority interprets this to mean that they spoke in some kind of heavenly language (which is probably the kind of 'tongue' from 1 Corinthians 14). They arrive at this conclusion by reasoning that God interpreted the tongue by changing how they heard it. In other words, on this interpretation, the speakers spoke in apparent jibberish, but the hearers heard in their own tongue.
- This is unlikely. The emphasis of the story is on God's miraculous outpouring upon the 120 and its derivative effect—amazement, confusion—on those who heard. If the crowd heard heavenly languages in their own human tongue, then there was a double miracle: first, speaking in tongues; second, interpreting tongues. This is a stretch. Are we really to believe that the greater miracle of interpreting heavenly tongues was experienced, not by the 120, but by the crowd? I seriously doubt that Luke intends us to believe that unbelievers received the spiritual gift of interpretation. These were not heavenly languages interpreted as earthly ones. These were earthly languages spoken on Pentecost.
- "the mighty works of God":
 - Some understand this evangelistically, as if the tongue-speakers were sharing the Gospel with their hearers. It just as well might be a form of worship, where the tongue-speakers are declaring God's wonders to God, much like we see in the Psalms.
 - In 1 Corinthians 14, it is certainly "vertical" in its direction—toward God. There, when one speaks in tongues, she "speaks not to men but to God," (14:2); she is praying, singing, and giving thanks in the Spirit (14:14-17).
 - In support of these "mighty works" being declared toward God is not only the parallel in 1 Corinthians 14, but in the rest of Acts. Acts 10, 11, and 19 record speaking in tongues while no unbelievers are present. There is no need for evangelism when only believers are present. Tongues as prayer and worship makes more sense.

13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

—These "others" contrast with the "amazed and perplexed" crowd that exclaims, "What does this mean?" The crowd—even the confused portion—seems to consider this with appropriate sobriety. They believe it is spiritually significant, even if they don't get it. Not so with these people.

—"they are filled with new wine":

- The most important significance of this statement is its irony: they are indeed filled with the new wine of the Spirit! Examples of the relationship between wine and the eschatological giving of the Spirit / new covenant.
 - Wine coheres with the new covenant in Jesus' blood in the Lord's Supper, and the new covenant is characterized by the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus describes his ministry, in contrast with John's, as new wine that requires fresh wineskins.
 - Jesus "saves his best wine for last" at the wedding in Cana, which speaks of the new covenant, over and against the old covenant water used for ritual cleansing (which Jesus turned to wine).
 - In each of these cases, there is a strong connection between the eschatological turning of the age—launched by Jesus, and sealed by the new covenant—and wine. If the old age of law and ritual was symbolized by water jars and old wine skins, the new age of grace and the Holy Spirit is symbolized by wine, and the ministry of the Spirit, by fresh wine skins.
 - Bringing this back to the story of Acts, the outpouring of the Spirit is viewed within a new covenant context. This was not just a neat experience for the 120 in the upper room; it was the dawn of a new age; it was the "promise of the Father" which is "for you and your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:39); it was the new wine of the Holy Spirit baptizing His people in a way John the Baptist could never do—nor any Old Testament prophet, for that matter.
- It is funny, nevertheless, that God would place such rich theology in the mouths of mockers. It reminds me of the way the wicked high priest Caiaphas prophesied, "It is better for one man to die for the nation than that the whole nation perish" (Jhn. 11)—not knowing that his intended

murderous statement was true in a way he had never imagined. Why would God do this? This is God's way of mocking mockers. The mocker seats himself in judgment against God, so God judges him by placing His truth in his very mouth, yet not in a way that saves. It is as if He's saying, "You thought you were so clever, yet even when truth filled your mouth, your mind still missed it." One way of saying it is: God uses the truth that the mocker mocks to mock the mocker.

—Many charismatics have used this verse as a reason to act wildly "drunk in the Spirit" in their church gatherings. Can this verse be used to defend such a practice?

- First, it should be acknowledged that even if we grant that this gives license for strange behavior when the Spirit falls, this is not a church gathering. This is a group of Christians praying, probably at first in the upper room, and afterward in a more public place. Context and setting matters. Paul is clear that our church meetings should be orderly. We cannot use this verse to justify acting "out of control" in church. Even if the Spirit falls in church, Paul tells Corinth that "the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets." In other words, God isn't forcing anyone to practice any spiritual gift in a corporate church setting. He's not forcing people to interrupt meetings with outbursts of tongues/prophecy.
- Second, there is no indication that these tongue-speakers have lost control of their faculties like a drunk person. There is no mention of stumbling or doing harmful things to themselves and others. The reason for the remark about drunkenness is exclusively speaking in tongues. It admittedly is a strange phenomenon. But we can't give license to acting silly and foolish in church meetings based on a false accusation by mockers in Acts 2.

—There are other passages that seem to contrast wine/drunkenness and the Spirit. Luke 1:15 says John "must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from the womb." Eph. 5:18 says, "Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery; instead be filled with the Spirit." Ephesians 5 uses a different word for "filled" than Luke, but the point stands: there seems to be a reasonably consistent link between wine/drunkenness and the Spirit. Does this make the charismatic practice of getting drunk in the Spirit more reasonable?

- First, it does not make it reasonable to pursue "getting drunk in the Spirit," as some charismatics do. John Crowder talks about "smokin Jehova-juana" and "drinkin some Godka." He and his followers gather for church meetings and act like crazy drunk people, stumbling around and interrupting sermons with giggling and loss of inhibition. No one in the Scripture does any of these things. If there is evidence of apparent drunkenness in Acts 2, it was not because they pursued a drunk feeling, but because they sought the Spirit and spoke in tongues.
- Second, the Ephesians passage makes the opposite point of these charismatics. It comes in the context of Paul's teaching about self-control. The more filled with the Spirit we are, the more control we should have over our faculties. The contrast he makes with alcohol even emphasizes this point. If wine diminishes our faculties, the Spirit vivifies them.
- But what about the people in Acts, who spontaneously spoke in tongues as the Spirit carried them along? There is no evidence they were out of control. They were accused of drunkenness not for that, but for speaking in tongues.
- But what about, for instance, the priests who were unable to stand in the temple, or Saul who fell out under the Spirit, or the soldiers arresting Jesus who all collapsed when they heard, "I am He"? Is there not a place for the Spirit so overwhelming someone that they can no longer stand? I believe there is a place for it. I even believe these manifestations can occur in church meetings. But I have two cautions: first, the gifts of the Spirit, as manifestations, are controllable; second, other manifestations (falling, crying, laughing, etc.) should not be pursued for their own sake. The model of Scripture is to pursue the Spirit. If, in doing so, I naturally respond by falling down or crying, praise God. But my goal is not to fall or cry; my goal must be to experience the Spirit. Too often, charismatics pursue manifestations of the Spirit instead of the Spirit Himself.