

LOGOS

Logos Online Bible Study

First Wednesdays, 7.00–8.30 pm, on Zoom

Christian Beginnings

According to the Acts of the Apostles

Session 4 – Acts 2.1 – 13

Acts – Chapter Two

The Birth of the Church – Overview

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Pentecost: The Phenomenon (vv 1–13)

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Pentecost: Exposition & Response (vv 14–41)
Peter's Sermon & First 'Converts'

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Pentecost: Lived Reality – Community Life (vv 42–47)

Acts 2.1 – 13

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, 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, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³ But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

Acts 2.1

‘When the day of Pentecost (*tên hêmeran tês pentêkostês*) had come,
they were all together (*homou*) in one place.’

Pentecost

Pentêkostês – *fiftieth*; cf *Shavuot* = Feast of Weeks

‘You shall observe the Festival of Weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the Festival of Ingathering at the turn of the year ... You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the Festival of Weeks to the LORD your God, contributing a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing that you have received from the LORD your God.’ (Exod 34.22 & Deut 16.9–10)

‘You [will count] for yourselves from the day you bring the new meal-offering to Yahweh, [the] bread as the first fruit, seven weeks; seven Sabbaths complete [they will be un]til the morrow of the seventh Sabbath; you will count fifty days, and [will bring] new wine for a libation ...’ (Temple Scroll [11QT], 18–21; three ‘pentecostal’ feasts: Passover – 50 days – Feast of Weeks – 50 days – Feast of New Wine – 50 days – Feast of New Oil)

Acts 2.2 – 3



El Greco, *Pentecost*, c 1600

‘And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind (*êchos hôsper pheromenês pnoês biaias kai eplêrôsen*) and it filled the entire house where they were sitting (*kathêmenoi*).³ Divided tongues, as of fire (*diamerizomenai glôssai hôsei puros*), appeared among them, and a tongue rested (*ekathisen*) on each of them.’

Rushing Winds & Fiery Tongues

‘On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now all of Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently (Exodus 19.16–18; cf 3.2, ‘There [Mount Horeb] the angel of the LORD appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.’)

Acts 2.4

Jewish 'Pentecost'

‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit (*eplêsthêsan pantes pneumatos hagiou*) and began to speak in other languages (*lalein heterais glôssais*), as the Spirit gave them ability (*kathôs to pneuma edidou apophthengesthai autois*).’

Jesus' 'Pentecost'

‘Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove ... Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit ... Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit ... “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”.’ (Luke 3.21–22; 4.1, 14, 18)

Gentile 'Pentecost'

‘While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.’ (Acts 10.44–48)

Acts 2.4

‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit (*eplêsthêsan pantes pneumatōs hagiou*) and began to speak in other languages (*lalein heterais glôssais*), as the Spirit gave them ability (*kathôs to pneuma edidou apophthengesthai autois*).’

Tongues as an Unacquired Recognised Language (Missionary evangelism)

‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.’ (Acts 2.4)

Tongues as an Unacquired ‘Recognisable’ Language (Prophecy in church)

‘Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit ... To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good ... to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.’ (1 Cor 12.4, 7, 10)

Tongues as an Unacquired Inarticulate Language (Personal edification, glossolalia)

‘For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God, for no one understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit ... Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church.’ (1 Cor 14.2, 4; cf Rom 8.26–27; 1 Cor 13.1)

Acts 2.4 (vv 5–8, 11)

‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit (*eplêsthêsan pantes pneumatou hagiou*) and began to speak in other languages (*lalein heterais glôssais*), as the Spirit gave them ability (*kathôs to pneuma edidou apophthengesthai autois*).’

Ability to speak an unacquired language (xenolalia)

‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages (*lalein heterais glôssais*), as the Spirit gave them ability.’ (Acts 2.4)

Ability to comprehend an unacquired language (aurolalia)

‘Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each (*hoti êkouon heis hekastos tē idia dialektō lalountōn autōn*). Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language (*kai pōs êmeis akouomen hekastos tē idia dialektō êmōn en hē egengêthēmen*)? ... in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power (*akouomen lalountōn autōn tais êmeterais glôssais to megaleia tou theou*).’ (Acts 2.5–8, 11)

Acts 2.5–11

‘Now there were devout Jews (*loudaioi andres eulabeis*) from every people (*pantous ethnous*) under heaven living (*katoikountes*) in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans (*Galilaios*)? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents (*katoikountes*) of Mesopotamia, Judea (*loudaian*) and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome (*hoi epidêmountes Rômaioi*), both Jews and proselytes (*loudaioi kai prosêlytoi*), Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’

Holy Spirit – God’s Universal Medium, Communicating God’s Universal Message

‘[Luke] wishes to indicate that they represented every nation under heaven ... The major point of all this is that the Spirit overcomes all barriers, even of languages, to witness to the various parts of the known world ... in verse 5 the verb *katoikountes* normally means “residing” or “dwelling”, in which case we would probably not in the main be talking about pilgrims come to Jerusalem from the Diaspora for the feast, but rather diaspora Jews who had come to live and retire in Jerusalem, and no doubt would have attended some of the synagogues founded in Jerusalem by Diaspora Jews (cf Acts 6.9).’

(Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p 135)

Acts 2.5–11

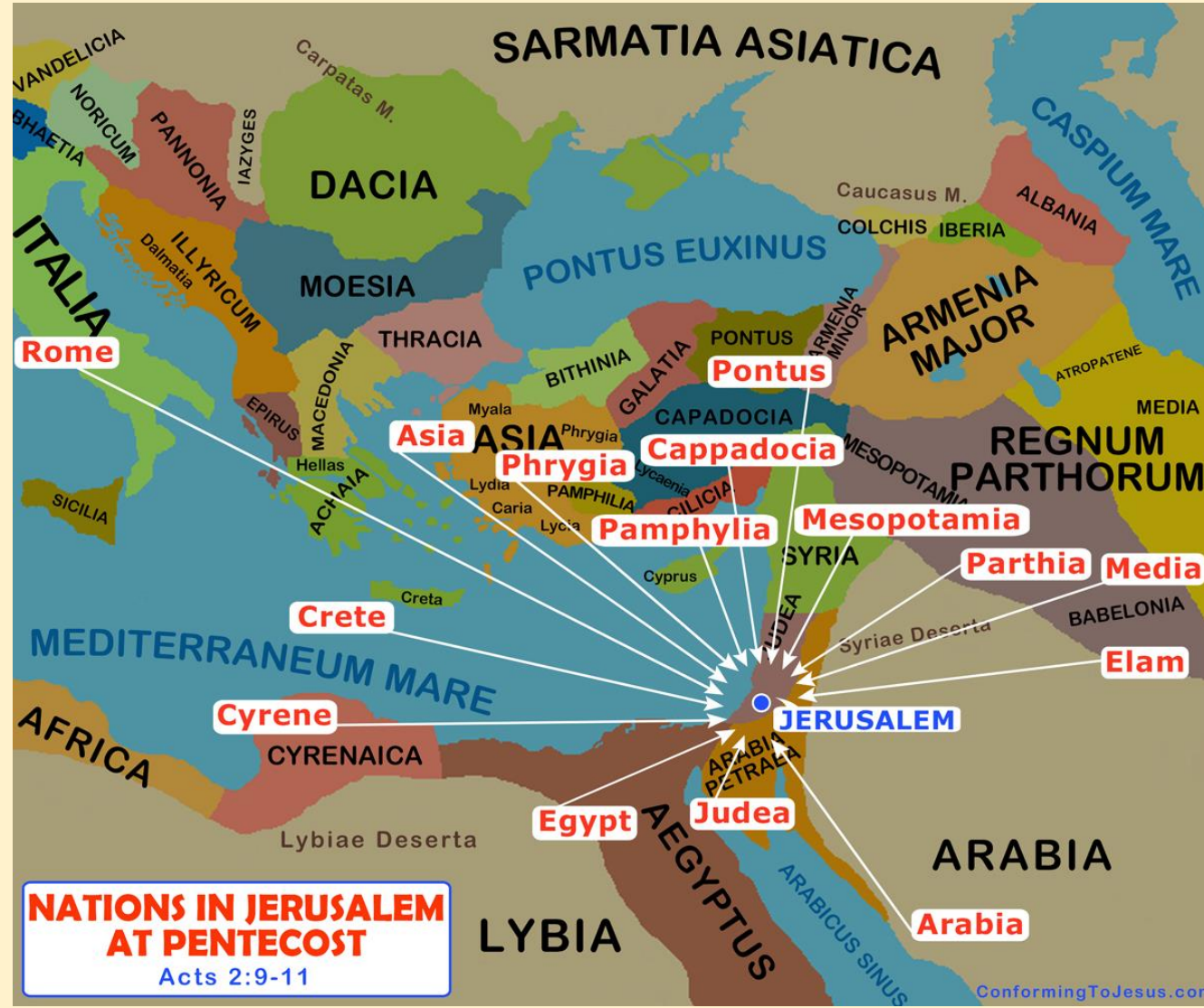
‘Now there were devout Jews (*Ioudaioi andres eulabeis*) from every people (*pantous ethnous*) under heaven living (*katoikountes*) in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans (*Galilaios*)? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents (*katoikountes*) of Mesopotamia, Judea (*Ioudaia*) and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome (*hoi epidêmountes Rômaioi*), both Jews and proselytes (*Ioudaioi kai prosêlytoi*), Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’

The Extent of the Jewish Diaspora – Is Luke Using a Source?

‘While she [Jerusalem], as I have said, is my native city she is also the mother city not of one country Judaea but of most of the others in virtue of the colonies (*dia tas apoikias*) sent out at divers times to the neighbouring lands Egypt, Phoenicia, the part of Syria called the Hollow and the rest as well and the lands lying far apart, Pamphylia, Cilicia, most of Asia up to Bithynia and the corners of Pontus, similarly also into Europe, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth and most of the best parts of Peloponnese. And not only are the mainlands full of Jewish colonies (*Ioudaikôn apoikiôn*) but also the most highly esteemed of the islands Euboea, Cyprus, Crete.’ (Philo [c 20 BCE – 50 CE], *On the Embassy of Gaius* 281–2; cf Gaius = Caligula [37–41 CE])

Acts 2.5-11

Parthians
Medes
Elamites
Mesopotamia
Judea
Cappadocia
Pontus
Asia



Phrygia
Pamphylia
Egypt
Libya (Cyrene)
Rome
Cretans
Arabs

Conforming to Jesus Ministry Website

https://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/nations_at_pentecost_acts_2_map.htm

Acts 2.8–11

‘And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea (*Ioudaïan*) and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (*Ioudaioi kai prosêlytoi*), Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’

Jews, Proselytes & God-Fearers

‘What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit ... and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch (*prosêlyton Antiochea*) ... When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism (*sebomenôn prosêlytôn*) followed Paul and Barnabas ...’ (Acts 6.5; 13.43)

‘In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius ... He was a devout man who feared God (*eusebês kai phoboumenos ton theon*) with all his household ... Fellow Israelites and others who fear God (*hoi phoboumenoi ton theon*), listen ... A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God (*sebomenê ton theon*) ... Then [Paul] left the synagogue and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God (*sebomenon ton theon*) ...’ (Acts 10.1–2; 13.16; 16.14; 18.7)

Acts 2.12 – 13

‘All were amazed and perplexed (*existanto ... diêporoun*, ‘confused and doubted), saying to one another, ‘What does this mean? But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine (*gleukous memestômenoi*).’

Experience & Interpretation

Luke distinguishes between experience (*xenolalia* or *aurolalia*) and interpretation of that experience. While the former is self-evident/self-authenticating for recipients, it remains open to multiple interpretations.

Background

Commenting on Eli’s accusation that Hannah was drunk when she was in deep communion with God through prayer: ‘For with the God-possessed not only is the soul wont to be stirred and goaded as it were into ecstasy but the body also is flushed and fiery, warmed by the overflowing joy within which passes on the sensation to the outer man, and thus many of the foolish are deceived and suppose that the sober are drunk.’ (Philo, *On Drunkenness* 146–7)

‘... you will count fifty days, and [will bring] new wine for a libation ...’ (Temple Scroll [11QT], 18–21; three ‘pentecostal’ feasts: Passover – 50 days – Feast of Weeks – 50 days – Feast of New Wine – 50 days – Feast of New Oil)

Pentecost as the Reversal of Babel (cf Genesis 11)



Joseph Mulder, *The Descent of the Holy Spirit and the Tower of Babel*, 1694

‘And the LORD said, “Look, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.”’ (Genesis 11.6–7)

‘... if pride caused the division of tongues at Babel, humility was the condition necessary for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost’ (Ambrose [339–97 CE], Sermon 36.2)

‘For whence came the diversity of tongues, save only that the wicked and ungodly counsels of men might be brought to nought? But God does furnish the apostles with the diversity of tongues now, that he may bring and call home, into a blessed unity, men which wander here and there. These cloven tongues made all men to speak the language of Canaan, as Isaiah foretold (cf Isaiah 19.18).’ (John Calvin [1509–64], Commentary on Acts 2)

Pentecost as the Confirmation of Babel (cf Genesis 11)



Joseph Mulder,
*The Descent of the Holy Spirit
and the Tower of Babel*, 1694

Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture,
General Synod, Dutch Reformed Church, 1974, English trans 1976

‘The report stated that the language miracle of Pentecost “confirms that it is the will of God that each man should learn of the great deeds of God in his own language” (86). In this interpretation, Acts 2 ... provided the biblical underpinnings to the apartheid practice of insisting that each language group (eg race in the South African context) must form its own separate, racial churches and the transfer of membership from one church to another was prohibited. After all, Acts 2 (echoing Genesis 11 according to the report) affirms the “cultural identities, linguistic barriers and the psychological distinctiveness of each people” (86). In an ironic twist on the Babel/Pentecost typology, this pro-Apartheid interpretation understood that the effects of Babel were not reversed at Pentecost ... but rather were carried over to and sustained by the Pentecostal church ...! (*The Acts of the Apostles Through the Centuries*, Heidi J Hornik & Mikeal C Parsons, 40–41)

Pentecost as the Giving of God's 'New Law'

Pentecost = Feast of Weeks (50th day after Passover)



The *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (14th cent)

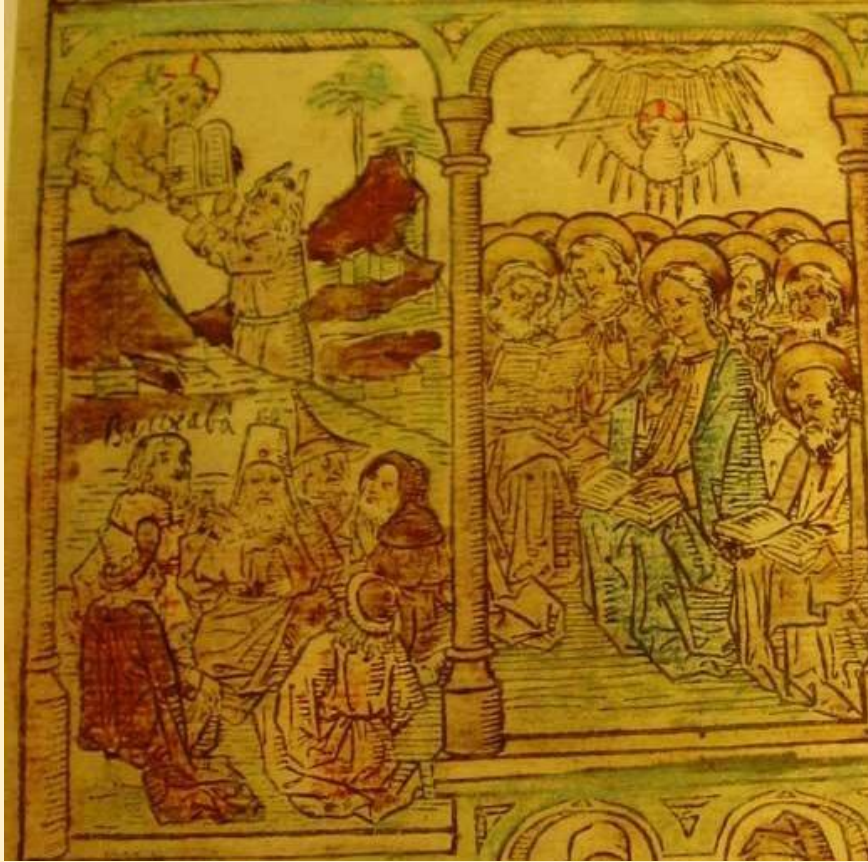
‘For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.’ (Romans 8.2)

‘The Pentecost, too, we observe, that is, the fiftieth day from the passion and resurrection of the Lord, for on that day He sent to us the Holy Paraclete whom He had promised; as was prefigured in the Jewish Passover, for on the fiftieth day after the slaying of the lamb, Moses on the mount received the law written with the finger of God [Exodus 19–31]. If you read the Gospel, you will see that the Spirit is there called the finger of God [Luke 11.8].’

Augustine [354–430 CE], *Contra Faustum* 32.12; also Cyprian [d 258]. *Treatises* 101

Pentecost as the Giving of God's 'New Law'

Pentecost = Feast of Weeks (50th day after Passover)



The *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*

‘Therefore, it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets that they should observe the feast of [Weeks] ... once per year, in order to renew the covenant in all respects, year by year.’ (Jubilees [2nd cent BCE] 6.17–18; also 2 Chron 10–12; IQS 1.16–2.18)

‘It was natural that the place should be the scene of all that was wonderful, claps of thunder louder than the ears could hold, flashes of lightning of surpassing brightness, the sound of an invisible trumpet reaching to the greatest distance, the descent of a cloud which like a pillar stood with its foot planted on the earth ... Then from the midst of the fire that streamed from heaven there sounded forth to their utter amazement a voice, for the flame became articulate speech in the language familiar to the audience ...’

(Philo of Alexandria [c 20 BCE – 50 CE], *On the Decalogue* 46)

‘R. Johanan said: What is meant by the verse, The Lord giveth the word: They that publish the tidings are a great host? Every single word that went forth from the Omnipotent was split up into seventy languages.’

(Babylonian Talmud [6th-7th cent], *Shabbat* 88b)

Pentecost as the Giving of God's 'New Law'

Pentecost = Feast of Weeks (50th day after Passover)



The *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (14th cent)

‘For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.’ (Romans 8.2)

‘The law of the letter was given from Mount Sinai to those to whom temporal blessings were promised; but the Law of the Spirit was given, not from Jerusalem but rather from heaven on the day of Pentecost.’
(Martin Luther [1483–1546], *LW* 27.319)

‘At the Pentecost of Sinai in the Old Testament, and the Pentecost of Jerusalem in the New, were the two grand manifestations of God, the legal and the evangelical; the one from the mountain, the other from heaven, the terrible and the merciful.’ (John Wesley [1703- 91], *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*)

Christianity Begins as a Movement of the Spirit

(Experience of the Spirit interpreted Christologically)

Jesus' 'Pentecost'

‘Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove ... Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit ... Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit ... “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”’ (Luke 3.21–22; 4.1, 14, 18; cf 3.16, ‘I [John the Baptist] baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’)

Jewish 'Pentecost'

‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.’ (Acts 2.4)

Gentile 'Pentecost'

‘While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.’ (Acts 10.44–48)

Christianity Begins as a Movement of the Spirit

(Experience of the Spirit interpreted Christologically)

‘When [Jesus] had said this, he breathed on [the disciples] and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” ... and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us ... For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit ... The one who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a down payment ... Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? ... In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit ... For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction ... while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will ... If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.’

(John 20.22; Rom 5.5; 1 Cor 12.13; 2 Cor 5.5; Gal 3.2; Eph 1.13; 1 Thess 1.4–5; Heb 2.4; 1 Pet 4.14)

Christianity Begins as a Movement of the Spirit

(Experience of the Spirit interpreted Christologically)

‘What we find, then, in or through or underlying Luke’s account of the first Christian Pentecost, is the shared memory of the initial burst of spiritual renewal and enthusiasm which launched the movement which became Christianity. That it took place in Jerusalem itself is very likely, and at the time of the feast of Pentecost following Jesus’s death is quite probable. That it took the form of the core disciples enjoying an experience of spiritual ecstasy is most probable, including the phenomenon of glossolalia, quite possibly heard by some as the language of their homeland. And that it resulted in many local Jews, including those who had returned from the diaspora, attaching themselves to the movement is hardly to be disputed ...

Christianity Begins as a Movement of the Spirit

(Experience of the Spirit interpreted Christologically)

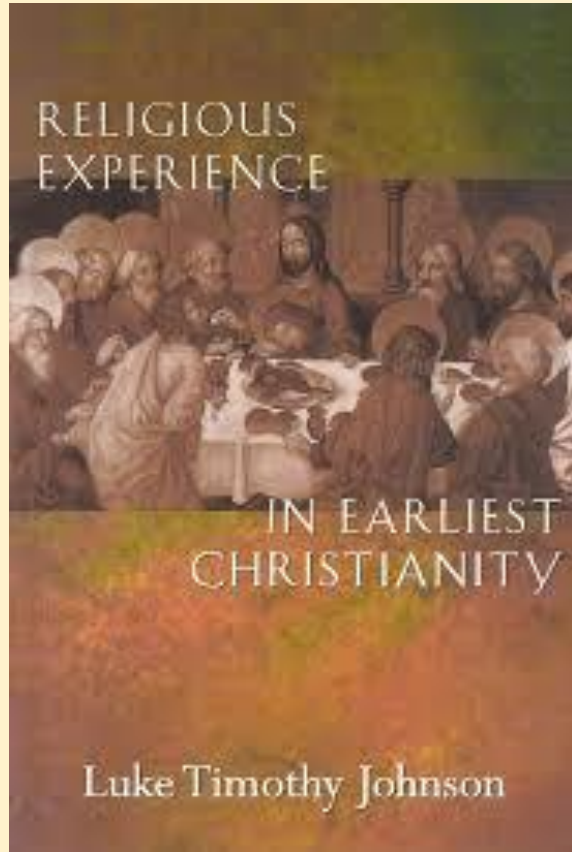
Most important of all for embryonic Christianity, this experience was no doubt a major factor in ensuring that first generation Christianity understood itself as *quintessentially a movement of the Spirit of God*, as the fulfilment of the ancient prophetic hope of a people (God's people Israel) renewed by the Spirit, and on whom the Spirit had been outpoured, to inspire praise and prophecy and witness and conduct. The focus on Jesus, which soon showed itself to be a dominant feature of the new movement's self-understanding, should not cause us to ignore or sideline this twin aspect of infant Christianity. If resurrection and ascension remind us that entirely constitutive of Christianity was the Christian understanding of what had happened to Jesus, Pentecost should never allow us to forget that Christianity understood itself in the first instance as a religion of the Spirit.

J D G Dunn, *Christianity in the Making – Volume II: Beginning from Jerusalem* (2009), pp 170-71

Christianity Begins as a Movement of the Spirit

(Experience of the Spirit interpreted Christologically)

A Phenomenological Approach



‘Religious experience is a response to that which is perceived as ultimate, involving the whole person, characterised by a peculiar intensity, and issuing in action.’

‘Despite the diversity within earliest Christianity, a diversity so obvious that it scarcely needs underscoring, the evidence also suggests that from the beginning a certain unity of experience and conviction was sufficient to distinguish this collection of people from others in the Mediterranean world and to provide the basis for its life, movement, change, and growth.

This implicit – yet no less real – unity of experience and conviction centred on the of transforming power among them because of the resurrection of Jesus.’

Luke Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity* (1998), p 60 & 184

Logos Online Bible Study

First Wednesdays, 7.00–8.30 pm, on Zoom

Christian Beginnings
According to the Acts of the Apostles

Next Time
Wednesday 7th October 2026

Session 5 – Acts 2.1–36

Please read beforehand