

## **ASCENSION**

In the weeks after his death and resurrection, Jesus met with his followers many times.

He even made them breakfast over a charcoal fire, cooking fish that they'd caught. Everyone who saw Jesus was full of joy—he was really alive! They believed that Jesus was the true Messiah that the Jews had been waiting for—a new kind of king who would lead them in a new way of life in God's kingdom.

But Jesus' followers kept asking him, *"Have you returned to free Israel from foreign rule and restore Israel's kingdom now?"*

Jesus replied, *"Only God knows what will unfold in the future. But you will be given power when God's Spirit fills you. You'll go everywhere, telling everyone about me. Here in Jerusalem, throughout this region, and to the ends of the earth."*

Immediately after Jesus said this, he was taken up in a cloud as his followers watched in amazement. After he disappeared from their sight, his followers still stared into the sky to try to see him. As they looked up, two angels suddenly appeared, standing next to them.

*"Why are you still looking into the sky?"* the angels asked. *"Jesus was taken to heaven, but someday he'll return in the same way you just watched him go!"*

## **EMPOWERED**

A few weeks later, a group of about 120 of Jesus' followers gathered in a home. All of a sudden, they heard an extremely loud noise—it sounded like a roaring windstorm that shook the house!

Then what looked like flames of fire appeared and settled on every person. Each of them was filled with God's Spirit and began speaking languages they'd never learned!

At that time, Jews from all over the world were staying in Jerusalem for a special festival called Pentecost. When they heard the roaring noise, a crowd gathered outside the house where the disciples were to see what was going on.

As they got closer, they heard Jesus' disciples sharing in a multitude of languages about the great things God had done. Astonished, the crowd began to ask, *"How can this happen? These are people from Galilee, but each of us—no matter where we are from—hear these people speaking our own language. What does this mean?"*

But some in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, *"They're just drunk, that's all!"*

## **PETER EXPLAINS**

One of Jesus' disciples, Peter, stepped forward to explain to the crowd what was happening: *"Listen! We are not drunk as some of you have suggested. What you're seeing are the predictions of the prophets come true. We are eyewitnesses to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the true Messiah! And now God's Spirit has been poured out on us, which is what you've seen and heard today."*

People's hearts were filled with sadness because they realized that Jesus—their Messiah—had come, but was overlooked, tortured, and crucified.

They asked Jesus' disciples, *"What can we do?"*

Peter told them, *"Turn from your ways, to God's ways. Jesus is alive—in him you'll find forgiveness, and you'll be filled with God's Spirit."*

That day, thousands chose to follow Jesus as Messiah and were baptized, becoming a part of a new community known as the church. (The Greek term for church is *ekklesia*, which means those "called out" by God.)

### **A NEW COMMUNITY**

These followers of Jesus became deeply committed to God's ways and to one another—praying, learning, sharing everything, and helping anyone in need—all with great joy and generosity.

Every day they ate together and remembered Jesus' life and sacrifice. Twelve of Jesus' disciples became known as apostles and led the church, teaching people how to follow in the ways of Jesus. Everyone saw God do amazing things through the church—miracles and healing—and more and more people joined the church each day.