Pentecost: The Day the Gift Was Poured Out

Bible Stories Anthology — Acts 2

Copyright 2026

Distribution of this study as is in its entirety is permitted & encouraged.

Author: John Lobota

Research Assistant: Claude Cowork

papertiq@bellsouth.net

> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

The Morning Everything Changed

Ten days earlier, they had watched Him go. On the Mount of Olives a cloud had received Jesus out of their sight, and two men in white had told them He would come again. Then they walked back to Jerusalem — a sabbath day's journey — to do the one thing He had told them to do: wait.

On the fiftieth day after the resurrection, at nine o'clock in the morning, in a city packed with pilgrims from every corner of the known world, the waiting ended. A roar came out of heaven. Something like fire rested on every one of them. And about a hundred and twenty ordinary men and women — most of them from Galilee, with the accent to prove it — began to speak the wonderful works of God in languages they had never learned, to men who had been born in those languages.

By nightfall, three thousand people had believed.

At Babel, God had scattered mankind by confusing one language into many. At Pentecost, He gathered men of many languages by one message. A feast that had been kept for fifteen hundred years suddenly meant what it had always pointed to. And the age we live in — the age of grace — began.

The Setting

When. The feast of Pentecost, in the late spring of the year Jesus was crucified, raised and taken up — fifty days after the firstfruits were waved at Passover time. Scripture does not name the year.

What the feast was. "Pentecost" is Greek for "fiftieth." In the Law it is called the Feast of Weeks, because it came seven full weeks after the firstfruits of the barley harvest were waved before the LORD:

> **Leviticus 23:15** *And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:*
>
> **Leviticus 23:16** *Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.*
>
> **Leviticus 23:17** *Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.*

Two things stand out. The count began with *firstfruits* — and Christ was raised on that very day, **"the firstfruits of them that slept"** (1 Corinthians 15:20). And the two loaves offered at Pentecost were **"baken with leaven"** — one of the very few offerings in the Law where leaven was not only allowed but required. Pentecost was the firstfruits of the wheat harvest: the first loaves of the season, offered to God as the pledge of everything still to be gathered.

Why the city was full. Pentecost was one of three feasts that every Israelite man was commanded to keep at the place God chose:

> **Deuteronomy 16:16** *Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:*

Jews scattered across the Roman and Parthian worlds came home for it. The Jewish historian Josephus, who lived in that century, describes Pentecost crowds of "many ten thousands," filling "all the places about the temple and all the city."

Where they were. Luke's Gospel closes by saying that after the ascension the disciples **"were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God"** (Luke 24:53). Acts 1 says the apostles lodged in **"an upper room"** (Acts 1:13). On the morning of Pentecost, Luke says only that they were **"all with one accord in one place"** (Acts 2:1). The traditional picture puts them in the upper room. As this series understands it, the temple is the likelier place: it was where they went daily, it was where a crowd from every nation would already be gathered at the morning hour of prayer, and scripture calls the temple "my house" (Matthew 21:13) — the same word Luke uses when the sound **"filled all the house where they were sitting."** No upper room could have held the multitude that came running.

Who they were. The eleven apostles and Matthias, newly chosen to take Judas's place; the women who had followed Jesus; Mary His mother; His brothers, who had not believed in Him before the resurrection but now did; and others — **"about an hundred and twenty"** in all (Acts 1:14-15).

What they were waiting for. Jesus had told them exactly:

> **Acts 1:4** *And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.*
>
> **Acts 1:5** *For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*
>
> **Acts 1:8** *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

"The promise of the Father." "Baptized with the Holy Ghost." "Power." They did not know how it would come, or what it would look like. They only knew it was "not many days hence." It had been ten.

The administration. Until this morning, God's people had lived under the administration of Christ, which opened at Jesus' baptism. On this day a new administration begins: the **administration of grace**, the fifth of the seven stretches into which scripture divides God's dealings with mankind. (An *administration* is a period during which God governs His people by a particular set of instructions.) Grace is the administration we live in today.

The Story, Told Faithfully

A Sound From Heaven

> **Acts 2:1** *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*
>
> **Acts 2:2** *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*

"When the day of Pentecost was fully come." The Greek word behind "fully come" means *being filled up* — the fifty-day count was being completed. The day God had marked on Israel's calendar for fifteen centuries had arrived.

"With one accord." One Greek word, *homothumadon*: of one mind, one passion. Luke uses it again and again in the early chapters of Acts for the believers' unity (1:14; 2:46; 4:24). They were not arguing about who would be greatest any more.

"A sound from heaven." The word for "sound" is *ēchos* — our word "echo" comes from it. Notice what Luke is careful to say and not say. The sound came **"from heaven"** — out of heaven, not from anyone in the room. And it was **"as of"** a rushing mighty wind — *like* a violent wind, not a wind itself. This way of speaking, comparing one thing to another with "as" or "like," is called a **simile**. It was the *sound* that filled the house. Nothing blew; something was heard.

Luke also chose an unusual word for "wind." The ordinary Greek word is *anemos*. Luke used *pnoē*, which means "breath" — the word the Greek Old Testament uses for **"the breath of life"** that God breathed into Adam (Genesis 2:7). It comes from the same root as *pneuma*, "spirit." On resurrection evening, Jesus had **"breathed on them"** and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22), a sign of what was coming. Now the sound from heaven was like a mighty breath. As this series understands it, Luke's word choice is meant to remind us of the breath of God giving life. But the text is plain that the sound itself came from heaven.

Tongues Like as of Fire

> **Acts 2:3** *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*

"Cloven tongues." The word means *distributed, divided among them* — not one great flame over the whole company, but a portion resting on each person. **"Like as of fire"** — another simile. It had the appearance of fire; Luke does not say it was fire.

"It sat upon each of them." Each one. Not only the apostles, not a select few. Every person present received the sign.

John the Baptist had said of the One coming after him, **"he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire"** (Matthew 3:11). Fire in scripture is the sign of God's presence — the burning bush, the pillar of fire over Israel, the fire that fell on Elijah's altar. God was showing, in a way they could see, that He had come to dwell with His people in a new way.

Filled — and Speaking

> **Acts 2:4** *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

"They were all filled." All — the whole company. **"Filled with the Holy Ghost"** — this is the moment Jesus had promised: "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Scripture uses the phrase "baptized with the Holy Ghost" only of this outpouring at Pentecost. It happened once, as the opening of a new age.

A word about how this series speaks of it. God is the Giver; God is Spirit, and He is holy. What He gave that day was a *gift* — His own life and nature, holy spirit, placed within each believer. In these pages the Giver is always "He" and "God," and the gift He gives is "holy spirit," "the gift," and "it." The King James text is quoted exactly as printed.

"And began to speak with other tongues." The first thing they did with the gift was speak — and what came out was not their own words. **"As the Spirit gave them utterance."** The words came from God. They spoke them. God supplied the content; they supplied the voice. The Greek word for "gave them utterance," *apophthengomai*, means to speak out clearly and with weight. Luke uses the same word eleven verses later when Peter stands up and **"said unto them"** (2:14) — the same Spirit-given boldness, first in other tongues, then in Peter's own.

"Other tongues" is *heterais glossais* — tongues of a *different kind*. The next verses tell us what kind: real human languages.

Every Man in His Own Language

> **Acts 2:5** *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.*
>
> **Acts 2:6** *Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.*
>
> **Acts 2:7** *And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?*
>
> **Acts 2:8** *And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?*
>
> **Acts 2:9** *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,*
>
> **Acts 2:10** *Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,*
>
> **Acts 2:11** *Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

"When this was noised abroad" — literally, when this sound occurred. The sound from heaven drew the crowd.

“Were confounded.” Here is a detail most readers miss. The Greek word, *suncheō*, is the very word the Greek Old Testament uses at Babel: **“let us go down, and there confound their language”** (Genesis 11:7). At Babel, God *confounded* one language into many, and the builders could not understand each other, and He scattered them over the earth. At Pentecost, men of many languages were *confounded* — astonished — because each one understood. Babel scattered the nations by language; Pentecost gathered them by it.

> **Genesis 11:9** *Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

“Every man heard them speak in his own language.” The word for “language” is *dialektos* — our “dialect.” Not a trade language, not Greek that everyone half-understood: **“our own tongue, wherein we were born.”** A man from Parthia, beyond the Euphrates, heard Parthian. A man from Cappadocia heard his own mother tongue. From Galileans.

“Are not all these which speak Galilaeans?” Galileans were known for their country accent. When Peter warmed himself at the high priest’s fire, the bystanders had said, **“thy speech bewrayeth thee”** (Matthew 26:73) — your accent gives you away. Now Galilean fishermen were speaking, without accent, in languages from the edge of Persia to the city of Rome.

Look at the list. It runs roughly east to west: **Parthians, Medes and Elamites** — the lands beyond the Tigris, where the ten tribes had been carried away and where Daniel had served in Babylon; **Mesopotamia**, the land of Abraham’s fathers; **Judaea**; **Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia** — the provinces of what is now Turkey; **Egypt and Libya** in Africa; **Rome** in the west; and **Cretes and Arabians** — islanders and desert peoples. These were **“Jews and proselytes”** — Jews by birth, and Gentiles who had fully converted to the God of Israel.

And what did they hear? Not a sermon, not a call to repent. **“The wonderful works of God.”** The tongues were praise. Paul would later explain that tongues are **“for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not”** (1 Corinthians 14:22). The first sign was given to the crowd at the temple, before a word of preaching.

What Meaneth This?

> **Acts 2:12** *And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?*
>
> **Acts 2:13** *Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.*

Two responses to the same wonder. Most were amazed, and honestly puzzled — **“What meaneth this?”** A figure of speech called **erotesis** — a question asked out loud, not so much for an answer as to express astonishment. Others mocked. **“New wine”** is *gleukos*, sweet wine. It was their way of dismissing what they could not explain.

It is always so when God moves. Some ask; some mock. The question gets an answer. The mockery gets a correction.

Peter Stands Up

> **Acts 2:14** *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:*
>
> **Acts 2:15** *For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.*
>
> **Acts 2:16** *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;*

"Peter, standing up with the eleven." Less than two months before, this same man had cursed and sworn that he did not know Jesus — first to a servant girl. Now he stood before thousands in the temple courts and lifted up his voice.

"It is but the third hour of the day." The Jewish day was counted from sunrise, so the third hour was about nine in the morning — the hour of the morning sacrifice and prayer. No one was drunk at that hour on a feast day. Peter answers the mockers with a plain fact, and then turns to the honest question.

"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

> **Acts 2:17** *And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*
>
> **Acts 2:18** *And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:*
>
> **Acts 2:19** *And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:*
>
> **Acts 2:20** *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:*
>
> **Acts 2:21** *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Peter quotes Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of God's spirit. Notice what he quotes and what he claims. The outpouring was happening in front of them: sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens, all speaking the words of God. But the rest of Joel's prophecy — wonders in heaven, blood and fire and vapour of smoke, the sun turned to darkness and the moon into blood — did *not* happen that morning. Those signs come **"before that great and notable day of the Lord."** As this series understands it, "this is that" means: what you are seeing is the very kind of outpouring Joel foretold — it has begun. The signs in the sun and moon are still to come, in the day of the Lord that Jesus Himself described (Luke 21:25-27).

Notice also that where Joel says "afterward" (Joel 2:28), Peter, speaking by the same Spirit, says **"in the last days."** A new age had opened.

And the promise at the end: **"whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."** Whosoever. Peter had just told them how to be saved before he told them why they needed it.

A Man Approved of God

> **Acts 2:22** *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*

> **Acts 2:23** *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*
>
> **Acts 2:24** *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

"Ye men of Israel." Peter now speaks to the whole nation, gathered in the person of its pilgrims.

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him." Read that carefully. Jesus was *a man*, approved — shown, demonstrated — *by God*. The miracles were **"which God did by him."** Peter's first sermon presents Jesus exactly as the rest of scripture does: the Son of God, the man God chose, anointed and worked through. There is one God, and Jesus Christ is the man through whom God did His works.

"Being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." God knew beforehand what men would do, and had determined the plan of redemption before the foundation of the world. But notice who did the killing: **"ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."** "Wicked hands" is a figure of speech called **synecdoche**, where a part stands for the whole — the hands for the lawless men who used them, the Roman soldiers acting on the demand of Jerusalem's leaders. God foreknew it; wicked men did it; and the adversary stood behind them. God's part was to raise Him up.

"Having loosed the pains of death." The word for "pains" is the word for the pains of *childbirth*. Death was in labour, and could not hold Him; it had to give Him up — **"it was not possible that he should be holden of it."**

David Is Not Ascended

Then Peter did what Jesus had done on the road to Emmaus: he opened the scriptures.

> **Acts 2:25** *For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:*
>
> **Acts 2:26** *Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:*
>
> **Acts 2:27** *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*
>
> **Acts 2:28** *Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.*
>
> **Acts 2:29** *Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.*
>
> **Acts 2:30** *Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;*
>
> **Acts 2:31** *He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*

Peter quoted Psalm 16, where David says, **"thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."** "Hell" here is the Greek *hades*, translating the Hebrew *sheol* — the grave, the state of the dead. It is not a place of fire. David was saying that God would not leave His Holy One in the grave, and would not let His body decay.

Then Peter made an argument no one could answer. David could not have been speaking of himself, because **"he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day."** David's tomb was right there in Jerusalem. His body had seen corruption. So David, **"being a prophet,"** knowing God had sworn to raise up the Christ from his descendants to sit on his throne, was speaking **"of the resurrection of Christ."**

> **Acts 2:32** *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*
> **Acts 2:33** *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*
> **Acts 2:34** *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,*
> **Acts 2:35** *Until I make thy foes thy footstool.*
> **Acts 2:36** *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." A hundred and twenty witnesses were standing behind Peter.

"Being by the right hand of God exalted." The **right hand** in scripture is the place of honour and authority. The risen Christ had ascended and been exalted to the highest place. And there, **"having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."** Everything the crowd was watching and hearing was proof that Jesus was alive and exalted. The sound, the tongues, the languages — all of it came from the ascended Christ, who had received the promise from His Father and poured it out.

This is why the ascension matters so much. The cross paid for sin. The resurrection defeated death. The ascension placed Christ at God's right hand — and from there the gift was poured out. Without the ascension, there is no Pentecost.

"For David is not ascended into the heavens." Peter says it plainly: David, the man after God's own heart, was not in heaven. He was dead and buried, waiting for the resurrection. Only one Man had ascended.

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand." David, again, from Psalm 110. In the Hebrew of the psalm, the first "LORD" is God's own name, YHWH. The second "Lord" is *adoni* — "my lord" — a word the Hebrew Bible uses of kings, masters and superiors among men, and not the word reserved for God. God said to David's lord — the Messiah, his descendant and yet his Lord — "Sit thou on my right hand."

"God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." God made Him Lord. God made Him Christ. And then Peter drove the point home with four words that must have struck like a blow: **"whom ye have crucified."**

What Shall We Do?

> **Acts 2:37** *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

“Pricked in their heart.” The Greek word, *katanussō*, appears only here in the New Testament. It means to be pierced, stung, cut to the quick. Less than two months before, many in this city had shouted “Crucify him.” Now they understood what they had done — and whom they had done it to.

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Not “how dare you,” but “what shall we do?” The honest question of verse 12 had become the question of a pierced heart.

> **Acts 2:38** *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*
>
> **Acts 2:39** *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Peter’s answer has four parts.

“Repent.” The word, *metanoeō*, means to change one’s mind — to turn around in how one thinks, and so in how one lives. They had thought Jesus a blasphemer. Now they must see Him as God’s Christ.

“And be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.” Every one — each person individually. What does “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” mean here? Many Christians read it as a command to be baptized in water. As this series understands it, there is good reason to read it another way. Only ten days earlier, Jesus had set two baptisms side by side and distinguished them: **“John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 1:5). On this reading, “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” names the new birth itself — being immersed into Christ by receiving the gift of holy spirit — rather than a water rite. The water reading is held sincerely by many, and scripture does record water baptisms after Pentecost (the Ethiopian treasurer, Lydia, the Philippian jailer). What is certain is that the name is **Jesus Christ’s** — the One Peter had just proven to be Lord and Christ.

“For the remission of sins.” “Remission,” *aphesis*, means *sending away* — sins released, dismissed, removed, not merely covered over.

“And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” “Receive” is *lambanō*, the same word Jesus used on resurrection evening: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” What the hundred and twenty had received that morning, the crowd could receive too. It is a *gift* — not earned, not deserved, given.

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Three widening circles: the people standing there; their children; and those “afar off.” Peter himself probably thought of Jews scattered across the world. God meant far more. Years later He would send Peter to the house of a Roman centurion, and the gift would fall on Gentiles **“as on us at the beginning”** (Acts 11:15). Paul would call them those who **“sometimes were far off”** and are **“made nigh by the blood of Christ”** (Ephesians 2:13).

Save Yourselves

> **Acts 2:40** *And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*
>
> **Acts 2:41** *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

“With many other words.” Luke gives us only a summary. Peter said much more.

“Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” “Untoward” is the Greek *skolios* — *crooked*. Our medical word “scoliosis,” a curved spine, comes from it. Paul uses the same word: **“in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”** (Philippians 2:15).

The grammar here is worth knowing. “Save yourselves” in Greek is a command, but it is in the *passive* voice — more literally, **“be saved.”** A passive command is a command to *receive* something, not to *achieve* it. No one can save himself from a crooked generation by his own strength. But he can let himself be saved, by believing what God has done. Paul uses the same kind of command: **“be ye reconciled to God”** (2 Corinthians 5:20).

“Then they that gladly received his word.” “Gladly received” is a strong word, *apodechomai* — to welcome warmly, to take to oneself with open arms.

“Were baptized.” Here the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” is not repeated. Whether this means water, or the same new birth, the text does not say; this series leaves it open.

“About three thousand souls.” Here is a striking contrast. On the day the Law was given at Sinai, when Israel worshipped the golden calf, **“there fell of the people that day about three thousand men”** (Exodus 32:28). Jewish tradition associated the Feast of Weeks with the giving of the Law. On this Pentecost, **three thousand were made alive.** Paul would write: **“the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”** (2 Corinthians 3:6). (The link between Pentecost and Sinai is a tradition, not a statement of scripture; the two numbers are scripture’s own.)

The First Church

> **Acts 2:42** *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
>
> **Acts 2:43** *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*
>
> **Acts 2:44** *And all that believed were together, and had all things common;*
>
> **Acts 2:45** *And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*
>
> **Acts 2:46** *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*
>
> **Acts 2:47** *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

“They continued stedfastly.” The word means to keep at something persistently, to be devoted to it. Four things marked the first believers:

- **“The apostles’ doctrine”** — the teaching. They wanted to know what God had done and what it meant.
- **“Fellowship”** — *koinonia*, a sharing in common, a partnership in one life.
- **“Breaking of bread”** — eating together in their homes. Bread was broken, not cut, and a shared meal meant shared lives.
- **“Prayers”** — including the set hours of prayer at the temple, which they still kept (Acts 3:1).

“Had all things common.” No one was commanded to do this. Later, when Ananias lied about his gift, Peter told him, **“Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine**

own power?" (Acts 5:4). The sharing was the free overflow of love, as each had need. It was not a law, and it was not a system; it was a family taking care of its own.

"Singleness of heart." The Greek word, *aphelotēs*, appears nowhere else in the Bible. It comes from a word describing ground that is smooth, free of stones. Their hearts were clear — no hidden motives, no rocky places.

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Notice who did the adding. Not Peter's eloquence, not a program. The Lord added. Every day.

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

He is alive, and He is exalted. Pentecost is the public proof of the ascension. Peter's whole argument rests on it: the gift they saw and heard came from the risen Christ at God's right hand. "He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

The cross, the resurrection, the ascension — and the outpouring. The cross paid for sin. The resurrection broke the power of death. The ascension placed Him at God's right hand. From there, He poured out what He had received from the Father. The four belong together.

Lord and Christ. God made the man He raised both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). The first Christian sermon ends not with a doctrine but with a Person.

The firstfruits. Christ rose on the day the first sheaf of barley was waved; fifty days later, the first loaves of the wheat harvest were offered, and three thousand were gathered in. He was the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20); they were the first of the harvest that followed.

To the Grace Administration

The age of grace begins. Pentecost opens the administration we live in. Its basis is stated plainly: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Every believer receives the gift. In the Old Testament, God's spirit came *upon* certain people — prophets, judges, kings — for a time and a purpose. Beginning at Pentecost, every believer receives holy spirit *within*, as a gift that stays. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

Tongues, then and now. The first thing the believers did with the gift was speak in tongues, and wherever Acts tells what happened when people received the gift, it records them speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:45-46; 19:6). Paul later wrote to the Corinthians, "I would that ye all spake with tongues" (1 Corinthians 14:5), and taught how to do it decently and in order. God still gives the words; the believer still speaks them.

More than Peter knew. Peter preached to "the house of Israel" (Acts 2:36) from Israel's own prophets. He did not yet know how far the promise would reach. Years later God revealed to Paul what had been hidden: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). The door that opened at Pentecost opened wider than anyone standing in the temple that morning could see.

Babel undone. Men once built a tower to make a name for themselves, and God scattered them by confusing their language. At Pentecost God gathered men of every language around one Name — the name of Jesus Christ.

To the Topic of Waiting on God

- **They waited where they were told.** "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Obedience put them in the right place at the right time.
- **They waited together.** "With one accord." Unity was the soil the gift fell on.
- **They waited in praise and prayer.** Not anxious, not idle — "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."
- **They waited on a promise.** They did not know how it would come, only that God had said it would. God kept the promise to the day.

The Main Takeaway

On the day of Pentecost the risen and ascended Christ poured out the gift of holy spirit, the age of grace began, and the gift God gave that day He still gives to everyone who believes: repent, receive, and be saved.

- **God keeps His appointments.** The gift came on the fiftieth day, exactly as the feast had pictured for fifteen centuries.
- **The gift is the proof that Jesus is alive and exalted.**
- **God gives the words.** They spoke "as the Spirit gave them utterance."
- **Some will ask, and some will mock.** Answer the mockers with facts, and the askers with the scriptures.
- **Peter was restored.** The man who denied Him preached Him to thousands.
- **Salvation is received, not achieved.** "Be saved."
- **The promise is to all** whom the Lord our God shall call — including you.

For Our Learning — The People

- **The hundred and twenty.** The apostles, the women who had followed Jesus, Mary His mother, His brothers and other disciples, gathered "with one accord" and waiting as He had told them.
- **Peter.** The fisherman who had denied Jesus three times, now standing up with the eleven to preach the first sermon of the age of grace.
- **The eleven, and Matthias.** The apostles; Matthias had just been chosen to take the place of Judas (Acts 1:26).
- **Mary the mother of Jesus.** Named among those praying before Pentecost (Acts 1:14) — the last time scripture mentions her.
- **His brethren.** Jesus' brothers, who had not believed in Him during His ministry (John 7:5) but were now among the believers.
- **The devout men.** Jews and proselytes from every nation under heaven, in Jerusalem for the feast.
- **The mockers.** Those who dismissed the wonder as drunkenness.

- **Joel.** The prophet whose words Peter quoted.
- **David.** The king and prophet, dead and buried in Jerusalem, whose psalms foretold the resurrection and exaltation of his descendant and Lord.
- **The three thousand.** The first harvest of the age of grace.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **The pilgrim feasts.** Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles; every Israelite man was to appear before the LORD at each (Deuteronomy 16:16). Jerusalem swelled with visitors from across the world.
- **The Feast of Weeks.** Counted seven weeks from the waving of the barley firstfruits; two leavened loaves of the new wheat were offered.
- **The hours of the day.** Counted from sunrise: the third hour about 9 a.m., the ninth hour about 3 p.m. — both hours of prayer at the temple (Acts 3:1).
- **The temple courts.** Vast open courts and colonnades, such as Solomon's porch (Acts 3:11; 5:12), where thousands could gather and teachers could address crowds.
- **Proselytes.** Gentiles who had fully converted to Judaism and kept the Law.
- **The Galilean accent.** Galileans were recognized by their speech (Matthew 26:73).
- **David's tomb.** The royal tombs of David's line were in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:16), known and visited in Peter's day.
- **Breaking bread.** Bread was broken by hand; sharing a meal was a sign of close fellowship.
- **The right hand.** The place of honour and authority beside a king.
- **The footstool.** Conquered enemies were sometimes pictured beneath a king's feet — total victory.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Simile** — a comparison using "as" or "like." "A sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" (2:2); "cloven tongues like as of fire" (2:3).
- **Erotesis** — a question asked to express feeling, not to get information. "Are not all these which speak Galilaeans?" (2:7); "What meaneth this?" (2:12).
- **Synecdoche** — a part put for the whole. "By wicked hands" (2:23), the hands for the men who used them.
- **Metaphor** — speaking of one thing as another. "Having loosed the pains of death" (2:24), death pictured as a woman in labour; "pricked in their heart" (2:37); "untoward [crooked] generation" (2:40).
- **Anthropopatheia** — speaking of God in human terms. "The right hand of God" (2:33).
- **Polysyndeton** — many "ands" to make each item stand out. "In the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (2:42).
- **Idiom** — "Men and brethren" (2:29, 37), a respectful form of address; "the fruit of his loins" (2:30), his descendants; "all flesh" (2:17), all kinds of people.

What the Bible Actually Says

- **The sound came "from heaven."** It was "as of" a wind — the sound of one — not a wind blowing through the room.
- **The tongues were "like as of fire,"** and one rested on each person.
- **"All" were filled** — the whole company, not only the apostles.
- **They spoke real languages**, heard by native speakers "in our own tongue, wherein we were born."
- **What they spoke was "the wonderful works of God"** — praise, not preaching.
- **Scripture does not say they were in the upper room** that morning; it says "in one place," and "the house."
- **Peter did not say all of Joel's prophecy was fulfilled that day.** The signs in the sun and moon did not happen.
- **Peter called Jesus "a man approved of God,"** and said God made Him "both Lord and Christ."
- **"Hell" in Acts 2:27 is the grave,** and Peter says plainly that David "is not ascended into the heavens."
- **The gift is called "the gift of the Holy Ghost"** — something given and received, not earned.
- **The sharing of goods was voluntary** (Acts 5:4).
- **The Lord added to the church** — not the apostles.

God's Will and Intent

- **God keeps His word to the day.** The promise of the Father came exactly when He said.
- **God wants every believer to have the gift** of holy spirit — "unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off."
- **God wants the wonderful works of God spoken,** in every language.
- **God raised Jesus, exalted Him, and made Him Lord and Christ.**
- **God wants all men to be saved** by receiving what He has done, not by achieving it themselves.
- **God gathers what man scattered.** Babel's confusion is answered at Pentecost with one message for every nation.
- **God builds His church Himself.** "The Lord added to the church daily."