

Acts 10 - Cornelius' Vision; Peter's Vision; Peter Visits Cornelius' House; Peter's Message to Cornelius; "The Pentecost of the Gentile World"

II. Outreach in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1—12:25)

- (6) Conversion of Cornelius (10:1—11:18)
 - (A) Cornelius' conversion (10:1-48)

Acts 10

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1 Now *there was* a man in **Caesarea** named **Cornelius**, a centurion of what was called the **Italian cohort**,

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— "...Caesarea" - this was not Caesarea Phillipi, which is in the north; this Caesarea is on the coast, the headquarters for the Roman establishment

— "...Cornelius" - a centurion of an Italian cohort (100 soldiers), serving under Herod

Agrippa, the representative Roman power in the district

— We have to understand the hatred that the Jews had for the Romans. Ever since 63 BC when Pompei subjugated Israel, took away their sovereignty and freedom, and forced upon them exorbitant taxes. Rome also removed their right to capital punishment.

— If you were Jewish and worked for the Roman government (i.e. Matthew, a tax collector), you were hated and despised by your own people. You were viewed as a traitor and a thief.

— It is interesting to note that the first Gentile whom Jesus dealt with during His ministry was a Roman centurion, and he too believed. In response to that man's faith, Jesus announced that many would come from among the Gentiles to join Jews in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 8:11).

- Every reference to a centurion in the NT is positive (Matt 8:5-10; 27:54; Mark 15:44-45; Luke 7:2; 23:47; Acts 10:1; 22:25-26; 23:17-18; 27:3,6,43)
 - "...Italian cohort" - about 100 soldiers, organized by nationality

Cornelius represents a new type of person to whom the gospel had not gone before, as recorded in Acts. The Ethiopian eunuch was also a Gentile, but the Jews viewed *his* occupation favorably. There was nothing about his occupation that would have repulsed the Jews. However, Cornelius, in addition to being a Gentile, was a member of Israel's occupying army. The Jews would have avoided him solely because of his occupation, even though he possessed an admirable character and was friendly to the Jews.

- Acts 8 gives the conversion of the Ethiopian Treasurer, a son of Ham
- Acts 9 gives the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a son of Shem
- Acts 10 gives the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a son of Japheth

2 a **devout** man and one who **feared God** with all his household, and **made many charitable contributions** to the *Jewish* people and **prayed to God continually**.

2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually.

2 He was a devout man who feared God, as did everyone in his home. He gave many gifts to the poor among the people and always prayed to God.

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

- "...devout" - Cornelius was not saved at this point, but he had evidently renounced paganism; he was a God-seeker, but not a proselyte to Judaism

- "...feared God" - Cornelius feared the Lord (Cf. Prov 1:7)

— Scholars debate the existence of the "God-fearers" as a distinct group. The Scriptural evidence points to their existence (Cf. Acts 10:2,22,35; 13:16,26,43,50; 16:14; 17:4,17; 18:7), and this has been the opinion of the majority of scholars over the years.

- "...made many charitable contributions" - Cornelius was generous; as a Roman, he was generous to the Jewish people

- "...prayed to God continually" - he was a man of prayer

— According to this verse (Cf. v31) and contrary to some other Christian teaching, God does hear the prayers of unbelievers

- Based on these four qualities about Cornelius, one would think he was a saved man. However, according to 11:14, when Peter is recounting the salvation of Cornelius to the church, at this point in Cornelius' life he was an unsaved person.

— So Cornelius was "devout," he "feared God" along with his family, he was generous (to the Jewish people no less), and he "prayed to God continually." Yet he was not saved (yet).

- This description of Cornelius, along with 11:14 stating he was not (yet) saved, is a blow to the Calvinistic argument for Total Depravity.
- Total Depravity, according to Calvinism, is the belief that man is completely and total depraved and has no ability whatsoever to respond (repent or believe) to God until he is first "regenerated" by God (given the gift of faith). They believe that God must first do a work of regeneration, giving a person faith needed for salvation, before a person can be saved.
- If Calvinism's belief in Total Depravity is correct, how do you explain Cornelius before he was saved? He was obviously seeking God, even though Calvinism teaches that this is impossible for an unsaved person.
- Cornelius was seeking God because God has disclosed Himself to mankind...in creation (general revelation, Rom 1), in our conscience (internal barometer of right and wrong, either convicting us or freeing us), and the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11).
- Another heresy that uses Acts 10:2 is called "Inclusivism." It teaches that Cornelius here was saved because he was actively seeking God. They believe that anyone who authentically seeks God, whether they know the name of Jesus or not, is saved.
- One of the most popular teachers of Inclusivism is Oprah Winfrey, who teaches it around the clock. Others include Robert Schuller, Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, and Tony Evans.
- Outside of the heretical beliefs of Calvinism's Total Depravity and Inclusivism, the reason Cornelius came to belief in Christ is because he first responded positively to the light (knowledge) that he already had.
- For the same reason, the Ethiopian Eunuch was saved...because he responded positively to the light that he had
- When unbelievers do this, God will literally move heaven and earth to get the Gospel to that person. In the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch, an angel told Philip to leave Samaria, where he had a thriving ministry (Cf. 8:5-12), and go to Gaza, where he met the Ethiopian Eunuch.
- The Eunuch was reading Isaiah, but did not understand what he was reading. The Holy Spirit confirmed what the angel instructed Philip to do (8:29), so Philip went and the Eunuch got saved, then water baptized.
- So both the Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius here responded to the light (creation, conscience, conviction) they were given, and God moved heaven and earth to have them hear the name of Christ.
- But if a person suppresses the light they have, which is man's natural proclivity, then why would God send them additional revelation? The mental gymnastics you have to go through to deny the existence of God is astounding. If a person is going to deny a Creator when you view creation, how on earth is additional revelation going to help them? If they

are denying (suppressing) what is obvious to them in the physical world, how are earth are they going to believe by faith in God's Word?

— So the question is always asked: If the name of Jesus is required for salvation (Cf. 4:12), what about the guy on a deserted island who is seeking God but does not know the name of Christ? If that person is responding positively to the light (creation, conscience, conviction) that they have, God will move heaven and earth to get the gospel (specific revelation) to them in order for them to be saved.

General vs. Special Revelation		
	General	Special
Examples	Nature, conscience (Rom 1–2)	Incarnation, Scripture, miracles
Availability	All	Some
Accomplishment	Accountability (Rom 1)	Salvation (Acts 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15)
Form	Non-written or non-verbal	Written
Quality	Natural	Supernatural, miraculous

- General revelation cannot save anyone. So what does it accomplish? It makes us accountable to search for truth. This is why Paul says that those who do not respond to general revelation are "without excuse" (Rom 1:20).

— God holds every human being responsible for seeking truth. Some do, most don't. Cornelius did, the Ethiopian Eunuch did, but others don't, they suppress it. But the accountability is there, it's built into the universe through creation, conscience, and conviction.

— A person can't get saved by looking at rocks and trees, but looking at rocks and trees makes you accountable to seek God, because God is built into the rocks and trees. Rom 1:20 says that God can be "clearly perceived" and "understood" through rocks and trees.

— If someone responds to General Revelation, God will move heaven and earth to get them the Special Revelation. But if someone suppresses the General, it's a waste of God's time to send them the Special.

- Why is it a waste of God's time? Because the only thing that would be accomplished by sending someone the Special when they reject the General would be to increase their accountability, and thus increase the threshold of their judgment. The more light a person has, the more responsible they are for seeking God.
- God knows that sending the Gospel (Special Revelation) to someone who will reject it will only increase their responsibility and accountability on the day of judgment. Someone who hears the Gospel rightly presented over and over and over again, and rejects it, will be held more accountable and have a more severe judgment at the Great White Throne.

3 About the **ninthhour** of the day he clearly saw in a vision **anangel** of God who had *just* come in and said to him, "Cornelius!"

3 About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had *just* come in and said to him, "Cornelius!"

3 One day, about three in the afternoon, he had a vision and clearly saw an angel of God coming to him and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

- "...ninth hour" - 3pm, the Jewish hour of prayer (Cf. 3:1), so Cornelius may have been praying

- "...an angel" - not Jesus

4 And he looked at him intently and became **terrified**, and said, "What is it, lord?" And he said to him, "**Your prayers and charitable gifts have ascended as a memorial offering before God.**

4 And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

4 He stared at the angel in terror and asked, "What is it, Lord?"

The angel answered him, "Your prayers and your gifts to the poor have arisen as a reminder to God.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

- "...terrified" - alarmed, afraid, intimidated; a normal reaction of a person who comes into the presence of a holy being

— When this type of encounter happens between a person and an angel, you will almost invariably see fear on the part of the person

— The reason people are afraid is because they are in the presence of a being, sent by God, who is holy and has the right to destroy us because we're unholy (Cf. Gen 3:8; Is 6:1-5; Luke 5:8; Rev 1:17)

- "...Your prayers and charitable gifts have ascended as a memorial offering before God" - there's a teaching in Christianity that God does not hear the prayers of unbelievers unless it is a prayer of repentance

— The angel's message to Cornelius contradicts that teaching. God clearly heard the prayers of Cornelius, who was not saved but was seeking God.

5 Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter;

5 Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter;

5 Send men now to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

- The angel now gives Cornelius instructions to send some men to Joppa to retrieve Peter

- The angel provides Cornelius with Peter's Hebrew name ("Simon") and his Greek name (Petros, or Peter)

— Since Peter was staying at the home of Simon the tanner (9:43), the angel had to differentiate Simon the Tanner from Simon Peter (v6)

6 he is staying with **atanner**named Simon, whose house is by the sea."

6 he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea."

6 He is a guest of Simon, a leatherworker, whose house is by the sea."

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

- Joppa is about 30 miles south of Caesarea

- "...a tanner" - a tanner was despised; his house had to be at least 50 cubits outside the city

— If a girl was betrothed to a tanner without knowing he was a tanner, the betrothal was void

— Tanners used a lot of water in their occupation, which is likely why he lived by the sea

7 When the angel who *spoke to him left, he summoned two of his servants and a **devout** soldier from his personal attendants,

7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants,

7 When the angel who had spoken to him had gone, Cornelius summoned two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of those who served him regularly.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

- "...devout" - *eusebēs*, same word used to describe Cornelius (v2)
- So this soldier, one of Cornelius' personal attendants, had renounced paganism just as Cornelius did, and was seeking God

- 8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.
- 8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.
- 8 He explained everything to them and sent them to Joppa.
- 8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.
- Cornelius relayed the instructions from the angel (v5-6) to his two servants and devout soldier (v7)

Verses 1-8 make up the first of eight sections to the salvation story of Cornelius. Verse 9 begins to document God's work on the other end of the equation: with Peter. God was doing a work within Cornelius, as he was a devout "God-seeker" but God was also doing a work within Peter, to begin to separate him from the Mosaic Law.

The first step of God's work with Peter was the fact that Peter was staying with Simon the tanner in Joppa. Tanners worked with dead animal carcasses, which were unclean for a Jew to touch or be around.

The lesson here is that when God is doing a work, He will work on both ends of the equation. If God tells someone something about you, or a work you should do, He will also confirm it for you personally. God always operates under His standard of two to three witnesses are required to confirm a matter.

Peter's Vision

- 9 On the next day, as **they** were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up **on the housetop** about the **sixth hour to pray**.
- 9 On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.
- 9 Around noon the next day, while they were on their way and coming close to the town, Peter went up on the roof to pray.
- 9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:
 - "...they" - the two servants and one soldier dispatched by Cornelius
 - "...on the housetop...to pray" - a normal ritual for Jews; they did this all through the Babylonian captivity (Cf. Dan 6:10)
 - "...sixth hour" - noon

Although Peter was not an overly scrupulous Jew, and as a Christian, his inherited prejudices were gradually wearing thin, he was not yet prepared to go so far as to minister to a Gentile. A special revelation was necessary for that to happen. Thus, God, knowing our needs and limitations intimately, took the initiative to make that happen.

10 But he became **hungry** and wanted to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a **trance**;

10 But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance;

10 He became very hungry and wanted to eat, and while the food was being prepared, he fell into a trance

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

- "...hungry" - the reference to Peter's hunger, which God evidently gave him, partially explains why God couched his vision in terms of food, as food was obviously on Peter's mind

- "...trance" - *ekstasis*, the root of the English word "ecstasy"; it means to "stand outside oneself in a state of surprise or amazement" (Cf. 3:10; 22:17)

11 and he *saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,

11 and he *saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,

11 and saw heaven open and something like a large linen sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the ground.

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 and on it were **all kinds** of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the sky.

12 and there were in it all *kinds* of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.

12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds of the air.

12 Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

- "...all *kinds*" - included clean and unclean animals (11:6; Cf. Lev 11); the issue of unclean food was the basic one that separated observant Jews like Peter from Gentiles

- The point of the vision the Lord gave Peter is that it freed Peter from any hangups about going into a Gentile home and eating whatever food may be served
- It would be a short step from recognizing that Gentile food was clean to realizing that Gentiles themselves were clean also

Milk drawn by a heathen, if a Jew had not been present to watch it, bread and oil prepared by them, were unlawful. Their wine was wholly unclean—a mere touch of a heathen polluted a whole cask; even to put one's nose to heathen wine was strictly prohibited.

- 13 A voice came to him, **"Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"**
- 13 A voice came to him, **"Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"**
- 13 Then a voice told him, **"Get up, Peter! Kill something and eat it."**
- 13 And there came a voice to him, **Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.**
- The voice (Jesus) gave Peter three instructions: (1) Get up; (2) kill; (3) eat what you just killed
- 14 But Peter said, **"By no means, Lord**, for I have never eaten anything **unholy and unclean."**
- 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."
- 14 But Peter said, "Absolutely not, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean!"
- 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.
- "...By no means, Lord" - an oxymoron, stating two things that contradict each other...like jumbo shrimp, reasonable attorney's fees, government intelligence, postal service, Microsoft works...
- Peter recognizes the authority behind the instruction, but he doesn't want to follow it. Peter had said "No" to the Lord before (Matt 16:22; John 13:8-9; 21:7).
- Peter protested the Lord's command politely, just as Ezekiel did when we received similar instructions from God (Ezek 4:14)
- Peter recognized Jesus' voice, but had either not understood or recalled Jesus' teaching in which He declared all foods clean (Mark 7:14-19; Cf. Rom 14:14)
- If Christ is Peter's "Lord" then Peter wouldn't say "By no means"
- Based on the teaching of Lordship Salvation, which leaves no room for a rebellious, struggling, backslidden Christian, you would have to conclude here that Peter was not saved.

— What makes someone a Christian is not their submission to the lordship of Christ. What makes them a Christian is that they have received as a free gift what Jesus did in their place.

- "...unholy and unclean" - the Mosaic Law gave strict instructions regarding animals that could be eaten and those that could not (Cf. Lev 10:10; 20:25; Ezek 4:14; Dan 1:8-12)

The cliche "If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all" is simply that, and not biblical or theological truth. He can be Lord of aspects of my life while I withhold other areas of my life from His control. Peter illustrated this often, particularly here in this episode when the Lord asked him to kill and eat "unclean" animals. At that point, was Christ the Lord of all of Peter? Certainly not. So can we conclude that the Lord was not Lord at all in relation to Peter's life? Certainly not. [Ryrie]

15 Again a voice came to him a second time, **"What God has cleansed, no longer consider unclean."**

15 Again a voice came to him a second time, **"What God has cleansed, no longer consider unclean."**

15 Again the voice came to him a second time, **"You must stop calling unclean what God has made clean."**

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, **What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.**

- What God had made clean (kosher), Peter was not to call common or unclean. God reminded Peter that He alone is the final Determiner of what is or is not clean and acceptable.

— Jesus is methodically teaching Peter that there has been a dispensational change, and that the dispensation of the Mosaic Law is now past, and God is working with a new entity called the Church

— Peter's Jewish cultural preferences were overriding the Word of God in Peter's thinking. For this reason, God repeated the vision two more times, so Peter would be sure he understood God's command correctly.

— Along with that change, there is a change in rules of what a God-follower can and cannot eat. There's been a change from the Law of Moses to the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2). This goes for Jews as well as Gentiles.

— Jesus hinted many times during His ministry that this change was coming (Cf. Matt 15:16-20; Mark 7:18-19). Paul also talked about the affect of this dispensational change on clean and unclean foods (Cf. Rom 14:14; 1 Cor 10:19; Col 2:16-17; 1 Tim 4:3-4).

The immediate context is clearly that of eating food. The wider context shows that the vision included not just the fact that Gentiles were now to be considered clean, but also these non-kosher animals were now to be considered kosher or clean. The account of the same event (Matt 15:15-20) shows that the Messiah's words were particularly addressed to Peter in Mark 7:18-19. Peter did not learn the lesson in Matt 15 or Mark 7, so now he had to be taught the lesson again.

All foods are clean, says...

- Jesus (Mark 7:14-23)
- Peter (Acts 10:9-15)
- Paul (Rom 14:1-12; 1 Cor 8:4,8; 10:23-33; Col 2:16-17; 1 Tim 4:4)

16 This happened **three times**, and immediately **the object** was taken up into the sky.

16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

16 This happened three times. Then the sheet was quickly taken back into heaven.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

- "...three times" - it had to happen three times because Peter was steeped in a completely different system for the past 1500 years. It may have also reminded Peter of a three-fold instruction of Jesus on a familiar beach (Cf. John 21:15-17).

— The only "Bible" available at this point was the OT, so the only written word of God that Peter had as a foundational truth was the OT, which clearly delineated clean and unclean foods

— A principle of God is that a matter should be confirmed by 2-3 witnesses. In this case, Jesus had to confront and instruct Peter 3x in order for him to grasp and understand these new instructions

- "...the object" - the sheet Peter saw coming down from the sky, with animals, crawling creatures, etc. (v11-12)

- The message of Peter's vision(s) is that the disciples are to receive the Gentiles, not before cleansing, but after God has cleansed them as He will do later through the cleansing gospel which Peter would share with them the next day.

— The specific application was the nullifying of Jewish dietary laws for Christians, in accord with Jesus' teaching in Mark 7:17-23. But Peter would soon learn that the vision extended much more widely, touching on Jewish-Gentile relations in ways he could never have anticipated.

What Does it Mean that the Dispensation of Law is Over?

About 1500 years earlier, God gave the Mosaic Law to Moses/Israel at Mount Sinai. God gave Israel the Mosaic Law not as a rulebook to follow in order to be redeemed (saved)

because they were already redeemed/saved. He gave it to them not to redeem them, but because they had already been redeemed (they put the blood on the doorpost, and were "baptized" through the Red Sea).

The Mosaic Law was given to them to teach them now to act...toward God (commandments 1-4), and with each other (commandments 5-10), and how they were to worship God (the extensive instructions for the tabernacle). The 613 commands in the Mosaic Law amplify or explain each of the 10 Commandments. They apply the 10 Commandments to daily life.

Our salvation story today mirrors this...we're saved by faith alone in the blood of Christ (the Passover Lamb), then He brings us into the walk of sanctification, teaching us as redeemed people how we're supposed to live. The open question is how were they to act toward the pagan nations around them? This is why God ordained Israel to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6). They were to be God's ambassadors or representatives to these other nations.

The NT tells us that since Acts 2, the beginning of the dispensation of the church, we are no longer under the rules of the Mosaic Law (Cf. Rom 6:14; 2 Cor 3:7-11). Unfortunately, some today will divide the Mosaic Law into three parts (which the Bible never does): civil laws, ceremonial/sacrificial laws, and the moral laws. Then they will say that we're no longer under the civil or ceremonial provisions, but we are still under the moral provisions.

The problem with this is that the Bible never divides the Mosaic Law into three categories...these are man-made categories. The problem also is that the Bible is clear that as soon as you put yourself under one inch of the Mosaic Law, you're automatically under the entire Law. You can't pick and choose what provisions you feel like obeying, and which you don't. The Law is a package deal (Cf. James 2:10).

It's also clear that the Mosaic Law was given ONLY to the nation of Israel (Ps 147:19-20). It was not given to any other group or nation...only to Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The legal code ("law") for the Church Age is called the "Law of Christ" (Gal 6:2) or the "Law of the Spirit" (Rom 8:2). This NT "Law" mirrors the OT Law of Moses in some instances. For example, in the Law of Christ/Spirit, 9 of the 10 commandments are repeated. The only one of the 10 Commandments not repeated in the NT is the command to honor the Sabbath. Some people look at the similarities between the Law of Christ/Spirit and the 10 Commandments, and just assume that we're under the entire Mosaic Law. Not true. Similarity is not the same as equality. Just because two things are similar doesn't mean they are equal.

Just like with the Mosaic Law, complete obedience to the Law of Christ/Spirit does not justify/save anyone. Just like the Mosaic Law, the Law of Christ/Spirit gives us instructions for our relationship with God, with others, and provisions for worshipping Him.

No one taught the NT believer's separation from the Mosaic Law more aggressively than Paul. Yet in Acts, there are four instances where Paul voluntarily puts himself back under the Mosaic Law:

1. Acts 16:3, with Timothy during his 2nd missionary journey, Paul had Timothy circumcised because the Jews he was ministering to knew Timothy's father was Greek (Gentile).
2. Acts 18:18, Paul had his hair cut in order to keep a Nazarite vow (Cf. Num 6:2,5,9,18)
3. Acts 20:16, Paul hurried back to Jerusalem in order to be present for the Day of Pentecost
4. Acts 21:26, Paul offered an animal sacrifice in the temple

Paul explains why he voluntarily put himself back under the Mosaic Law in these four instances in 1 Cor 9:20-22:

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those who are under the Law, *I became as one* under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, so that I might gain those who are under the Law;

21 to those who are without the Law, *I became as one* without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law.

22 To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some.

Paul never put himself under the Mosaic Law for his justification or his sanctification; he did it to avoid offending those he was witnessing/ministering to. It's very difficult to evangelize the Jews when your lifestyle violates their laws. You can't preach the love of Christ and simultaneously offend someone. So what Paul did for those who were of weaker understanding is to volitionally put himself under the Mosaic Law in order to earn the right to share the gospel with them.



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 237



"However, there are two dangers that must be avoided by the believer who voluntarily keeps the commandments of the Law of Moses. One danger is the idea that by doing so he is contributing to his own justification and sanctification. This is false and should be avoided. The second danger is in expecting others to keep the same commandments that he has decided to keep. This is equally wrong and borders on legalism."

In summary: Paul put himself voluntarily under the Mosaic Law so as to increase his chances for successful evangelism. He didn't put himself under the Law to be justified, to be sanctified, nor did he expect or instruct others to do as he was doing.

Invitation from Cornelius' Messengers

17 Now while Peter was **greatly perplexed** in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius had asked directions to Simon's house, and they appeared at the gate;

17 Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate;

17 While Peter was still at a loss to know what the vision he had seen could mean, the men sent by Cornelius asked for Simon's house and went to the gate.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

— "...greatly perplexed" — *diaporeō*, he was confused/perplexed because Christ just told him, 3x, that he was to break the Mosaic Law. This did not compute in Peter's mind.

— Peter couldn't make any sense of the vision he saw, and he couldn't understand why this was happening. He received the instruction, but now he needs an explanation (why?).

— At the height of Peter's confusion, God brings the explanation to his doorstep in the form of the two servants and the soldier dispatched by Cornelius

18 and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

18 and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

18 They called out and asked if Simon who was called Peter was staying there.

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter **was reflecting on** the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.

19 While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.

19 Peter was still thinking about the vision when the Spirit told him, "Look! Three men are looking for you.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

- "...was reflecting on" - "to think through and through"; Peter gave the vision a lot of thought

— While Peter is trying to unwind his confusion with the vision and the instructions from Christ, the Holy Spirit alerted him about the arrival of the men sent by Cornelius

— A lot of people were involved in getting Peter to accompany the messengers to Cornelius' house: an angel of God (v3,22); the Holy Spirit (v19); the ascended Christ (v4,14); we could also add "God" to the list (v28; Cf. 8:26,29,39; 16:6-7; Rom 8:9-11; 2 Cor 3:17-18)

20 But get up, go downstairs and accompany them **without misgivings**, for I have sent them Myself."

20 But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself."

20 Get up, go downstairs, and don't hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

- Notice that the three men sent by Cornelius to Peter did not tell Peter, God told me to tell you.... God was working on Peter's end as well.

— The three men obeyed the instructions received in Cornelius' vision, and at the same time the Holy Spirit is confirming God's will to Peter to receive and follow these three men.

- "...without misgivings" - Peter is told by the Spirit to step out in faith and obey His instructions, without any further consideration; no paralysis by analysis

- Sometimes God gives us a clear word, and expects us to act on it—immediately. There are some things in the Bible that are crystal clear, and we don't need to sit around and think about it, or pray about it, to decide whether it's true or not.
- What we need to do in those circumstances is step out in faith, with no misgivings or paralysis by analysis. This is what Peter is being commanded to do here by the Holy Spirit.

21 Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?"

21 Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?"

21 So Peter went to the men and said, "I'm the man you're looking for. Why are you here?"

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

- Peter identifies himself, then seeks an explanation for the Holy Spirit's instruction to go with these men

22 They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you."

22 They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you."

22 The men replied, "Cornelius, a centurion and an upright and God-fearing man who is respected by the whole Jewish nation, was instructed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his home to hear what you have to say."

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

- The three men answer by giving a description of who sent them, and his character

— They note that he was "divinely directed" by an angel to make contact with Peter and bring him to Cornelius' house to receive a message

- "...a centurion" - interesting that Luke wrote both Luke and Acts to Theophilus, who was also a centurion (Luke 1:1-4, "most excellent" indicates he was a centurion), who was having doubts if Christianity was for him because he was a Gentile.

— Understanding this purpose, you could see how the story of how God miraculously got the Gospel to Cornelius, also a Gentile, would be uplifting and encouraging to Theophilus

- "...righteous...God-fearing...well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews" - three more attributes of Cornelius (Cf. v2)

- Based on his character and reputation, and the fact that he was actively seeking God, it is evident why God moved heaven and earth to get the Gospel to Cornelius
- He was a blessing to the nation of Israel (Cf. Gen 12:3), thus God was actively blessing him (Cf. Luke 7:5). God continually keeps His promise of Gen 12:3 to Gentiles who bless Israel.



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 235



"This chapter in the book of Acts is a crucial turning point because the salvation of uncircumcised Gentiles began here. Notice how much it took to get Gentile salvation started: First, it took an angel coming to Cornelius; second, it took a voice out of heaven, speaking three times to Peter; third, it took the Holy Spirit speaking audibly to Peter; and, fourth, it took two visions, one for Cornelius and one for Peter."

23 So **he** invited **them** in and gave them lodging. Now on the next day he got ready and went away with them, and **some of the brothers** from Joppa accompanied him.

23 So he invited them in and gave them lodging. And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

23 So Peter welcomed them as his guests. The next day, he got up and went with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along with him.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

- "...he" - Peter

- "...them" - the two servants and one soldier sent by Cornelius

- The distance from Joppa to Caesarea is about 30 miles

- After learning their intent, Peter brings them inside the house and acted as their host; this was highly unusual, as Jews did not provide hospitality to Gentiles

— Evidently, Peter began to understand the point of the visions and began to apply it in his relationships with these Gentiles

- "...some of the brothers" - 6 others went along with Peter (Cf. 11:12), in addition to the three men originally sent by Cornelius

— These six men turn out to be important witnesses of this event when Peter recounts Cornelius' salvation to the Jerusalem leadership

- A total of 10 men journeyed: two household servants and a soldier; the apostle Peter; and six Christian Jews (11:12); 10 is the number of witness
 - It was wise for Peter to take six Jewish Christians along with him. Jewish law required two or three witnesses to establish truth (Deut 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor 13:1). Peter knew many witnesses would help others believe God's unfolding plan for the church.

This passage is a crucial turning point because Gentile salvation began here. Notice how much it took to get Gentile salvation started: first, it took an angel coming to Cornelius; secondly, it took a voice out of Heaven, speaking three times to Peter; thirdly, it took the Holy Spirit speaking audibly to Peter; and, fourthly, it took two visions, one for Cornelius and one for Peter.

Peter Visits Cornelius

24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

24 The next day, they arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called his relatives and close friends together.

24 And the Morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

- Cornelius knows that Peter is coming, but he doesn't know what message Peter has for him. He just knows that it is significant.

— The message Cornelius expected from Peter was so significant that he gathered together his relatives and close friends to hear from Peter

25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*.

25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*.

25 When Peter was about to enter, Cornelius met him, bowed down at his feet, and began to worship him.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

- Cornelius, being unsaved and not knowing any better, begins to fall down and worship Peter

26 But Peter helped him up, saying, "Stand up; I, too, am just a man."

26 But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am *just* a man."

26 But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up! I, too, am only a man."

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

- Peter stops the worship in its tracks because he knows that God does not share His glory with another

— If Peter was the first pope, as Roman Catholicism argues, then he would've likely accepted the worship and adulation from Cornelius

— This same thing will happen to Paul on his 1st missionary journey (14:11-15; Cf. Rev 19:10; 22:8-9). There are numerous instances of apostles given worship, but immediately refusing it (here; 14:11-15; Rev 19:10; 22:8-9).

27 As he talked with him, **he entered** and *found many people assembled.

27 As he talked with him, he entered and *found many people assembled.

27 As Peter talked with him, he went in and found that many people had gathered.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

- "...he entered" - two simple words, but a crucial statement: Peter, a Jew and an apostle no less, entered the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, in the land of Israel. This was unheard of.

— Remember, a Jew is not even supposed to enter the house of a Gentile because of the strict Pharisaic rules Jews followed in eating, preparing, and even handling food; the Gentiles also didn't tithe or practice circumcision, which made it even worse

— Any physical contact with Gentiles made a Jew susceptible to becoming ceremonially unclean because of the failure of Gentiles to observe these Mosaic Laws

— Peter understood that he could do this because of the vision of the sheet with the animals that God showed him, explaining to Peter that the dispensation of Law is no longer binding

— This was probably the first time that Peter had ever been in a Gentile house

Food was the crux of the issue that separated Jews from Gentiles. However, Peter obviously received the message loud and clear from the sheet of food that food does not make a person unholy or unclean. God had convinced him to go against traditional Jewish custom. If the food laws of the Jews were no longer valid, there was no real reason to avoid social contact with Gentiles.

28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner; and yet God has shown me that I am not to call any person unholy or unclean.

28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

28 He told them, "You understand how wrong it is for a Jew to associate or visit with unbelievers. But God has shown me that I should stop calling anyone common or unclean,
28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

- The Mosaic Law did not prohibit a Jew from entering the house of a Gentile. This became part of Jewish culture from pharisaic tradition.

— There are examples of Jews entering the homes of Gentiles/proselytes in the OT (Cf. Joshua 2:1; Ruth 1:16; 2 Chr 9:1-12)

— This is just one of many examples of the legalism of the Pharisees, of the "fence" that they put around the Mosaic Law after the Babylonian captivity.

— There are two directions that Satan wants to push the believers into:

- Licentiousness - no rules or boundaries; appeasing our sin nature
- Legalism - cease obeying God's truth and begin to obey man's rules, which are designed to keep you in the right lane. The thing about man's rules is that over the course of time they begin to be more important than what God actual said.



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 239



"These were Gentiles living in a Jewish country, and they knew about the Jewish practice of not entering the home of a Gentile, as it was unlawful to do so. This practice was not part of the Mosaic Law, but it was part of Pharisaic Judaism not to associate with or visit one of another nation."

29 That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask, for what reason did you send for me?"

29 That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me."

29 and that is why I didn't hesitate when I was sent for. Now may I ask why you sent for me?"

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

- Peter knew (v28) that God sent him to Cornelius' house, and because of that he was willing to set aside centuries of pharisaic tradition to step foot into the house of a Gentile

— So after obeying what Jesus told him to do, he now asks Cornelius why he sent for him

30 Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining clothing,

30 Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments,

30 Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this very hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, I was praying in my home. All at once a man in radiant clothes stood in front of me

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

- Four days ago Cornelius had a visit from an angel, who prepared me for this encounter with you Peter...

— Interesting that no one views "four days" in this verse as four eras of time (billions of years) as they do in Gen 1

31 and he *said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your charitable gifts have been remembered before God.

31 and he *said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard. God has remembered your gifts to the poor,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

- According to this verse (and v2), and counter to some Christian teaching, God indeed does hear the prayers of unbelievers

— It's clear that Cornelius is not yet saved at this point (Cf. 11:14)

32 Therefore send *some men* to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon *the tanner*, by the sea.'

32 Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon *the tanner* by the sea.'

32 so send messengers to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter, to come to you. He is a guest in the home of Simon, a leatherworker, by the sea.'

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

- Cornelius recounts how the angel made it clear to him which of the two "Simons" he was to call to come: Simon who is called Peter, not Simon the tanner

— At the same time Cornelius is having this angelic encounter and receiving instructions to send for Peter, Peter is having an encounter with Christ Himself, and receiving instructions to follow three men who were coming for him.

33 So I sent *men* to you immediately, and you have been **kind enough to come**. Now then, we are all here present before God **to hear everything** that you have been commanded by the Lord."

33 So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

33 So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. All of us are here now in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has ordered you to say."

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

- "...kind enough to come" - Cornelius appreciated Peter leaving his comfort in Joppa, as well as his willingness to set aside centuries of pharisaic Judaism to step foot into my home

— Cornelius attributes both of these things to Peter's "kindness"

- "...to hear everything" - Cornelius and the audience had their ears open, were humble, and ready to hear from the Lord through Peter

— This audience was sitting on the edge of their seat, eager to hear exactly what God had to say to them through Peter

— You could describe Cornelius and his friends/family through the parable of the Sower as the seed that fell on the good soil, germinated, and bore lots of fruit

Peter's Message to Cornelius

34 **Opening his mouth**, Peter said: "I **most certainly understand now** that God is not one to **show partiality**,

34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality,

34 Then Peter began to speak: "Now I understand that God shows no partiality.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

- "Opening his mouth" - in Luke's eyes, what Peter was about to say was indeed momentous in sweeping away centuries of racial prejudice

— This sermon by Peter was the first sermon in Acts addressed to a Gentile audience; it is similar to the sermons he preached in 2:14-40 and 3:11-26, except that this one has more information about Jesus' pre-crucifixion ministry

- In addition, this sermon contained no quotes from the OT, although it does contain OT allusions
- At some point, to evangelize someone, we have to speak. Some people think that mowing someone's lawn, doing household chores for someone who is unable, giving to the poor, or just living a righteous lifestyle is "evangelism."
- Of course those are all good things, but none of these "good works" will ever get someone saved. Eventually, at some point, we have to "open our mouth" and share the gospel.
- "...most certainly understand *now*" - he understands this "now" because God gave him the vision of the sheet with the animals
- "...show partiality" - God never demonstrated partiality toward Israel, even though they were His elect nation/people (Cf. Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7)
- Going back even to Abraham (Gen 12:3), the reason/purpose God would bless Israel is so they could in turn bless the world. His blessings were not to be held by Israel only, but He would bless Israel so that they could pass along those blessings to the rest of the world (Cf. Is 42:8; 49:6).
- Same goes for us today...we are blessed to be a blessing to others. The purpose and intent of God blessing us, our family, our church, etc. is so that we would in turn use those blessings to bless others.
- Since God does not show partiality (Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7; Job 34:19; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25), certainly Christians should not either
- Peter proceeded to prove that God deals with all people equally through His Son (v36,38,42-43), not on the basis of anything else, including race

35 but in **everynation** the one who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.

35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

35 Indeed, whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him in any nation.

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

- "...every nation" - not just in Israel; another statement to demonstrate that God does not show partiality



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 241



"In verse 35, Peter recognized the fact of Gentile acceptance: *but in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness is acceptable to him.* The one who fears God obviously has faith. The one who has faith will work righteousness as the evidence of that faith. Such a person is acceptable to God."

36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—

36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—

36 He has sent his word to the descendants of Israel and brought them the good news of peace through Jesus the Messiah. This man is the Lord of everyone.

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all):

- The gospel went out first to the Jewish people. They were given the first opportunity to receive the kingdom and believe that Jesus was their Messiah (Cf. Matt 10:5-7).

37 you yourselves know the thing that happened throughout Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.

37 you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.

37 You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached.

37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

- Peter begins to outline Jesus' ministry after His baptism by John the Baptist (Cf. John 1:29; Matt 3:16-17)

— This is the most comprehensive review of Jesus' career found in any speech in Acts

38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how **God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit** and with power, and **how He went about doing good and healing** all who were oppressed by the devil, for **God was with Him.**

38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

38 God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, he went around doing good and healing everyone who was oppressed by the devil.

38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

- "...God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit" - if Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh, had to be anointed by God the Father with the Holy Spirit...how on earth do I think I could get by in ministry or teaching without the Spirit's empowerment?

— If Jesus needed the anointing of the Spirit, how much more does every human being need it?

- "...He went about doing good and healing" - what did Christ do with His anointing of the Spirit and power? He went about doing good works and healing people.

— You're a Christian and you want to know what to do with your life? How about going around doing good for other people. That is following in the footsteps of Christ.

- "...God was with Him" - God was pleased with what Jesus did with His Spirit's anointing (Cf. John 1:29)

39 We are witnesses of all the things that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. **They** also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.

39 We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.

39 We are witnesses of everything Jesus did in the land of the Jews, including Jerusalem. "They hung him on a tree and killed him,

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

- "...They" - the Jews (more specifically, the religious leaders of 1st century Israel)

— While Peter here pins Israel as the ones who crucified Christ, you have to handle the blame carefully (see notes on 2:23; Cf. Luke 18:32; John 10:18)

— The Bible never exonerates 1st century Israel for the crucifixion of Christ, but it never pins the total blame on them either. There is enough blame to go around.

— If you want to know who was responsible for the crucifixion of Christ, look in the mirror

40 God **raised Him up** on the third day and granted that He be revealed,

40 God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,

40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear—

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

- "...raised Him up" - if Christ had not been raised from the dead, our faith is in vain (1 Cor 15:14)

41 **not to all the people**, but to witnesses **who had been chosen beforehand** by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

41 not to all the people, but to us who were chosen by God to be witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

- "not to all the people" - Jesus did not reveal/display Himself to a single unbeliever post-resurrection; only believers saw Him (Cf. 1 Cor 15:5-8)

- "...who had been chosen beforehand" - *procheirotoneō*, to elect or choose in advance

— Notice that the election or choosing here is not to salvation. These specific people were chosen/elected by God to visibly and personally see (eat and drink with) the resurrected Christ.

42 And He ordered **us** to preach to the people, and to testify solemnly that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

42 He also ordered us to preach to the people and to testify solemnly that this is the one appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

- "...us" - the apostles

- Jesus' instruction to the apostles was to Jesus was the Messiah, and He was appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead

— There is coming a time in human history when Jesus Christ will render judgment on both those who are living and those who are dead

— Every single person who has ever lived will one day stand before the resurrected Jesus Christ in judgment. Thankfully, those who have trusted in Christ for their eternal salvation will not have their sins counted against them because they have Christ's righteousness imputed to their account.

— Believers will simply give an account for their works, the good works they have done in the power of the Holy Spirit (Cf. 1 Cor 3:10-15)

— On Mars Hill, Paul climaxes his sermon on the same note (Cf. 17:31)

43 All the prophets testify of Him, that through His name everyone who **believes** in Him **receives forgiveness of sins.**"

43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

43 All the prophets testify to this: everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

- Referring to the OT (Cf. Luke 24:27,44; John 5:39,46; Acts 17:2-3; 1 Cor 15:3-4); the entire OT point to Jesus Christ

- "...believes" - a single-step gospel: belief. No ABC (admit, believe, confess) obstacle course in order to be saved. Justification is based solely on belief/trust in Jesus Christ (Cf. Gen 15:6; John 3:16; 5:24; 6:28-29,47; 16:8-9; 20:30-31; Acts 16:30-31; Rom 1:16; Eph 2:8-9; Heb 11:6)

— People like to build a complex course of justification based on Acts 2:38 (repent, be baptized, etc.). However, In 11:15-16, Peter clearly states that what happened to Cornelius and those with him was exactly the same as what happened to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost.

— In that passage, Peter is saying that the pure simplicity of the gospel presentation in this verse (10:43) is the same simplicity of the gospel presented in Acts 2:38.

— The Bible simply will not allow someone to complicate the gospel

- "...receives forgiveness of sins" - this verse confirms the "because of" translation of *eis*, often translated "for"

— Notice the (single) prerequisite condition for having your sins forgiven: it's not water baptism (as Church of Christ and others teach, which is that you must be water baptized to be saved)

— The only condition given in this verse to have your sins forgiven is *belief* in Jesus Christ. Not mention of the need to "repent of your sins," "give your heart to Jesus," "sacrifice your life to Christ," or "make Jesus the Lord of your life."

— This fact is also confirmed again later in Acts:

Acts 15:11: But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

All

Throughout this sermon, Peter stressed the universal benefit of Jesus' ministry in this message to Gentiles: it was for both Gentiles and Jews. This destroys the Calvinist idea of

Limited Atonement.

- v36: Jesus is Lord of **all**
- v38: Jesus went about healing **all**
- v42: Jesus is the Judge of **all**
- v43: to whom **all** the prophets bore witness
- v43: God forgives **all** who believe on Him

Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit

"The Pentecost of the Gentile World"

44 While Peter was **still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell** upon all those who were listening to the message.

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

44 While Peter was still making this statement, the Holy Spirit fell on all the people who were listening to his message.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

– "...still speaking these words" - you get the idea that Peter had not yet concluded what he was going to say to them, but they interrupt him

— Cornelius and his family were so ripe to be saved that Peter barely had to touch the fruit and it fell off the tree

— The fact that Cornelius and the others were saved so easily is due in large part to how the Holy Spirit prepared their hearts in advance

– "...the Holy Spirit fell" - the miracle of regeneration (notice that this happened at the point of salvation, not before); Cf 11:15

— This is the first time Gentiles were saved purely as Gentiles, without having to first become proselytes to Judaism

— The Holy Spirit "fell" upon those who "heard the word"; they simply believed what Peter had just said, so they were saved at that moment

— Note that Peter did not need to call for his hearers to repent on this occasion (Cf. 2:38; 3:19). As soon as he gave them enough information to trust in Jesus, they did so.

— The Gentiles did not have to do anything but *believe* on Jesus: they did not need to become proselytes, experience baptism in water, be circumcised, turn from their sins, or even say they were willing to turn from their sins.

— Peter's presence was necessary because Peter had "the keys of the kingdom" (Matt 16:17-19). See note: **Delay in Spirit Baptism in the Book of Acts** section in [Holy Spirit](#).

— In Acts 9, Paul was saved to become "the Apostle to the Gentiles" (v15). Although Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he did not have "the keys to the Kingdom" so Peter was

the one who first preached the gospel to the Gentiles to open the door to the Gentiles.

— Then, in Acts 13, Paul began to fulfill his commission of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Concerning the circumstances in Acts 10, it was Peter who preached to these Gentiles.

45 All the **Jewish believers who came with Peter** were **amazed**, because **the gift of the Holy Spirit** had also been poured out on the Gentiles.

45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

45 Then the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the gentiles, too,

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

- "...Jewish believers who came with Peter" - six Jewish men accompanied Peter (Cf. v23)

— They were witnesses of the events at Cornelius' home, and would later be important to testify to the Jerusalem leadership what happened (Cf. 11:12)

— At this point, their bodies because the perpetual and permanent residence of the Holy Spirit. This same thing happened to the apostles and the 3000 Jews at Pentecost, now is happening again to the Gentiles.

- "...amazed" - *existēmi*, where we get the English word "ecstatic"

— The six Jewish men who accompanied Peter to Caesarea were "ecstatic" or "astonished" at what was happening to these Gentiles

- "...the gift of the Holy Spirit" - this is the first instance in the NT where the baptism of the Holy Spirit happened to a Gentile

— At this point, the details around the baptism of the Holy Spirit had not yet been explained, because Paul had not written Romans or 1 Corinthians yet

— In 1 Cor 12:13, Paul later explained that all believers are "baptized" into one body, Jews and Gentiles, by the same Holy Spirit

— The Greek word for "baptized" (*baptizo*) means "oneness," "unity," "identification," or "connection." We shouldn't confuse *baptizo* with water, as that's what most Christians do. The water baptism that we submit ourselves to as Christians is an outward symbol of what the Holy Spirit has already done.

— The water of baptism symbolizes the reality of what the Holy Spirit already did (baptize us with the Holy Spirit), which connects us invisibly and metaphorically to Christ's body, the Church

— The Holy Spirit began this work of baptism at Pentecost (Acts 2); this is just the first time it has occurred to a Gentile

46 For they were hearing them speaking **with tongues** and **exalting God**. Then Peter responded,

46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,

46 because they heard them speaking in foreign languages and praising God. Then Peter said,

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

– "...with tongues" - *glōssa*, "the language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations"

— Tongues (*glōssa*) always refer to a known language; it *never* refers to babbling or incoherent speech

— Sometimes the Bible will use the word *dialecto*, where we get the English word "dialect." Either way, in all cases, whichever Greek word is used, it always refers to a known language that the speaker had not learned.

— It is likely that these Gentiles were praising God in Aramaic, which the Gentiles would not have known previously since Aramaic was a language the Jews understood

— The Jews would've understood Aramaic immediately, and recognized that their ability to speak in an unstudied language was an evidence of Spirit baptism, as it was at Pentecost

— To understand why "tongues" accompanied the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on these new believers, we have to understand that Acts 2 brought about a significant dispensational change

— Jews had been under the Mosaic Law for 1500 years. Thus, in order to convince and confirm this huge dispensational change to Israel, confirmatory signs and wonders accompanied the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

— In addition to the dispensational change, the fact the Gentiles were not to be included in the Church, without having to first convert to Judaism, was also a huge hurdle for Jews, even those who believed in Christ, at that time.

— "...exalting God" – whenever the Holy Spirit is at work, you know it by the fact that whomever is the object of that work exalts the Son (Cf. John 16:13-14)

— If the glory (credit) for something is going to a person, a talent, a budget, a building, or a program, that is not the work of the Holy Spirit because the Spirit always points/gives glory to the Son

— There are many churches or denominations that put a lot of focus on the Holy Spirit. All they talk about is the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit, as wonderful as He is, is not interested in directing attention or glory to Himself. He *always* directs the attention and glory to Jesus Christ.

— The Holy Spirit inspired the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation. And what's the entire Bible about? Jesus Christ.

- The OT is the *preparation* for Jesus
- The Gospels are the *manifestation* of Jesus
- Acts is the *propagation* of Jesus
- The Epistles are the *explanation* of Jesus
- Revelation is the *consummation* of Jesus

— Every major section of the Bible points to Jesus Christ. And this makes sense since the Holy Spirit inspired human men, breathing the words through them onto paper, with God's message to mankind.

— If someone is writing a message under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they are going to want to talk about Jesus because that's what the Holy Spirit does

— This is why when you see these people in Cornelius' house getting saved, you don't see them glorifying Peter, tongues, or anything else...they glorify God (the Son, since He is the subject of Peter's sermon)

The giving of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles is one of humanity's greatest events! Until this time, Jews were separated from Gentiles. In Israel's history, some individual Gentiles became God-fearing people among the Israelites, meaning they followed God's Law and Jewish religious practices. However, this was an unusual result from their interactions. More often, Israel turned away from God to follow Gentile idols and ways.

Gentile Tongues

For the Gentiles, speaking in tongues authenticated the message of Peter. For the Jewish believers, it authenticated the fact that the Gentiles could obtain salvation without first becoming proselytes to Judaism, which was the very thing that surprised the other six Jewish believers (v45-46). Peter later used this very fact as evidence to defend his actions to believers at the congregation of Jerusalem (11:1-2,15-18). Furthermore, at the Jerusalem Council, Peter will again use this incident to prove that Gentiles were saved by faith, apart from circumcision (15:7-9). Once again, the purpose of tongues here, as in Acts 2 and in Acts 8, was for the purpose of authentication.

Through Peter's experience with Cornelius, it is plain to see that the norm for this Age for both Jews and Gentiles is for the Holy Spirit to be given without delay, human mediation, or other condition than simple faith in Jesus Christ, for both Jew and Gentile.

47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be **baptized**, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?"

47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?"

47 "No one can stop us from using water to baptize these people who have received the Holy Spirit in the same way that we did, can they?"

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

- The formation of this question in Greek requires a negative answer
- "...baptized" - Peter is now referring to water baptism, not Spirit baptism
- Spirit baptism happens the moment a person places their faith/trust in Christ; water baptism, hopefully, happens some time shortly after that
- But water baptism doesn't save; Spirit baptism saves (happens at time of salvation). See notes on 2:38.
- There was no reason to withhold water baptism from the Gentile converts; they could undergo baptism as a testimony of their faith immediately
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit was Jesus' sign of His acceptance of them, and baptism with water was their sign of their acceptance of Him
- The very fact that these Gentiles experienced the same thing that the Jews experienced in Acts 2 means that there was no reason to forbid them from being water baptized

Some say that if you are baptized with the Holy Spirit, you do not need to be baptized in water. However, it is not a question of what you need—it is a question of what God has commanded. [Ironside]

48 And **heordered** them to be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ**. Then they asked him to **stay on for a few days**.

48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

48 So Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah. Then they asked him to stay there for several days.

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

- "...he ordered" - *prostassō*, commanded
- While water baptism doesn't save us, it is the first command given by Christ to a new believer. Although it doesn't save, it's also not presented in Scripture as an option.
- If a believer is never water baptized, they are still saved (Cf. the thief on the cross), but their spiritual growth will be stunted because they are in disobedience to the first command given to a new believer
- Notice that Peter himself did not do the baptizing, but with apostolic authority, he commanded the other Jewish believers to baptize the new Gentile converts

- Peter will be held responsible for preaching the gospel to uncircumcised Gentiles, while the six other Jewish believers were responsible for following up by means of water baptism
- Peter made sure that the other Jewish believers with him accepted those Gentiles as fellow believers; they were to show it by being the ones doing the work of baptism
- They were to baptize "in the name" of Jesus Christ, as in Acts 2:38; 19:5. This is what distinguishes believer's baptism from proselyte baptism and John's baptism.
- "...in the name of Jesus Christ" - why are people baptized in the name of Jesus Christ? Because the name of Jesus Christ saves (4:12; Cf. 2:38; 19:5).
- Many during the early church were baptized by John the Baptist. Those who were baptized unto repentance by John were re-baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Cf. 19:3-5)
- Note the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) for Cornelius and his pals:
 - The gospel is preached (by Peter): v34-43
 - Cornelius and others believed: v43-44
 - The Holy Spirit fell on them (regeneration): v44
 - They were water baptized: v48
- This is the same order of salvation we see every *single time* in the Gospels and Acts:
 - Jesus, in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20): Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them... (make disciples, then baptize them)
 - Philip preaching to the Samaritans (Acts 8:12): "When they believed...they were being baptized..."
 - Ethiopean eunuch: "I believe..." (Acts 8:37); Philip baptized him (Acts 8:38)
 - Lydia, first convert in Europe: "...The Lord opened her heart to respond..." (Acts 16:14); "Now when she and her household had been baptized..." (Acts 16:15)
 - Philippian jailer: he asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). They said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Acts 16:31). "...and immediately he was baptized" (Acts 16:33). "...he had become (past tense) a believer in God together with his household" (Acts 16:34).
 - Crispus: "Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed..." (Acts 18:8); later baptized (v18)
- The reason why God set a concrete *ordo salutis* is so mankind could not take any credit whatsoever in their salvation
- If water baptism is required for salvation, why would Paul state openly that he only baptized two people (Crispus and Gaius, 1 Cor 1:14)
- Then he says that he did baptize the household of Stephanas, but other than these, he wasn't sure if he ever baptized anyone else (1 Cor 1:16)
- Then to top it off, in 1 Cor 1:17 he says that Christ did not send him to baptize people, but to preach the gospel. If water baptism is required for salvation, this is a very strange thing

for Christ to tell Paul, the most prolific missionary in human history.

- "...stay on for a few days" - Peter could've just left after Cornelius and others were saved and baptized, but he instead stayed around for a few days, in order to teach and disciple them

— If Peter had just left, that would be the same as having a newborn, and after you bring him home, lay him on the kitchen floor and tell him to help himself to a ham sandwich when he's hungry

— We are not called to make converts, we're called to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20).

Catching fish is very different than cleaning the fish.

— Peter caught a big fish here, in fact a number of them. Then he stayed around for a few days to "clean" the fish, helping ensure they got off on the right foot in their Christian walk.

— Paul was a "cleaner" of fish...you can see this if you look at a map of his missionary journeys. He would visit a city, birth a church, then leave. After awhile, he would come back through the town to check on them, exhort and encourage them, teach them, and answer questions.

— In some cities, Paul stayed for a longer period of time in order to help grow the church toward maturity, because Paul was not just a fish "catcher" but also a fish "cleaner"

A comparison between how the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles here, how He came upon the Jews in Acts 2, and upon the Samaritans in Acts 8 shows that no one formula is consistently followed. This is why we cannot take these historical accounts and try to develop a set rule and doctrine from them. There are variations from one account to the other:

In Acts 2, with the Jews, the order was:

1. Repentance
2. Water baptism
3. Received of the Holy Spirit

In Acts 8, with the Samaritans, the order was:

1. Belief
2. Water baptism
3. Apostles were sent to Samaria from Jerusalem
4. The laying on of hands by the apostles
5. Received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of the apostles from Jerusalem

In Acts 10, with the Gentiles, the order was:

1. Faith
2. Received the Holy Spirit
3. Water baptism

The order was clearly different between Jews and Samaritans and between Samaritans and Gentiles.