

**“BABEL REVERSED”**  
**Acts 2:5-13**  
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INTRODUCTION

Reversal of Babel

Coming of the Greater Law-giver

Establishment of the New Testament Church

Tongues not Ecstatic

Thesis: The Gospel is to go to the whole earth.

I. THE SETTING OF THE SCENE (5)

A. Nature of the Crowd

- These were “Jews”
- “Living” seems to indicate permanent residence, as opposed to temporary stay for the feast. In Jerusalem—they had become settlers, just as many have done in modern times.
- “Devout” means “God-fearing”

B. Origin of the Crowd--“From every nation under heaven”—these are spelled out in 9-11.

II. THE GATHERING OF THE CROWD (6)

A. Their bewilderment—They heard the “sound” (noise) of the tongues-speakers.

Thus we see that the tongues were used in order to:

- Gather a crowd
- Gain their attention
- Let them listen to the praise of God—“speaking of His mighty deeds” (11)

B. The hearing of each one in his own language

- However, we are **not** to surmise from this that we have here a miracle of hearing rather than a miracle of speaking. Verse 4 is crystal clear—they began to **speak** with other languages as the Holy Spirit was giving them **utterance**; the emphasis is on their speaking.
- The word for “language” in v. 6 is *dialectos* from which we get our word “dialect”. Note again that these clearly are languages.

III. THE ASTONISHMENT AND PERPLEXITY OF THE MULTITUDE (6, 7, 12)

(The words in vv. 6, 7 & 12 convey the idea of amazement and confusion with astonishment.) The one word can mean “lose one’s mind”! (vv. 7, 12)

A. The Language of the speakers (7)—they are all “Galileans”—they had an easily recognizable accent; plus, as Jesus’ followers they were quite well-known about Jerusalem.

B. The Languages of the Hearers (8-11)

1. Each heard in their own native (in which they were born) language (dialect v.8).
2. Dialects of Persian: Parthians, Medes, Elamites; and Residents of Mesopotamia. (Jews in these regions spoke Aramaic; these were the regions of the Assyrian and Babylonian dispersions of the N & S kingdoms.)
  - *Parthia*: vast extent from the Tigris River to India; had not been defeated by Rome.
  - *Elam*: Northern end of Persian Gulf
  - *Media*: North of Elam and south of Caspian Sea
  - *Mesopotamia*: the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Modern Iraq. These people actually were dwellers in Mesopotamia; only temporarily in Jerusalem.
3. Residents of Judea—Why are they mentioned? Does this include Syria?
4. Dialects of Asia Minor (Turkey)—Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia. See 15:21—*Moses has his preachers* in every city—Asia Minor is mainly in view.
  - *Phrygia*: Antiochus the Great transported 2,000 Jewish families there to help strengthen his hold on the country. Jews attained high positions of affluence and dignity here and in Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, etc.
5. Northern Africa—Egypt, districts of Libya around Cyrene
  - Jews had been in Egypt since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC; there had been constant new migrations since the Greek conquest of Israel and especially the abuses of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). Two of Alexandria's 5 wards were Jewish!
  - Cyrene—modern Tripoli in Libya. Ptolemy I of Egypt (323-283) settled numerous Jews there to ensure its loyalty. Note Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus' cross.
6. Romans—both Jews and Gentile proselytes to Judaism
  - Pompey brought many Jewish families to Rome in BC 62.
  - In 19 AD the entire Jewish population was banished from Rome, but Tiberius likely permitted them to return.
  - Jews were expelled again in 49 AD due to rioting due to the spread of Christian teaching (Acts 18:2).
  - “Sojourners” refers to those who are strangers among another people. The word seems to indicate that they only temporarily lived in Rome for business purposes, but were permanent residents of Jerusalem (See 17:21—other use of word). Some think that these are the people who returned to Rome to begin the Roman Church; however, Acts makes clear that they stayed in Jerusalem for some time! It may well be that when many went back to Rome on business trips they helped start the church.
  - Nowhere was proselyting activity more zealous than in Rome. A “proselyte” is “one who has come over” from paganism to Judaism. **Three** requirements for a proselyte:
    - Circumcision for males
    - Purification (self-baptism) before witnesses by immersion.
    - Offering of a sacrifice
  - More female than male proselytes due to number 1; men were often content to be “proselytes of the gate” (known as “God-fearers” in Acts.)

- The word here is really “Romans”—not Rome. They are citizens.
7. Cretans (from the island of Crete)
    - For Jewish influence in Crete, see Titus 1
  8. Arabs (from Arabia)
    - Aretas of Petra had a kingdom and later acquired Damascus (11:32); his kingdom stretched from the Red Sea to the Euphrates.
    - These names seem to be added almost as an afterthought and help show that Luke gave the list as it was given to him.
- Strabo made the comment that “the Jews had already penetrated into every city, and that it would not be easy to find a place in the world where this race had not arrived and taken possession.” (From Josephus)

#### C. The Content of the Speech (11)

1. They hear them speaking their own languages (tongues). Notice how “tongues” is used parallel with “dialects” or “languages”.
2. They are speaking the “mighty deeds” of God. The word has the idea of “magnificent”. We cannot be sure of the content; the context does not favor preaching. If the “deeds” refer to Jesus’ resurrection etc., then they recited these things.

Notice their continued **amazement** (astonishment, losing one’s mind) and **perplexity** (“to be at a loss, perplexed).

**The eyes were *bugging out*** and their *minds were stunned*.

**They did not know what to think of all of this.**

3. They ask the question: “What does this mean?”

#### D. The Mockery of the Native Jews (13)

These were likely the same Jewish leaders who had had so many conflicts with Jesus and had Him put to death. *The Jews who were from out of Palestine and later returned were less likely to possess the full prejudices of native Jews.*

1. The word for “mocking is used only here and comes from a noun meaning “joke.”
2. “Full of new (sweet) wine” (gleukos). This is not grape juice! It is intoxicating.
  - They were joyous and enthusiastic, with readiness of speech.
  - They were obviously controlled by another “force”—the Holy Spirit—see Eph. 5:18.
  - “Saying” indicates repeated remarks by several people.

#### CONCLUSION

The Gospel will spread; it did spread on that day!

Will you be an **willing** and **active** part of the process?

Has the Gospel spread to YOUR HEART? **Are you controlled by the Holy Spirit?**