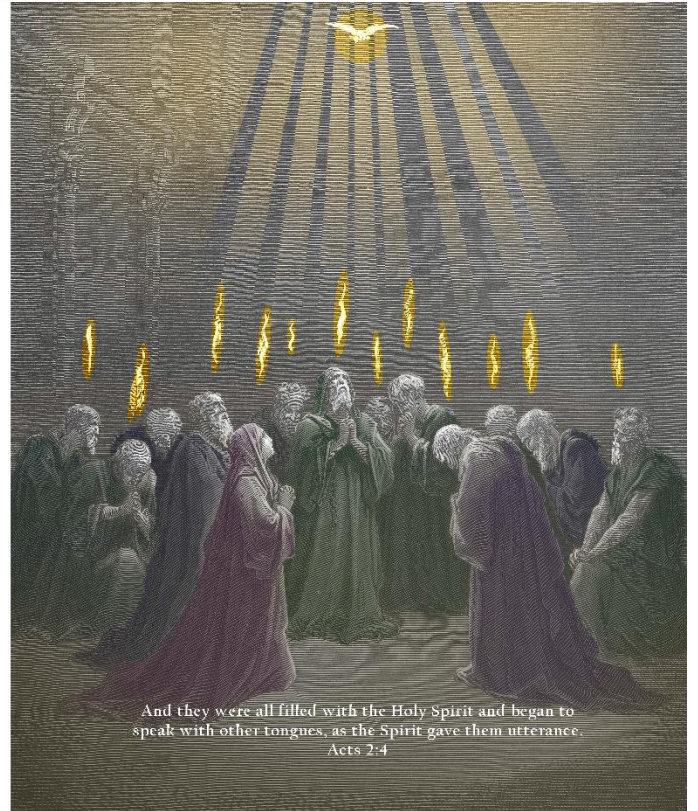


# MISSIONAL LIVING

A Study of the Book of Acts



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

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# Are You Ready for This? (Acts 2:1-13)

## The Power is On

**<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

In the final words of Jesus, before He ascended into heaven, the disciples were given a clear command: wait in Jerusalem for the Person of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). The Promise of the Father is a non-negotiable requirement for the mission of bringing the gospel to the nations (Acts 1:4-8); the disciples cannot begin witnessing until He arrives (Luke 24:45).<sup>4</sup> After giving this command the Lord, having been given authority over everything in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18), is raised from the ground before their eyes and is received away from their sight into a cloud.<sup>5</sup>

At first the disciples could not turn their gaze away from the sky. But with a little prompting from two men dressed in white they came to themselves (Acts 1:11) and then returned to Jerusalem. Without further instructions on what to do, in an upper room where Jesus had repeatedly revealed Himself to them, they began to do what they had seen so often in the life of their Teacher: *they prayed* (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:15; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 11:1). Men and women, the remaining eleven, the immediate family of Jesus, and others that had followed the Lord were together without disputing, without division - asking for aid in going forward (Acts 1:14).

Before long Peter stood up in the midst of his brethren with a positive perspective on recent events (Acts 1:15-22). The message of the changed fisherman (Luke 24:45) strengthened His brethren (Luke 22:32). What did he say?

- We should not fixate on Judas' failure but on the fulfillment of Jesus' words (Acts 1:16-17).
- We must not forget the fact that the same Scriptures that spoke prophetically about Judas' fall also speak prescriptively on filling the office (Acts 1:20).
- We need to get ready for the work of witnessing by filling the vacancy left by the son of perdition (John 6:70; 17:12; Acts 1:21-22).

The fisherman is not confused about who he is, what he is doing, or what happens next. Having embraced his calling, Peter is leading their motley band into their commission, into their calling to be witnesses in Jerusalem, and then Judea, and then Samaria, and then the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

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<sup>4</sup> The Lord Jesus Himself did not begin His public ministry until after He had received the Spirit (Matthew 3:1-17). Later He would explain the marvels of His ministry as manifestations of His anointing (Luke 4:16-21).

<sup>5</sup> Where did He go? Daniel, some 165 years before the birth of the Christ, will prophecy about what happened when Jesus ascended into heaven (Daniel 7:13-14). Three things can be readily seen in these two verses. First, observe that in the vision Daniel sees one "like the Son of Man." *Son of Man* is Jesus' favorite title for Himself (Matthew 8:40; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8; 12:32; 12:40; 13:37; 13:41; especially 16:13). He used it throughout His ministry to indicate that He was the mysterious figure foreseen by the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel. Second, see that the Son of Man is coming with the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13). These are the clouds into which Jesus was received (Acts 1:9). Jesus will be conveyed from the presence of the disciples into the Presence of the Ancient of Days; some believers, as they depart this world, will be ushered into this same place (Acts 7:54-56; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23). Third, the reign of Jesus began at that moment. Where some would say that the reign of Christ is yet to begin, the passage in Daniel clearly states that "to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom." The fullness of the kingdom is not yet present with us but the dominion of the Lord Jesus has commenced. Jesus is Lord!

But what now? It has been over a week since they last saw Jesus. All of the words about the Promise, about the power, and the Person of the Holy Spirit are fresh in their minds. But it seems that the world is moving on without them. Passover has passed and fifty days later they are now at Pentecost. *What is going on, Jesus? Why the delay?*

As they shall soon see, Jesus keeps His commitments (1) according to His own calendar, (2) according to His earlier communications, and (3) according to His commission and calling on their lives.

**Jesus is Keeping Commitments According to His Own Calendar (Acts 2:1; Leviticus 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:9-11; Acts 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8)**

**<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.**

The Jews have a calendar that was given to them by God Himself. It specifies times for work, for worship, for forgiving debts, and for remembering important events in their history with the LORD. The days of remembrance were called feasts - celebrations that help wayward minds and fickle hearts recall Yahweh's loving faithfulness and the call to love Him. And the feasts were more than memory aids and ways of calling the nation to love the Lord and their neighbors. The feasts were also dress rehearsals and foreshadows of work that would be done by Messiah for His people:

**The feasts furnished a regular reminder of God's faithfulness and a foreshadowing of a work to be fulfilled in Christ.**

**The Feast of Passover (Exodus 12:1-14; Isaiah 53:7; 1 Corinthians 5:7)**

In this feast the Jews celebrate their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. The hand of God forced Pharaoh to let Israel go when He sent a plague to kill all the firstborn in the land. Only the homes that had the blood of a lamb over the door were exempted from the firstborn tax. Christ is our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). His shed blood has turned away the righteous wrath of God from all who receive him (John 3:36; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

**The Feast of Passover was a regular reminder of how God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-14). The lamb of the Passover feast foreshadowed the work of the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36) to deliver believers from bondage to sin; Christ is our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7).**

**The Feast of Firstfruits (Exodus 23:10-12; James 1:18)**

Fifty days after Passover the Jews were commanded to celebrate God's blessing on their land with an offering of their abundance from the field.

<sup>15</sup> ‘And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. <sup>16</sup> Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. (Leviticus 23:15-16, NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> “You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from *the time* you begin to *put* the sickle to the grain. <sup>10</sup> Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you. <sup>11</sup> You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who *is* within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* among you, at the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. (Deuteronomy 16:9-11, NKJV)

The term Pentecost was another way of referring to the Feast of Weeks. A week is seven. When we use the term week we generally mean a period of seven days. However, the term can be used to refer to seven of anything. You can have a week of minutes; that would be seven minutes. You can have a week of weeks; that would be seven periods of seven days – 49 days. The Feast of Weeks was held the first Sunday after the Sunday immediately following Passover. It was a period of 50 days.

The day of Pentecost was so called because it fell on the fiftieth day after the presentation of the first sheaf to be reaped of the barley harvest, that is, the fiftieth day from the first Sunday after Passover (*pentēkostos* being the Greek word for “fiftieth”). Among Hebrew- and Aramaic-speaking Jews it was known as “the feast of weeks” (Ex. 34:22a; Deut. 16:10) and also as “the day of the firstfruits” (Num. 28:26; cf. Ex. 23:16a) because on that day “the firstfruits of wheat harvest” (Ex. 34:22a) were presented to God.

Bruce, F. F. (1988). *The Book of the Acts* (pp. 49–50). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Pentecost was the second of the three great harvest festivals of Judaism, coming between Passover and Tabernacles. In the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor 16:8) it is referred to as “Pentecost,” which means *fiftieth* in Greek. In the Old Testament it is referred to as the Festival of Weeks or of the Firstfruits, the first term referring to its coming a “week of weeks” after Passover, the second to the fact that an offering of two loaves prepared from the wheat harvest was made on this day.

Polhill, J. B. (1992). *Acts* (Vol. 26, p. 97). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

It was called the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Firstfruits. During this feast the firstfruits of the abundance from the Lord’s blessing was presented back to Him. The feast was fulfilled in Christ being the first from the dead to walk in the newness of Life. Christ's people are the firstfruits that have been set aside for the Father by the anointing of the Spirit of Christ (James 1:18).

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:18, NKJV)

The Feast of Firstfruits was a regular reminder of God’s faithfulness to provide and that the first of the abundance belonged to Him. Christ is the grain that, having fallen into the ground and died, is now raised

bearing much grain (John 12:23-24). Just as Christ is the first from the dead dedicated to the Father, because we are in Christ, so are we (1 Corinthians 15:20,23; James 1:18; Galatians 2:20).

The pouring out of the Spirit on Pentecost was according to a calendar that had been in place and rehearsed for hundreds of years. Now at last in Christ it was being fulfilled.

### Jesus is Keeping Commitments According to His Own Character (Acts 2:2-3; 4:31)

<sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

Without warning (suddenly) there came a sound from heaven. It sounded to those in the upper room like a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2). The sound of the rushing wind filled the whole house; that is, everyone in the house heard it. What just happened? Just what Jesus had been saying in His conversation with Nicodemus.

<sup>1</sup> There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> **The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**” (John 3:1-8, NKJV)

Did you see it? Jesus makes mention of what will happen when the born-again event that marks the birth of the Church happens. Later he will make it clear that He Himself will initiate the event:

<sup>21</sup> So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” <sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:21-22, NKJV)

With the words to Nicodemus and the prophetic act of breathing on the disciples Jesus has given advance indications of what the coming of the Spirit would actually sound like (John 3:8) – it would sound like blowing wind. It would be a rush of wind as of the breath of God upon the people. The God-Man had actually explained the prophesy of Ezekiel to the wind. What am I referring to? Earlier than the conversation with Nicodemus the prophet Ezekiel had spoken about wind, the Spirit, and the nation being made alive.

<sup>1</sup> The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” So I answered, “O Lord God, You know.” <sup>4</sup> Again He said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!’ <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.” <sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; **but there was no breath in them.** <sup>9</sup> Also He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”’ <sup>10</sup> So

I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. <sup>11</sup> Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. <sup>14</sup> **I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live,** and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the Lord.’” (Ezekiel 37:1-14, NKJV)

Where we are inclined to look for application or try to say what this means to us today, we do well to ask what did it mean to the disciples. As Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum says to me when I ask him for pointers on preaching and preparation, “Stay with the text and remember its Jewish context.” The passages from Ezekiel would not have been unfamiliar or obscure. And the recent words of Jesus to his late night Pharisee visitor would have been related. The Spirit had done more than give them power – He had given them life!

For the disciples the sound of rushing wind, the prophecy of Ezekiel, and illuminating words of Christ to Nicodemus all come together to indicate that the Spirit was bringing a quality and kind of life so much greater than what they previously had that they were being born again. They were going from death to life – abundant life (John 10:10).

But what about the divided tongues of fire that sat upon each of them? Is this in keeping with previous communications from the prophets and from Jesus? Indeed, it is. God has been saying from the beginning that His presence is a consuming fire (Exodus 19:18; 24:17; Leviticus 9:24; Number 16:35; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:25; 9:3; Judges 6:21; 2 Corinthians 7:1). However, He has also demonstrated that He can be present as a fire but not consume (Exodus 3:1-5).

<sup>1</sup> Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.” <sup>4</sup> So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup> Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground.” (Exodus 3:1-5, NKJV)

For the Jews this passage was clearly an association between the presence of God and fire. God is a consuming fire. But where His wrath is not against sin the fire does not consume. The burning bush was a foreshadowing of His presence not causing destruction. Because Christ has dealt with our sin the fiery nature of God can be present and not consume; instead, it further consecrates.

<sup>16</sup> John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:16,17, NKJV)

What would this have meant to the disciples? Jesus intended them to put it all together. They would have seen the Lord as keeping the promise made through John the Baptist to baptize them with the Spirit and with fire.

Through the sound of rushing wind the Lord has indicated that he has imbued them with the new life mentioned by Ezekiel; they are born again. Through the flaming tongues He has given them a visual confirmation that the Spirit is the very presence of God and that He is not there to consume but to further consecrate them. They are, like the bush that burned but was not consumed, made holy.

The baptism with fire is not repeated after this. That would have been unnecessary. After showing that the promise had been kept visual signs confirming the spiritual activity of the Lord would not be needed. In the same way that the sign of tongues was used to indicate that a ministry had begun the sign of the fiery tongues was used to indicate the commencement of a new age – *the Church had been born*.

#### Jesus is Keeping Commitments According to His Commission and Calling on Our Lives (Acts 2:4)

**<sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

The Holy Spirit now fills the people in the upper room. Outwardly His filling is manifest in the sign of tongues. The Galileans began to speak with tongues other than their own. Which tongue? It was a decision of the Spirit according to the needs of the mission of being witnesses (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Ephesians 4:11-13). In the moment they were probably not aware why they were speaking with other tongues; the Spirit was giving them utterance according to His own knowledge of what needed to happen. It would become clear.

#### Making the Most of the Moment (Acts 2:5-11)

**<sup>5</sup> And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup> Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”**

The Jews that came from other places for Passover would stay for the required feast of Pentecost or Firstfruits. This means that the people present for the crucifixion of Christ would still be present. That is there **were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven** (Acts 2:5). They heard the **sound**. The sound of the rushing wind? No. The crowd did not hear the rushing wind and did not see the tongues of fire. Those signs were for the church; it confirmed that the promise had been kept. There are two different words translated sound. In the case of the **sound** (ἤχος) of the rushing wind the word used is not used



to indicate human voices but any type of sound, tone, or noise other than human speech (Acts 2:2). In the latter case the word used for **sound** (τῆς φωνῆς) is used to indicate something distinct and meaningful and is often used to indicate human speech (Acts 2:6). The **multitude came together** and heard something distinct and meaningful.

“The pronunciation, the dialect, ἡλαλία of the Galilæans was defective in the utterance of the gutturals, so that no distinction was perceptible between א, ע, ה (Alef, Ayin, He). Besides, the Galilæans also pronounced the ש like ה (Shin was pronounced like Het).” De Wette. The pronunciation of the people of Galilee was uncouth and indistinct; hence they were not allowed to read aloud in the Jewish synagogues. The Talmudists relate a number of amusing anecdotes about the curious misunderstandings occasioned by the indistinctness of pronunciation in Galilee. See Friedlieb, p. 84.

Lange, J. P., & Schaff, P. (2008). *A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* (p. 498). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

It was confusing to hear the Galileans speaking with other tongues. The people from Galilee were notorious for their accent. Their pattern of speech was held in such low regard that they were not allowed to read Scripture in some synagogues. People who normally do not do well speaking their own tongue are now speaking with other tongues!

Peoples	Tongue / Language
Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians – descendants of the ten tribes	Aramaic
Judea – this included Galilee	Hebrew
Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia – all from Asia Minor or present day Turkey	Greek
Egypt and parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene – these are from North Africa	Greek
Visitors from Rome	Latin
Cretans	Greek
Arabs	Nabeteian

When Texans read Psalm 23 their accent can be heard.<sup>6</sup> When someone from New York reads the same passage their accent can be heard. And when someone from London reads Psalm 23 it preserves its meaning to the hearers but the accent comes through. In the same way, as the Galileans speak about the wonderful work of God through Christ in other languages their accents come through. They cannot hide who they are.

And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are *one* of them, for your speech betrays you.” (Matthew 26:73, NKJV)

God often chooses to use the weak and base things to do His work (2 Corinthians 12:9). In this case He will make the gospel known to Jews from every nation under heaven through people that were not considered capable of much. The work of the church will be accomplished by the Spirit through whomever will allow themselves to be used.

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<sup>6</sup> We are unique in being able to pronounce “Lord” as if it has two syllables.

The Holy Spirit is Himself the sufficiency of the weak for the work of being a witness.

### Responses to the Work of the Spirit (Acts 2:12-13)

<sup>12</sup> So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?” <sup>13</sup> Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

Notice the two responses to the sign. Some tried to make sense of what they were seeing. Some tried to make light of it. We see in this passage fundamental responses of people then and today. The work of the Spirit, aimed at helping the believer to be a witness, will lead some people to seek to make sense; they are actually being drawn by the Lord (Acts 16:14). Others will seek to mock what the Lord shows them.

The work of the Spirit produces two responses in people then and now. Some will seek to make sense while others will seek to make fun or mock.

As the people heard the Galileans speaking with other tongues some of them sought the meaning of what was happening: **Whatever could this mean?** Peter, enabled by the Lord to both understand Scripture and by the Spirit to be a witness, will help them make sense of the sign (). Some of them, though, did not seek to get the meaning. In their minds the Galileans are drunk. They say, “**They are full of new wine.**”

### Questions for Missional Community Discussion

1. Jesus was crucified during Passover. What is the significance of the timing (1 Corinthians 5:7)? Why does God wait until Pentecost (the Feast of Firstfruits) to give the Spirit (James 1:18)?
2. What does the timing of the outpouring of the Spirit mean regarding the people who are still in Jerusalem? (Acts 2:5-11) How does speaking with other tongues support the mission of the newly formed Church? (Acts 1:8; 2:5-11)
3. What can you expect in the way of responses to the work of the Holy Spirit through you? (Acts 2:12-13)