

Cornelius and all his household are gathered and anxiously waiting to hear what God will speak through Peter.

Acts 10:33: *'Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.'*

Notice that Cornelius clearly understands that they will be hearing God's Word through Peter; they haven't gathered to hear from a man but from God.

Acts 10:34: *'Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.'*

Here is Peter, once more falling back into his Judaistic legalism: *'... he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with God...'*; in other words, still not understanding that Salvation is not according to keeping the Law of Moses, to 'working righteousness;' it will be left to Paul to clearly understand and to clearly explain the simplicity of the New Covenant, that Salvation is only according to faith: believing on/trusting in/ relying on His Sacrifice, that He is the only One Who ever could keep the Law and that He did so on our behalf. To the Philippian jailor, the full plan of Salvation was monumentally miniscule and simple: *'And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. ²⁹ Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹ And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,** and thy house. ³² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.'* Acts 16:27 Simple! No keeping the Law is involved at all!

Peter is still ready to lay upon these Gentiles the yoke of bondage, which is the Law, which neither Peter nor any other of the Apostles had ever been able to keep resulting in their own righteousness, in their own being accepted by Him. Remember what Peter said, in fact gainsaying what God had just told him: 'I have never eaten anything common or unclean!' continuing to think that he had been making himself more acceptable to God... Peter continues to be thick-headed!

This is the importance of studying Acts: seeing the transition of understanding that the Old Will and Testament, the yoke of the Law, was now done away in favor of the New Will and Testament, the clear understanding that God's favor and salvation have always been only according to His Grace and Mercy, according to belief in His Word. Peter doesn't understand it yet but eventually he will, thanks to Paul and his having been taught, in Heaven, by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself.

The main purpose of the Old Will and Testament, the Law, was first, to reveal God in His absolute Holiness and Perfection as well as revealing the absolute sinfulness of man. 1500 years later, God finally revealed Himself fully in the Lord Jesus Christ Who came under the Law; all that He did and all that He preached, again, revealed the absolute Holiness and Perfection of God and the impossibility of man's ability to conform to God's demand of Holiness and Perfection.

When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He wasn't giving man a roadmap to perfection, He wasn't being the Example Who could be emulated; He was, and is, perfection, Itself, which cannot be equaled; it can only be imputed through the Grace and Mercy of God, but that, only after man's debt of sin had been fully paid through Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection as the perfect Man, the perfect Sacrifice worthy to pay for all our sin and to then bring us to God with our being fully worthy to be in God's Holy Presence:

'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' 2 Cor 5:21 His Righteousness is imputed to us while our sinfulness was imputed to Him!

'Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' Heb 4:14

Jesus said: *'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'* Matt 5:48

He laid before us, God's required standard which any honest person immediately recognizes as being impossible but He was speaking prophetically of Himself; He would be perfect in our stead. God, Himself would make the impossible not only possible but, in fact, certain for His chosen Elect. He would cause it to be reality in those He had chosen: first, He chose us for Himself from the foundation of the World. Next, He gave us to His Son Who would then keep us secure while not losing even one of us. Then, He revealed Himself to each of us, individually; then He took it upon Himself to give us His gifts of repentance and faith to believe; then He imputed to us His Own Righteousness while giving us Eternal Life.

He said, *'Be Perfect as I Am Perfect!'* Then, He caused the impossibility to become the certain reality.

This is the New Will and Testament and we are the sole beneficiaries of all His eternal riches; this is what Peter does not yet fully understand but soon, Paul will understand and write it out clearly for us to know and to confidently embrace as our True Hope as we wait for His coming for us, in the Rapture, our Blessed Hope.

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

Peter is telling these Gentiles that God sent His Word to Israel. Jesus said: *'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'* Matt 15:24

When He sent the disciples out to preach: *'These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* Matt 10:5

When Jesus came, He preached the 'Gospel of the Kingdom:' *'From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* Matt 4:17

He offered the promised Kingdom and Himself as King but it and He were rejected; He was crucified. Then the message became: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.' This Gospel of Grace then went out to all the World as God began to fulfill His Eternal Plan of calling to Himself His Elect from every nation, tribe and tongue. Now Peter will begin to understand and he will begin to reach out to Gentiles.

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

Peter acknowledges that these Gentiles have heard of Jesus of Nazareth and His miracles.

Verse 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: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; ⁴¹ Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.'*

We were with Him the entire time and we saw all that He did; we are true witnesses; you can and should believe all that we are about to tell you... We are witnesses to His Resurrection from the dead! He was raised up into a human, physical body; we ate and drank with Him; He is not merely a spirit

Verse 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.'*

Here, then, is the heart of every man's responsibility before God. Every man knows that he will die and that he will eventually stand before the Lord Jesus Christ as Holy and Righteous Judge; every man who is living and every man who has died; all are guilty before God and every man stands condemned unless chosen and saved! Many seem to believe that if they simply pretend to disbelieve it they will be excused because of ignorance but it is this realization, the fear of this realization which causes him to push it from his mind... if he would but turn to the Judge in repentance and faith, he would be delivered from sin, bondage and death...

'... that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' Heb 2:14 ... through fear of death!

Verse 43: *'To him (Jesus Christ) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in*

him shall receive remission of sins.'

All the prophets looked forward to God's promised Deliverer; from God's first promise in the Garden, of the One Who would bruise the serpent's seed's head, through to and including John the Baptist, they all pointed to His first coming and most looked forward to His second coming... first, in the Rapture, and then in His physical return at Armageddon. All the prophets, all of God's Word points to and reveals God Himself as revealed in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

All these, of Cornelius' family, friends and servants... they all believed already. Peter has not given them a 'plan of salvation;' he hasn't given an invitation to come forward; God had chosen every one of these gathered and His Holy Spirit fell on all of them just as He had at Pentecost.

Verse 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. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.'*

The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were astonished! Again, they still believed that Gentiles were excluded from this work of God which they assumed was simply the next step in Judaism... to be a real Christian, you had to be Jewish... period. But God, as always, had other plans, better plans to include us!

Here, then, is the birth of the Gentile Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be sure, the True Church was, at its birth, primarily Jewish; Jesus *'came unto His own but His own received Him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:'* John 1:11

These Gentiles are willingly and eagerly receiving Him and believing on His Name. These are the beginnings of the *'other sheep of other pastures'* which the Father had chosen and given to His Son Who will not lose even one! He had said, *'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.'* John 10:16

'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out... ³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day... ⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.' John 6:37

To prove the legitimacy of these Gentile believers, God gave them all of His Holy Spirit and caused the very same miraculous signs which had accompanied His inauguration of the nascent Jewish True Church at Pentecost. God gives His Holy Spirit to every person He has chosen to draw to Himself in faith.

The Jews from Jerusalem are all amazed and, yet, will still disbelieve that Gentiles are fully equal children of God; later, we will see Peter continuing to act as though Gentiles are second class citizens...

Verse 47: *'Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.'*

These Gentiles are now saved by God's Grace through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit and hungrily ready to learn all they can for as long as they can keep Peter there to teach them.

Acts 11:1: *'And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ² And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, ³ Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.'* ... these people!!

Here we go! They heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God... did they rejoice?... did they praise God for His Love, Grace and Mercy?... did they offer to do whatever they could to further the Gospel out to the World? No! These selfish, unloving, unmerciful descendants of the Pharisees contended with Peter; they argued and accused him of the terrible crime of going in to Gentiles and even eating with them... what an ungrateful lot of louts! Ungrateful for all that Jesus Christ had done for them and now demanding that the same Salvation by God's Grace be withheld from the Gentiles!

People bemoan that today's Church is not like the Church in Acts... Praise God that we are not!... even though we often are... so now Peter has to explain himself to these...

Verse 4: *'But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, ⁵ I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: ⁶ Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. ⁸ But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. ⁹ But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. ¹⁰ And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. ¹² And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: ¹³ And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; ¹⁴ Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. ¹⁵ And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. ¹⁷ Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*

Did they all, then, rejoice and praise God?

Verse 18a: *'When they heard these things, they held their peace...*

'They held their peace...' That phrase doesn't usually mean, 'they saw the light and changed their minds...' It indicates that they simply stopped saying what was in their hearts. As in a marriage ceremony: 'Speak now or forever hold your peace...' If you have something to say and have the courage to say it... then say it or shutup! Now, the remainder of this verse does indicate that they '*glorified God*' but it sounds to me like it was half-hearted at best: *'...and (they) glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.'* so... we accept it, if we must... but we still wonder what in the world was God thinking!? Gentiles!!

Verse 18b: *'...and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.'*
It almost sounds like they 'grudgingly' glorified God...

Verse 19: *'Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, **preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.**'*

Even then, after this astounding chapter in the life of the New True Church, they continue preaching only to Jews... It's going to be left to Paul to fully take the Gospel of God's Grace out to the Gentile World...

The failure of the early Church to reach out to Gentiles is not necessarily the result of hatred and prejudice; it's understandable; Jesus told His disciples that He had come primarily to Israel and He never clearly explained to them His plan for the Church to include His Elect from all over the World. They didn't know enough, yet; God's plan was to use an 'outsider,' a man who had never traveled with Jesus and the Twelve. We see here that Peter is introduced to the concept but it will take work to unlearn a lifetime of training in Israel-centric thought and practice. Paul was the outsider God planned and chose; He then took Paul up to the third Heaven where He personally taught him all the previously hidden mysteries of His Eternal Plan. And, because Paul was not 'one of them,' they were not completely open to all that God had revealed to him: 'Who is this guy to 'explain' to us... he wasn't even with us during Jesus' Ministry among us!?' Again, always remember... the Apostles were just regular humans like us all and, like us, having to constantly battle against their fleshly sin natures. These were not 'saints' along the lines of erroneous Catholic teaching but they were saints just as you and I are saints; every born again Christian who trusts exclusively in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross is a true saint of God. Paul writes to the Romans: *'... Among whom are ye also **the called of Jesus Christ:** ⁷ To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.'* Rom 1:6 We are the saints of God! So go out and be saintly!