

6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

And at this sound- Refers to the sound of people speaking in many different languages. Even though there was also a sound like a great rushing wind, it is unknown who all would have heard that sound. If we heard people speaking in many languages simultaneously today, it may sound like a garbled, incoherent mess, similar to what people might have heard in the aftermath of the Tower of Babel. But God not only allowed the believers to speak, He allowed the people to hear and understand.

The multitude came together- Refers to devout Jews from every nation under heaven. Whenever something strange happens in public, people seem to come out of the woodwork. We sometimes call them gawkers. Sometimes, their curiosity is satisfied after seeing that something normal is going on, but in this case, it was no less strange to them after finding out what was really going on.

and they were bewildered- The Greek literally means "to pour together" or "to throw into confusion." Almost like a chemistry experiment that results in an explosion. Shows that this was not a calm assembly, but rather a crowd in uproar. In addition to being excited, the crowd had no idea what was going on

because each one was hearing them speak in his own language- Although there were common languages like Greek and Aramaic, this talks about languages that would have been unique to specific regions, also known as dialects. The regions and peoples are listed in later verses.

7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

And they were amazed and astonished- A typical reaction for those who have just witnessed a miracle. In the Greek, it literally says that they were "beside themselves" and completely at a loss for what was happening. To someone witnessing this, they might have believed they were out of their mind or that their senses were betraying them.

Saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?- The people recognized where the disciples were from, possibly just by hearing them talk. They recognized that this was not their native tongue that they were speaking. This leads some to believe that people from Galilee had an accent. Like we do today, people tended to judge on the basis of how a person talks. Galileans were not regarded as intelligent or cosmopolitan. Nazareth, the capitol of Galilee, is spoken of negatively by people in the Bible. Nathanael says "can anything good come from Nazareth?" when Philip tells Him about Jesus.

8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

And how is it that we hear- Learning individual languages takes a lot of time and study. The disciples had not invested this time and they likely wouldn't have had the resources. It takes even longer to learn a dialect. It often requires being integrated within a people group or region. Since the disciples had done none of these things, we have no choice but to conclude that this was a miracle

Each of us in his own native language- Essentially a repeat from verse 6, except that it emphasizes the places where these people lived and/or grew up. Again, this refers to distinct languages and dialects from different places.

9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia - People from ancient Iran. At their peak, the Parthians were a powerful empire several hundred years before Christ. Culturally, Parthians adopted both Persian and Greek elements at different points in time. In Parthia, there was a Jewish minority who enjoyed peace and prosperity in the silk trade. They also successfully led a revolt near modern day Fallujah, but many of them were eventually expelled after the time that Christ ascended into heaven. Medes were a group of tribes in the same place, but we know very little about them. Elam was an ancient civilization from before any Greek or Persian or Babylonian influence. The Elamite capitol was Susa, which may have been the home of Xerxes and Queen Esther. Mesopotamia is the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which forms something called the Fertile Crescent. It was known for farming and hosting some of the first successful civilizations. The Tigris and Euphrates are mentioned in Genesis as the site of the Garden of Eden.

Judea and Cappadocia- In the Old Testament, when Israel split into two kingdoms, they were known as Israel and Judah or Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom. Israel had 10 tribes, while the Southern Kingdom had only two. Judea is a slightly different name that was given to Judah when they became a Roman province. The area included Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. Cappadocia is a region in modern-day Turkey and the people could be the descendants of the Hittites who are mentioned in the Old Testament.

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome,

Phrygia and Pamphylia- Phrygia was also located in modern-day Turkey, in the Asian portion. According to Greek mythology, there were several famous Phrygian kings, most notably King Midas, who turned things to gold with his touch and Gordias, who made the Gordian knot which

was cut by Alexander the Great. According to Homer's Iliad, they also fought in the Trojan War as allies of the Trojans. In reality, there was a King Midas who rivaled the Assyrians for power during their peak, but he was the last free king of Phrygia before they were conquered. Pamphylia was a region in Asia Minor (Turkey), which was a mixture of many different people including Greeks and local tribes.

Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene- Egypt was a traditional powerhouse and enemy of God's people. We remember it for playing host to Joseph's rise to power, God leading His people out of slavery, and Joseph and Mary's flight with the young Jesus. Because Egypt and Northern Africa were on the Mediterranean Sea, there was a lot of interaction and travel between countries. We remember Cyrene because of Simon of Cyrene, the man who helped Jesus to carry His cross when He could no longer do it. Libya has one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, since 300 BC.

And visitors from Rome- Reminds us again that Judea was a Roman province. People from Rome could wander freely throughout their territories if they had the means. However, there were already Jews in Rome at this time and there would soon be a Christian community large enough to be written to by Paul. The Gospel would spread to the entire known world (The Roman Empire) and beyond.

11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

both Jews and proselytes- Proselytes were Gentile converts to Judaism who were circumcised and given a ritual cleansing. This emphasizes that this was not only for ethnic Jews or descendants of Abraham.

Cretans and Arabians- Crete was a large Greek island in the Mediterranean Sea. Cretans had a bad reputation as people who were liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons. Paul quotes the poet Epimenedes in Titus. Arabia refers to the Arabian Peninsula, the largest peninsula in the world. Today, it contains Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, UAB, and Bahrain.

We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God- The disciples weren't just speaking random sentences or words that had nothing to do with the context. They were specifically talking about the things that God had done all throughout history, leading up to the coming of the Messiah. This is His greatest and mightiest miracle.