

- 1) Peter travels with the men from Cornelius
 - i) taking with him some brothers from Joppa

- 2) Cornelius was being (impf) anticipating (ptc.) them
 - i) That is, he was in a constant state of anticipation, eagerly awaiting their arrival
 - (a) having called together his kin and 'necessary loved ones' (close, intimate friends)
 - (b) What does this tell us about him? His close friends and kin?**

- 3) And as "it came to pass" of Peter's entrance
 - i) another time reference of prophetic movement
 - (a) i.e. something is moving God redemptive story forward - the inclusion of Gentiles through faith in Jesus and the reception of the Holy Spirit as the sign and seal of that inclusion

- 4) Cornelius, having met Peter (at the door), having fallen upon his feet, worshiped.
 - i) Cornelius was ignorant, not arrogant, and his piety and respect for Peter is apparent
 - ii) It is also true that he assumed that Peter was something other than a mere mortal, judging by Peter's response
 - (a) This shows two things:
 1. Cornelius was affected by his culture, even though he was a God-fearer
 2. Cornelius had not heard of Jesus, and assumed that Peter was the Holy One

- 5) Peter lifted him up, saying, "Arise! I, also, myself am a man."
 - i) note the repeated "arise" (same word for resurrection) in this pericope
 - ii) note the correction of Peter is rooted in the reality that he is "too, a man"
 - (a) like Cornelius - identification in humanity
 - (b) unlike God or angel

- 6) and conversing with him he went in and finds many having been gathered together
 - i) What were they conversing about?
 - ii) Peter seems surprised, based upon the word "discovered", that many people were gathered together
 - (a) Again, Peter wasn't told what God was doing, precisely, so this whole event is pretty adventurous
 1. Every adventure begins with an unexpected surprise

- 7) PETER'S SERMON:
 - i) **"And he "affirmed" ($\phi\eta\mu\iota$) to them, "You all, you understand how a Jewish man to join together or come together with a non-Jew is unlawful (forbidden)."**
 - (a) "unlawful" is the word used in the apocrypha (2 and 3 Maccabees) to refer to animals sacrificed on the altar by Gentiles (2 Mac 6:5) and to refer to eating the "meat of swine" (2 Mac 7:1), the words hurled at the Maccabean force besieging the Gentile fort (2 Mac 10:34), and to refer to the Jews when used by the Gentile king trying to destroy them (3 Mac 5:20)
 1. This helps us understand that the word has a note of "against the law" to it, but also holds a type of disgust or disdain with in it
 2. That which is repulsive
 - (b) "join together with a non-Jew"
 1. same word used of Philip's attachment to the chariot
 2. It has to do with uniting for a purpose, to participate together for some shared goal

3. Thus, the unlawfulness mentioned by Peter is the shared goal, the union of fellowship and comradery associated with deep friendship
 - (c) "come together with a non-Jew"
 1. This 'cleaving' is further extrapolated by this word, which broadens the definition out to "any association" together, including "to visit a Gentile structure"
 2. We see this in John 18:28, where the Jews refuse to enter into the Praetorium out of fear of "defiling themselves" before Passover and not having time to be cleansed before the Passover meal would be served (they could not eat the holy food while unclean)
 - (d) "non-Jew"
 1. Peter uses the word "foreigner" here, rather than "Gentile"
 2. The emphasis is on one foreign to the covenant b/c of uncircumcision, not on race or nationality
 - ii) **"And to me God showed no one is to say a man is common (unholy) or unclean."**
 - (a) God showed to him
 - (b) no person is to be called common or unclean
 1. That is, nobody is to be avoided as disgusting or repulsive or unfit for association in the Lord *when they approach him with humble faith*
 - (c) The concept of "unclean" or "common" was the idea of being avoided, untouchable
 1. So NOBODY is untouchable, and NOBODY is to be avoided as untouchable
 - (d) What it does NOT mean is that every person is accepted by God apart from faith in Jesus
 1. "cleansed" in this context is about ceremonial cleansing, that is, worthwhile, useful, and touchable - not righteous
 2. Thus, the idea is one of welcome - nobody is unwelcome to come to God on the basis of faith in Jesus
 3. In fact, there are instructions not to associate with people in the NT - 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18 - but those are people in the Church, having professed to belong to the faith, but who are pursuing those things inconsistent with faith in Jesus
 - (e) Cornelius was a man of faith who was not to be treated as untouchable because of his food, his uncircumcision, or his non-Jew status
 1. His faith cleansed him, not his circumcision, in other words
 - iii) **"For this reason, having been summoned, I even came without objection."**
 - (a) Peter roots his willingness to come to the Gentile house, to visit it, because God revealed it to be good.
 1. Note the quickness of Peter to explain God's work in this, rather than his own graciousness or retreat from Judaistic tradition
 - iv) **"Therefore, I inquire, for what reason did you summon me?"**
 - (a) In other words, "Look, God told me to come to you and visit you, so why did you send for me? What is God up to?!"
 - (b) Peter is inquiring because he wants to know what God is doing!
- 8) Cornelius explains what God had told him:
- i) **And Cornelius affirmed, "Four days from up to this hour, I, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold a man stood before me in bright clothing, and he says,**
 - ii) **'Cornelius, your prayer was heard and your generous gifts were remembered before God. Therefore, send to Joppa and invite Simon, whom is called Peter. This one is being entertained in the house of Simon the tanner, next to the sea.'**

iii) Therefore, I immediately sent to you, and you did well at arriving. Now, therefore, we are all, in the presence of God, present to hear all the things commanded to you from the Lord."

9) Peter answers him:

i) Peter, having opened the mouth, said, "Upon the truth, I apprehend that God is not one who shows partiality [literally, "receiver of face"],

ii) but rather (adversative *αλλα*) in every people group the one fearing him and working justice is welcome (*δεκτος*) to him.

(a) justice in this sense is not moral perfection, but rather the mercy and kindness shown to the weak, evidenced by his humility and his compassion towards those in need

1. It has to do with partiality - God does not show partiality of whom He welcomes to approach Him by faith

2. Anyone who will come to Him through faith in Jesus is welcome to come to Him

(b) welcome, or acceptance, is not the final forgiveness of sins, which is mentioned later through faith in Jesus, but rather than any person who has such a heart is welcome to approach the Lord, regardless of their ritual cleanness, dietary practices, etc.

iii) He sent the word to the sons of Israel, proclaiming the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ, this one is the Lord over all things

iv) You all know the story (*ρημα*) which was through the whole of Judea, having begun from Galilee after the baptism which John preached,

v) Jesus, the one from Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power, whom passed through doing beneficial works and healing all those being oppressed by the devil, because God was being with him.

vi) And we are witnesses of all these things, which he did in the country of the Jews and Jerusalem. Whom also they killed, having hung upon a tree [1st century euphemism for crucifixion],

vii) This one, God raised up on the third day and gave him to be revealed not to all the people, but to witnesses having been chosen beforehand by God, to us, whoever ate with and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

viii) And He charged to us to proclaim to the people and to solemnly urge them because this one, he is the one having been determined by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

ix) All the prophets testify about him, everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

x) Conversion to life comes through the words of the Word - the good news of Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection, and authority.

(a) The Holy Spirit didn't come upon the Gentiles until Peter preached the gospel of Jesus

1. Couldn't the angel just have given them the Holy Spirit four days earlier? Why not?

2. The Spirit of God is not an impersonal force, a magical power, or an abstract ability

3. The Holy Spirit is the person of God who empowers *those who believe in Jesus* to carry out the purposes and designs of God

(b) Do you want the Holy Spirit? Believe in Jesus!

xi) The words which Peter spoke? The gospel

10) The Holy Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles!

i) **While the speaking of Peter was still these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.**

(a) The Spirit was poured out through the preaching and hearing of "the Word"

1. The singular usage of "the word" indicates that it wasn't the combination of words which Peter spoke, in particular, but the Message, i.e. the gospel which he proclaimed about the Christ
 - i. Righteous works
 - ii. Crucifixion
 - iii. Resurrection
 - iv. Authority to Judge
 - v. Lord over all
 - vi. Fulfillment of Prophecy
 - vii. Forgiveness of Sins
 - viii. to all who believe in Him

11) The circumcised believers were shocked that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles *in the same portion and manner which they received*

i) **and the believing ones of the circumcision, as many as had come together with Peter, were rocked [literally, "out of place"], because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles, too.**

ii) **For they were hearing them speaking in languages and exalting God. Then Peter answered [this]**

(a) First, the evidence of true conversion is the exaltation of God in the name of Jesus Christ.

1. What does this mean?
2. It is the transformation of worship, of the object of one's greatest value, or greatest love and pursuit
 - i. Everyone has something which they value ultimately, the center and highest desire of their heart and that which has the greatest value to them - that is worship.
3. This "exaltation of God" concerning the lordship of Jesus Christ and His salvation for all who believe in Him, is a conversion of the object of worship
 - i. Even a shift towards morality does not imply conversion or salvific faith
 - ii. Because morality can still not have God as its highest value and pursuit, to the point where it will humble itself to receive all which God has revealed
 - iii. Morality can be a tool to gain power, in which power is the highest value, or self-significance
 - iv. The man who trades the immoral lifestyle of sexual degradation of women for a moral lifestyle of religious fervor may retain the central value of each: power, self-exaltation

(b) The evidence that the Spirit had been given *in the same way* as the Jerusalem circumcised disciples was that the Gentiles were doing the same exact things as happened at Pentecost

1. In fact, the only time the Spirit is said to be "poured out" in Acts is here and in Acts 2, Pentecost, both of which are clear fulfillments of Isaiah 44:3 - "I will pour out My Spirit upon your offspring, my blessing upon your descendants"

2. Thus, like Pentecost, the exaltation of God *in differing languages* was a unique symbol of the pouring out of the Spirit, now having caught up to the Gentiles, making them descendants of Jacob, "I am the LORD's" (Isaiah 44:5)
 - i. The first Pentecost was on Jewish (circumcised) believers within the land of Israel (Jerusalem). TONGUES HERE
 - ii. The second Pentecost was on Samaritan (circumcised, but separate) believers within the land of Israel (Samaria, Northern Kingdom of Israel). TONGUES NOT MENTIONED HERE
 - iii. The third Pentecost was on Gentile (uncircumcised) believers within the land of Israel (Caesarea). TONGUES HERE
 - iv. The fourth Pentecost was on Gentile (uncircumcised) believers outside the land of Israel, in Gentile country (Ephesus, Acts 19). TONGUES HERE
 - v. All of this to progressively reveal that circumcision and the land were not the real sign or the real blessing of the promises of God's covenant. The Spirit is the sign and the seal and the blessing whose goal is to exalt Christ Jesus to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:9-13)
- (c) There is no mention of tongues in Saul's conversion, the Ethiopian treasurer's conversion, or anywhere else in conversions.
 1. Even when the Spirit of God "comes down" in power, there is not usually a speaking in tongues (Acts 4:8,31; Acts 13:9; 16:14)
- (d) This, then, is not a normative principle of the Spirit being poured out upon those who believe, but it is a signifying symbol that the Gentiles did not receive a lesser gift, or a smaller portion of the Spirit, but the *same exact gift of the Holy Spirit as the circumcised*

12) Then the Gentiles are brought all the way in, welcomed as full heirs of the covenant promises and the full blessing of the very Spirit of God, signified through baptism in the name of Jesus.

- i) Peter now gets this! Thus, when he is explaining this event to the church in Jerusalem, to the circumcised brothers, he says, "the Holy Spirit fell upon them *just as He did upon us at the beginning.*"
 - (a) The beginning of what? At Pentecost!

13) What did Pentecost mean?

- i) There was a baptism of the Holy Spirit, as fire, and tongues which were understood by peoples of many languages who were gathered there for the High Feast
 - (a) In the most vivid way possible, God was declaring that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was a welcome to all people groups, the undoing of Babel's curse, and the reworking of all which is broken *to anyone who would come, regardless of their previous allegiance.*
 1. If the gospel had only come in Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, or German, etc., then it would have elevated one language/people over all others
 - i. Islam does this with Arabic
 2. But the Gospel comes in a radically equalizing way - a way of no partiality which is expressed at Pentecost and its three-fold shadow into all the earth in the linguistic barriers being shattered
 - i. Thus, there is no one culture that is more appropriate for the gospel than another
 - ii. Racial superiority must end!

- iii. Cultural superiority must end!
- 3. In a way, this is exactly what Peter said the moment he walked into Cornelius' house: "You know what...I've never done this before."
 - i. The only reason that He did was because God initiated a transformation in him via revelation to go to Cornelius' house as one welcomed to the gospel graces
 - ii. And as he speaks, God pours out His Spirit upon the Gentiles, giving them their own little Pentecost as a way of reminding Peter of Pentecost was really all about - the gospel of God's grace for all peoples
- 4. There is no people group who are unclean! No racial group or cultural group who are unwelcome to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ via faith
 - i. If there is a people group whom you consider to be unclean, to be avoided, unwelcome to the gospel, that you like that racial group, but not that other racial group, then you are resisting the Holy Spirit and working against Him
 - ii. You are resisting the flow of the gospel and the intentions of the Holy Spirit because the job of the Holy Spirit is to create unity between racial groups and cultures in Christ Jesus
 - iii. Pentecost is God's way of saying that very truth - Jesus is the Lord over ALL
 - iv. Racial superiority or inferiority places one's race or culture as lord over all, the defining characteristic or quality by which one receives God's blessings - but Pentecost and its shadow here in Caesarea destroys that very foundation of self-justification through race
- ii) **"There is not anyone able to prevent the water to baptize these ones, is there? These who received the Holy Spirit as we, too?"**
- iii) **and he commanded them in the name of Jesus to have them baptized.**
 - (a) It appears that Peter commanded the circumcised believers to have the Gentiles baptized, rather than the Gentiles to be baptized.
 - 1. Either is possible, but the instructive aspect in the context of the question of the withholding of the waters of baptism seems to imply that the circumcised believers needed to be exhorted, not the Gentiles, who wouldn't have withheld the water
- iv) **Then they asked him to stay some days.**