

Pentecost: Lesson 9 (March 23/24)

The Gospel to the Gentiles, the Jerusalem Council



Read Acts 10:34–48

1. How would you summarize the message of good news Peter shares with Cornelius, his family, and those listening?
2. What does Peter mean when he says that “God shows no partiality”?
3. Note that Paul also teaches that God shows no partiality (read Romans 2:11, Eph 6:9, and Col 3:25), and James calls partiality among people sinful (read James 2:1, 9). How do we detect and correct partiality in our own actions and views?
4. What are the two connected conditions Peter says that God requires for someone to be acceptable to him? Are any nations, tribes, or language groups automatically excluded or included?
5. Compare Peter’s speech on Pentecost to the one he gives in this passage to Cornelius and his family? What parts of this second speech are similar, and which parts did he summarize for a Roman (non-Jewish) household? See verse 10:43.
6. What happens to the Gentiles to indicate that they too are able to respond to God in faith?

Read Acts 15:1–35

7. How do you feel about the historical nature of your Christian faith when you read about the Council of Jerusalem and the way it tackles the controversy about the necessity of circumcision?

8. How is the Council of Jerusalem a model for discussion? How can Christians engage with opponents of our faith in a way that honors our Lord?



9. The kingdom of God was always intended to be a kingdom of different nations, tribes, languages, and peoples. How do we distinguish between our own traditions we cherish from truly non-negotiable elements of the Christian faith?

10. The text says that after a long debate that Peter rose and said his piece (15:7–11). What is the essence of his message?

11. When Peter says (again) that that God makes no distinction between us and them (Jews and non-Jews), does he mean that ethnic, cultural, and gender distinctive are wiped out and have no more meaning? Why is it dangerous to think so?

12. What does Peter mean when he talks about testing God by putting a yoke on people that they themselves couldn't bear?

13. James was the leader of the church in Jerusalem. While this issue of creating a new community of Christ followers was a brand new problem, James still turns to the Hebrew Scriptures to resolve it and move the new community of Christ followers forward. Why is that important?

14. Church councils functioned throughout the history of the church for leaders to gather, pray, discuss, and come to conclusions on issues related to the church. Are there any current issues in your mind that necessitate a "Council of 2021?"

15. We know that the Bible is not a book of rules for life. How do we acquire wisdom so that we can respond in ways which please God when confronted with a unique and/or new problems within the church?