

Up until this point in Acts, the church has been exclusively made up of Jews and Jewish proselytes. However, Peter and the Jews accompanying him are surprised to witness the salvation of Gentiles as God filled a Roman centurion named Cornelius and the men with him with the Holy Ghost, proving that Jesus is not only the Messiah of the Jews but also the Savior of the whole world.

**Verses 1-8:** We are introduced to a Roman centurion named Cornelius who lived in Caesarea, a city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. He was a man who feared God and regularly prayed and gave alms. An angel appears to Cornelius and instructs him to send for Peter, providing directions on where to find him in Joppa. Cornelius obeys and sends three men to Joppa.

**Verses 9-33:** As Cornelius' men are approaching Joppa the next day, Peter has gone to pray on the rooftop of the house where he was staying as he was waiting for a meal to be prepared. He sees a vision of a sheet being let down by its four corners containing animals of all kinds. A voice called out for Peter to "rise, kill and eat" but he declined, saying that he'd never eaten anything "common" (unholy) or unclean. The voice replied that Peter should not call anything unclean that God has made clean. This happened three times before the sheet is taken back into heaven, leaving Peter to ponder the meaning of the vision. Just then the men from Cornelius arrive at the house, asking for Peter, and the Spirit of God instructs him to go with these men. Peter obeys and once he arrives at Cornelius' house, he asks why he has been summoned. Cornelius tells Peter of his experience with the angel four days prior and that the angel had instructed him to summon Peter to come and speak to him and his household.

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34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

**"Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons"** – Cornelius and the members of his household are listening expectantly to what Peter has to say. Peter has come to realize the meaning of his vision and that God's blessings aren't exclusively for the Jews. He begins by acknowledging that the Jew's belief of their own religious superiority has been misguided because God doesn't automatically accept Jews and reject Gentiles on the basis of their ancestry.

**"But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"** – Peter understands that regardless of what nation a person comes from, God accepts those that fear and obey Him. As we are seeing in this chapter, God will lead such people to Himself through the only avenue that He has provided: Jesus Christ, His Son (**1 John 5:11-12** "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*"). God did not leave Cornelius to find his own way but led him to summon Peter to tell him of THE way: Jesus Christ. The religions around the world aren't alternate methods to God. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way. **Acts 4:12** "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*"

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

Peter calls attention to the message that God sent to Israel in the person of Jesus Christ: their Messiah has come. God's promise of peace through reconciliation with Him comes through His Son Jesus Christ, Who is "Lord of all." Jesus is supreme in authority as the promised Messiah Whose kingdom will encompass the entire world.

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

Reports of the miracles and preaching that Jesus did after the days of John the Baptist had spread throughout all Judaea. Although Cornelius and his household must have also heard these reports, they may not have known whether they were true. Peter is now declaring these reports to be true.

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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.

These reports included the facts that Jesus of Nazareth performed many good works, including the healing of the sick and those oppressed by demonic spirits. These works demonstrated that all that Jesus did was of God because He had been empowered by God to do these things.

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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:

**"And we are witnesses of all things which he did"** – The reports of all that Jesus did were not mere rumors or exaggerated tales. Peter and the other apostles (and possibly some of the men that had accompanied Peter to Cornelius' house) were witnesses to all that Jesus did and could testify that these reports were all true.

**"both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem"** – The expression "the land of the Jews" likely refers to Judea, Galilee, and perhaps Samaria – the land given to Israel by God. Jesus ministered in all of these areas, including Jerusalem, the main headquarters of those who hated Him.

**"whom they slew and hanged on a tree"** – Any description of Jesus is incomplete without acknowledging how and why He died. Not only did Jesus go about doing good, but he was also crucified by "they." Peter does not hide the fact that Jewish leaders were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, although "they" could include the Roman authorities as well.

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

**“Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly”** – Another fact that should not be omitted when describing Jesus is His resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection was not something hidden, forcing the apostles to guess whether or not it actually happened. Luke records that Jesus showed Himself alive to His apostles over a 40 day period before ascending to the Father (Acts 1:3).

**“Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God”** – Jesus did not show Himself alive to the general public for all to see as indisputable proof of His resurrection. Instead He chose to show Himself not only to the apostles but to over 500 people that God had previously chosen to be witnesses of His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6).

**“*even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead*”** – The apostles were not witnesses to brief glimpses or ambiguous evidences of the resurrected Jesus that were hard to confirm. Rather, they were able to fellowship with Him over a meal, lending credibility to the apostles’ testimony of the resurrection.

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*.

Jesus had commanded the apostles to be witnesses of Him (Acts 1:8) and to give testimony to the fact that, as the Messiah, God has ordained Him to be the Judge of the “quick” (living) and the dead. **John 5:22** *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son...”* The living are those with eternal life and the dead are those destined for eternal death in hell. **2 Tim. 4:1** *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom...”*

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

The OT prophets predicted the coming of the Messiah and Jesus fulfilled these prophecies with the exception of those that have yet to be fulfilled when He returns. These prophecies also proclaim the forgiveness of sins available through faith in Christ.

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

As soon as Peter’s hearers heard that forgiveness of sins comes through faith in Christ, they believed and were instantly saved. The evidence of their salvation was the fact that the Holy Ghost fell on them, which surprised the Jewish believers who were watching.

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.

The Jewish believers had assumed that because Jesus was a Jewish Messiah, then salvation and the gift of the Holy Ghost was reserved for Jews alone. However, the salvation of Gentiles had been prophesied in the OT (Isa. 42:1, 6; 49:6).

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

**“For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God”** – Salvation is not something that is eternally visible and God knew that Peter and the Jews with him would be skeptical that these Gentiles could be equal recipients of God’s grace. Thus He gave them the unmistakable sign of causing these Gentiles to speak in tongues just as the apostles did on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). Peter later explains that this was something he couldn’t deny (Acts 11:15-17).

**“Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”** – Peter’s response to seeing these Gentiles filled with the Holy Ghost is to surrender to the will of God. Since these Gentiles had received the same gift of the Holy Ghost from God that the apostles had received (with the same evidence), Peter could see no reason that they shouldn’t also be baptized as the apostles had been.

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

Thus Cornelius and those in his household were baptized. Afterward, Cornelius invited Peter to stay with them for a while instead of immediately leaving.

**Acts 11:1-18:** When Peter returns to Jerusalem, news of his trip to the house of Cornelius had arrived before him. The Jewish believers confronted him, wanting to know why he, as a Jew, had accepted the hospitality of Gentiles, eating and fellowshiping with them. Peter recounts all that had happened over the previous few days, including the fact that God had filled these Gentiles with the Holy Ghost with the same evidences that were present on the Day of Pentecost. God had obviously made the Gentiles equal with the Jews in salvation and so was Peter to question that? The Jewish believers then recognized that God has made salvation through Jesus Christ available to Gentiles as well as Jews.

**Acts 11:19-30:** The believers that had fled Jerusalem because of the persecution following Stephen’s martyrdom had traveled as far as Phenice, Cypress and Antioch and these believers had preached the gospel as they went with many souls being saved. When the church in Jerusalem heard of this they sent Barnabas to these locations to encourage the new believers in the Lord, going as far as Antioch. Afterward, Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul and brought him back to Antioch, where they taught the church there for a year. At that time a prophet from Jerusalem named Agabus prophesied of a famine that was coming. The church at Antioch then took up an offering to help the needy in Judea and sent it by Barnabas and Saul.