

Lesson 10: The Gentile Pentecost

Acts 10:1-11:18

In Peter's explanation of what happened while he was with the Gentiles in Caesarea, he said that when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, he "remembered the word of the Lord" (Acts 11:16). He remembered words Christ had spoken while He walked among them in the flesh. Peter remembered the words, and they took on greater meaning as the hypothetical came to life.

In John 14:26, Jesus promised that one role of the Holy Spirit is to bring to our remembrance the words of God. Before you begin your lesson, ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of promises God has spoken and to give you greater understanding as you need it. Listen for His voice as you walk through this week.

Read the narrative of Acts 10:1-11:18 all the way through.

Preparing Hearts

1. How was Cornelius described in Acts 10:1-2 and 10:22? Before the events of Acts 10, did he still need salvation according to Acts 11:13-14?

Roman by birth, Cornelius was living in Caesarea – the Roman capital of the province of Judea and the military headquarters of the Roman forces in Israel.⁹ Caesarea was predominately populated by Gentiles. Although Cornelius is described as a "God-fearer" and a devout man, scholars agree that he was not a full convert to Judaism (a *proselyte*) and that he would have had full Gentile status.

Focus now on Acts 10:1-22.

2. Who appeared to Cornelius, and what was Cornelius instructed to do?

"I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him."

Acts 10:34-35

⁹ Gangel, Kenneth O. *Acts*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998.

3. What did the angel tell Cornelius in Acts 10:4?

I wonder what Cornelius' prayers were. I wonder how long he had waited for an answer. I wonder if he doubted if this God of the Jews had even heard him.

4. Daniel, a prophet of the Old Testament, was also visited by an angel. Read the beginning of their exchange in Daniel 10:10-12. What was the angel's reassurance to Daniel? How is that an encouragement to you?
5. How did Cornelius respond to the instruction he received?
6. Cornelius was not the only one hosting heavenly visitors. What did Peter see in his vision?
7. Skim through the Jewish dietary laws related in Leviticus 11. Why would this vision have been so alarming to Peter?
8. What did Peter do in response to this puzzling vision according to Acts 10:17 and 10:19?
9. Peter didn't have much time for pondering. What happened while he was still up on the rooftop? How did Peter respond to the clear instruction from the Spirit in Acts 10:19-22?

Read Acts 10:23-33.

The Gentiles did not follow Jewish dietary laws or other laws prescribed for the Jews, so the Jews had developed a rule of keeping away from Gentiles altogether in order to keep from being defiled or made unclean by them.

10. Remember the situation of the Gentiles according to Ephesians 2:11-22 (see Lesson 8). Why were the Jews not expecting the Gentiles to be included in Christ's offer of salvation?

11. What did Peter's response to the visitors and to Cornelius indicate about his understanding of the vision from God? See especially Acts 10:15, 10:23 and 10:28.

12. In this chapter so far, how did Peter and Cornelius respond to the bits of understanding and instruction that God gave them? What happened when they acted on that little bit of understanding?

13. What does that teach you about our responsibility to act when we receive what seems like partial understanding regarding God's will? Is there an area of your life where you don't yet understand *all* of God's will? How are you responding?

The Gospel and the Spirit

Continue reading Acts 10:34-48.

Many people refer to this as the *Gentile Pentecost* – the day that the Holy Spirit was poured out for the first time on Gentiles who believed in Jesus as the Christ.

14. How had the Lord prepared the hearts of the gathered Gentiles according to Acts 10:33?

15. What does Peter clearly state in Acts 10:34-35? Consider also Deuteronomy 10:17 and Romans 2:11. Do you think that God has changed?

16. What are some specific ways that believers sometimes show partiality?

17. In Acts 10:36, Peter added a parenthetical description of Christ. What is that description? What does that mean to you in your own life?

18. In Acts 10:36-43, Peter related the first gospel message to the Gentiles. What differences do you notice between the way he spoke to the Jewish people in Acts 2:14-40 and Acts 3:12-26 and the way he preached to these Gentiles?

19. What happened in Acts 10:44? How is this a picture of John's words in John 1:12-13? Whose will was it that these Gentiles be given new life?

20. How did the people – the Gentiles and the Jews who had come with Peter – respond to the activity of the Spirit in Acts 10:45-48?

The Response of the Church

Read Acts 11:1-18.

21. How did “the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea” respond when they heard what had happened in Caesarea in Acts 11:1-3?

22. How did Peter respond to their criticism? Do you think he identified with their confusion? What was his ultimate defense in Acts 11:17?

23. Keep in mind that these verses are clearly referring to the response of the believers. What warning do you see in these verses for us as believers in Christ and His gospel?

24. How did the believers respond to Peter's explanation according to Acts 11:18?

25. What is the exhortation of Hebrews 3:14-15? Is there any area of your life where you have been closed to the work or ways of God? What would it look like to have a soft heart to respond when He speaks?

Prepare for Life

Cornelius and Peter both walked in the understanding that God had given to them, and as they did, God brought further revelation of His heart and will. Spend some time now and take stock of your own response to the light that God has given you.

26. Do you relate to Cornelius? Have you heard wonderful things of a God with whom you long to be in relationship? Are you doing all you know to do but wondering what it would mean to have a real relationship with God through Christ? If so, go back to Acts 10:34-43. Read the Lord's Word, written directly to your hungry heart. If you believe, tell Him. Take some time to sit quietly before the Lord and ask Him to send His Holy Spirit to fall on you as He did on Cornelius.

27. Do you understand Peter's perplexing dilemma? Have you sensed the Lord telling you something that you can't quite understand? What would it mean to walk in the amount of understanding that you do have? Can you trust the Lord to bring further revelation as you walk in faith?

Lecture Notes: Lesson 10