# Peter and Cornelius (Acts 9:32-11:18)

### After Saul’s conversion, the focus of the next few sections in Acts goes back to the apostle Peter, whose ministry is still thriving. Peter made his last appearance when the Samaritans received the Spirit, but now we will see that he is involved in the greater Judean ministry by evangelizing the cities in the coast of that region. Also, in this section, we will see how the apostle is involved in the proclamation of the gospel that leads to the salvation of the first Gentile, Cornelius; this event will ignite the mission to the “remotest parts of the earth.” (1:8)

# Day One

## Peter’s Healing Ministry (9:32-43)

* The following sections deal with Peter healing Aeneas, a handicap man from Lydda and resurrecting a godly woman who is part of the believers in Joppa. Both of these miracles will serve to authenticate Peter’s ministry and as an introduction to one of the most “scandalous” encounters that an apostle ever had; a gentile by the name of Cornelius.

### Aeneas’ healing (32-35)

* In this section, we are going to observe a couple of similarities with the miracle at the temple when Peter and John healed the lame beggar in Acts 3:1-11. First, Peter heals a lame man in the name of Jesus (3:6 and 9:34). And second, because of this miracle, the gospel is authenticated in that many are hearing the good news (3:10ff and 9:35).
* V. 32 – Peter is described as “traveling through,” which means that he is has an itinerant ministry, a preaching tour. The apostle comes to the city of Lydda, (in the OT, Lod, 1 Chronicles 8:12; Ezra 2:33; Nehemiah 11:35). This city was located about a day’s journey from Jerusalem and about 12 miles from Joppa.
* V. 33-34 – In Lydda, Peter meets this man Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and had been “bedridden eight years.” Luke, being a physician, does not tell us how he came about being paralyzed, what he does tell us is that this man was confined to his bed.
  + Because of the context, it seems like Aeneas is saved, since Peter has been visiting the “saints who lived in Lydda.” (v.32).[[1]](#footnote-2)
  + Peter heals Aeneas by telling him that Jesus Christ is the one that healed him. The way this sentence is constructed indicates that Jesus Christ was actively healing him at that moment.[[2]](#footnote-3)
  + After saying this, Peter gives him two commands: “get up and make your bed.” Something that would have been impossible for Aeneas, now because of the power of Jesus Christ, is achievable. And he gets up at once.
* V. 35~ The healing of Aeneas, leads to mass conversions. How? Verse 35 says that “all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him…” Most likely those communities knew that Aeneas was unable to walk. And as those citizens witnessed this man walking around something happens: they turned to the Lord.
  + Once again, this miracle was authenticating the message that accompanied those signs and wonders.
  + Also, notice that it is not only the citizens of Lydda, but also those who lived in Sharon. This was the name of the region comprised by cities like Lydda, Joppa, and other smaller villages.
  + What Luke is doing here is using hyperbole to explain that there is a “**widening**” of the Christian mission within Judea. Also, he is preparing the reader for the next account where it shows Peter’s ministry in Joppa.[[3]](#footnote-4)

### Dorcas’ healing (36-43)

* Verse 36 shifts the attention from what happened in Lydda to Joppa, an old port city. This was located about 12 miles southwest of Lydda.
  + In this city was a disciple, whose name is given both in Aramaic (Tabitha) and in Greek (Dorcas). This follower of Christ is known as a woman who “was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.” Some details of her deeds are mentioned in v. 39, “tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make.” Apparently, she had a cottage industry that she developed to serve those in need.
* V. 37~ “And it happened at that time”—referring to the time that Peter is in Judea preaching the gospel and performing signs and miracles—Tabitha “fell sick and died.”
  + Jewish custom dictated that one must prepare the body for burial quickly, so immediately, her body is washed for burial, and she is laid in an upper room.
  + The laying on the upper room was not a common practice for the time, but the reason for this might be what is found in verse 38.
* V. 38~ The believers in Joppa, knowing that Peter is nearby (12 miles away, about a 3 hour walk from Lydda), decide to entreat him to come. The text is not clear as to what they wanted Peter to do, whether raise her from the dead or officiate a funeral, but what we do know is something urgent.
* V. 39~ Peter gets up and goes at once, when he arrives in Joppa, he is taken to Dorcas’ house where he is met by mourning widows who were ministered to by Dorcas’ charity. This scene is hopeless and despondent.
* V. 40~ In the midst of such disheartening situation, Peter takes a page out of Jesus’ miracles with Jairus’ daughter (Matthew 9:18-36; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56) and he sends everyone out of the room. Peter kneels and prays as a sign of submission to the Lord and says, “Tabitha, arise.” Polhill writes, “Jesus’ words to Jairus’s daughter were, ‘Little girl, arise,’ which [the Gospel of] Mark preserved in the original Aramaic form, “Talitha koum” (Mark 5:41). In Aramaic, Peter’s words would have been almost identical, “Tabitha koum”—only a single consonant’s difference.”[[4]](#footnote-5)
  + Luke tells us what happens next, “And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.” The miracle was done; this is how Luke shows us the completion of this wonderful event.
* V. 41a ~ “And he gave her his hand and raised her up.” Once she rose from the dead, Peter helps her up. As a devoted Jewish person, he would not have wanted to be defiled by touching a dead person, prior to this (Leviticus 21:1; Numbers 5:2; 9:6-10; 8:6; 9:33-35). It was then, and only then that he helps her up.
* V. 41b ~ “And calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.” This language is reminiscent of 1 Kings 17:23 (when Elijah raises up the son of the widow in Zarephath and gave her son back to her) and also in Luke 7:15 (when Jesus raises the son of the widow in Nain and he gave her son back to her). “In these two instances the restoration of an only son to a destitute widow was indeed a gift, and Peter’s presentation of Dorcas alive was no less a gift to the widows of Joppa.”[[5]](#footnote-6)
* V. 42~ Just like with Aeneas’ healing, the news of Tabitha’s resurrection spread throughout the Joppa—that important port city—to the end that “many believed in the Lord.” Again, signs and wonders authenticate the ministry of the apostles, and this brings many to salvation.
* V. 43~ Luke ends this story on a unexpected footnote: And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon*.* Simon the tanner is mentioned again several times in the following narrative (10:6, 17–18, 32). “Tanners were considered unclean by more scrupulous Jews because of their contact with the hides of dead animals. Peter was apparently not troubled by such concerns, but he would soon have difficulty taking the more radical step of visiting a Gentile household (cf. 10:6). He would need a series of revelations from God to move him in that direction.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

# **Day One- Questions**

1. Where was Lydda? Why is this important to our section in Acts?
2. What does it mean that they “turned to the Lord?” (v. 35)
3. How does Tabitha’s resurrection parallels that of Jairus’ daughter? (Look at Mark 5:22-43).
4. Why is it significant that Peter presents Tabitha to the widows? Is there another allusion here?

# Day Two

## Peter’s ministry to Cornelius: A Gentile (10:1-48)

* This section is of utmost importance in the book of Acts because this chapter not only deals with the salvation of the first non-proselyte Gentiles into the Christian community, but Luke also recounts it three times—here in Acts 10, again in chapter 11, and finally in 15:6-9. The extension of Christianity is not only geographical, but also cultural/ethnic.[[7]](#footnote-8)

### Cornelius’ Vision (1-8)

* Luke shifts the scene to another city, Caesarea, which was a newer town built by Herod the Great in AD 6. This place was the center of government for the Judean district. “Its population was mainly Gentile. Philip had previously gone as far as Caesarea in his evangelistic ministry (8:40), and at some stage settled there with his family (21:8–9). Paul had also stopped there on his way to Tarsus (9:30).”[[8]](#footnote-9)
* V. 1~ Luke introduces the reader to Cornelius, a Gentile, who is also a centurion, a man in command of 100 soldiers. He is also a centurion over a regiment called the “Italian cohort.” Commentators think that this “Italian cohort” was an outfit that was made up by freedman who enrolled willingly in times of need.[[9]](#footnote-10)
* V. 2~ “From the description of Cornelius as **devout** (*eusebēs*, used only here and in v. 7; 2 Peter 2:9) **and feared God** (“righteous and God-fearing,” Acts 10:22), it can be deduced he was not a full-fledged proselyte to Judaism (he had not been circumcised, 11:3), but he did worship Yahweh. Clearly, he frequented the synagogue and to the best of his knowledge and ability he observed the Old Testament Scriptures. Nevertheless, he had not entered into New Testament salvation (cf. 11:14).”[[10]](#footnote-11) He is also known as a person who is giving “alms to the Jewish people” shows his generous spirit towards those around him. And a man of prayer.
* V.3~ For a devout Jewish person, the customary hour of prayer was the ninth hour or three o’clock in the afternoon (see. Acts 3:1). However, this time as Cornelius is praying something happens, he sees a vision of an angel who addresses him by name: Cornelius!
* V.4a- Cornelius’ first response was fear. Some commentators believe that it was reverence, others that it was terror; what we do see in this response is that there was nothing normal about this vision. Also, he asked “What is it, Lord?” Cornelius does not know whom he sees and what the appearance of the heavenly being means. “The address “Lord” (κύριε) is more than a polite address: it reflects the willingness to obey any instructions that he might be given.”[[11]](#footnote-12)
* V 4b. The angel tells him that his prayers and alms had been taken by God as a memorial or as a remembrance—this is sacrificial language.[[12]](#footnote-13) However, God knew Cornelius’s heart, that he was a devout man, worshiping Him to the best of his knowledge. “Despite Cornelius’s sincerity, and devotion to the true God, he could not be saved apart from a correct understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).”[[13]](#footnote-14)
* Vs. 5-6~ The angel guides Cornelius to send for Peter who is staying in Joppa. Something noteworthy is the specificity of the directions that we find in verse 6.
* Vs. 7-8~ After the angel left him, Cornelius, at once responds by sending two of his servants and a soldier who evidently is a God-fearer “a devout soldier.” He recounts to the men what the angel said, and sends them off to Joppa to find this man of God.

### Peter’s Vision (9-16)

Luke tells us that the events we are about to read of occur the next day, while the three emissaries from Cornelius were approaching the city.

* V.9~ Peter goes up to the roof on the sixth hour (12PM) to pray. Most Jewish people prayed twice a day, however those who were devout also prayed at noon, at the sixth hour, which was known as a third time of prayer (Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10).[[14]](#footnote-15) Peter is on the rooftop; this is where is finds privacy to pray.[[15]](#footnote-16)
* V. 10~ As Peter is on the rooftop, he becomes hungry and it seems by the text that he asks for some food. While they are preparing the food, he fell into a trance.
* Vs. 11-13~ As Peter is in this trance, he does not see an angel. Instead he sees a sheet lowered down by for corners to the ground and it contained all kinds of animals, symbolizing the whole animal kingdom,[[16]](#footnote-17) both clean and unclean animals, according to the Mosaic law’s dietary restrictions. A voice came to him and instructed him to kill and eat.
* V.14~ However, Peter refuses to slaughter any of these animals and eat them. Peter says, “by no means” it is an adverb with a strong emphatic negation.[[17]](#footnote-18) The reason for Peter’s refusal to obey the voice is obvious for an observant Jew: Israel had been commanded by God never to eat anything profane or unclean.
  + “The Old Testament laws distinguished between pure (clean) and sacred (holy), and between impure (unclean) and common (profane). The term translated as ‘unholy’ [or defiled] (κοινόν) here denotes that which is ceremonially (ritually) impure and thus forbidden to Jews, as well as that which is allowed for Gentiles and thus ‘unclean.’ The term is thus used for Gentiles, who are inherently profane, as well as for animals and for food which is prohibited to Jews but permitted to Gentiles who eat animals that Jews are forbidden to eat. Thus, since Gentiles are profane these animals can be considered profane: the profane food of profane people. For Peter, forbidden animals and Gentiles are both impure and profane.”[[18]](#footnote-19)
* V.15~ The voice comes down again to Peter, ignores his allegation, and says, “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.” This voice is telling Peter that God has made all foods clean, which is reminiscent of the priests ceremoniously cleansing those who had been unclean or impure.[[19]](#footnote-20)
* V. 16 tells us that this message was so crucial that the whole event occurs 3 times! Obviously, much more than satiating Peter’s hunger; God had a massive message for him.

# **Day Two- Questions**

1. What kind of a man was Cornelius? Is this the reason why God sent Peter to preach the gospel to him?
2. How did Cornelius respond to the vision? What does that mean for the story?
3. Why did Peter refuse to obey the word from heaven regarding the animals?
4. Is there another passage in the Bible where God declared all foods clean and not defiled? ~Hint~ Mark 7:19

# Day Three

### Peter’s Visit to Cornelius (17-33)

### Peter and Cornelius’ Messengers (17-23)

* vs. 17-20 ~ After the vision ceased, Peter, still on the roof, is “greatly perplexed;” he’s at a loss and confused and pondering on the meaning of what he had heard and seen in the vision. At that time, suddenly, something surprising takes place, Cornelius’ emissaries come to the Simon the tanner’s gate, and the Spirit speaks to him by advising that he would go with them without any “misgivings” and the reason is “for I have sent them myself.”
  + It is important to note two items in these verses: 1) While Peter is deep in thought and trying to ascertain what just happened, at that very time, Cornelius’ messengers arrive. No doubt, this is by God’s design and sovereignty. 2) Before Peter speaks or even meets these men, the Spirit informs him supernaturally that these men were looking for him, and tells him to go with them without hesitation or concern. The reason has to do with God’s design and sovereignty—God sent them himself.
* Vs. 21-22~ As Peter descends from that staircase outside the home, nothing would prepare him of what he was going to do in the next few days.
  + He sees these men, introduces himself, and inquires as to the reason they were seeking him.
  + These men respond by giving Peter information regarding their employer .
    - Their employer’s name is Cornelius, a centurion- no doubt a Gentile and a man who has some power and influence.
    - He is a righteous man- he was morally upright.
    - A God-fearing man- he worships the God of Israel and lives like a Jewish person (for the most part).
    - He is well spoke of by the entire nation of the Jews- he is a man of good reputation among Peter’s people.
    - He was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from him- “Cornelius is waiting to hear the message about Jesus, Israel’s Messiah and the Savior of the world, the message that Peter has been proclaiming in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.[[20]](#footnote-21)”
* V. 23a~ At the end of this interaction, Peter obeys the Spirit’s prompting and he hosts these Gentiles by providing for the needs of food and lodging as it was customary in that culture. We are not giving much more detail on whether or not Peter is already connecting the dots between the vision he saw and what just occurred at his host’s home.

* + “The conclusion of this encounter is intriguing. *V. 23* indicates that Peter invited the three of them into Simon the tanner’s house and gave them lodging for the night. It was certainly less problematic for a Jew to invite a Gentile into his house, since there would not be the problem of non-kosher food, but nevertheless we may be meant to think that v. 23 indicates Peter is beginning to understand the message of the vision, since truly scrupulous Jews tried to avoid all such contacts with Gentiles. There may also be some intended irony here, since Peter had earlier protested his scrupulousness about food, all the while staying in the house of a man whose trade made him unclean!”[[21]](#footnote-22)

### Peter and Cornelius share their visions (23b-33)

* V. 23b~ Peter leaves the next day with the three men and he takes some of the “brethren from Joppa” we find out in 11:12 that Peter took six brothers from Joppa. Peter is taking more than just companions; Peter is taking witnesses with him that will corroborate the Spirit’s work in that Gentile’s home.
* V. 24~ After spending a night on the road (they had traveled around 37 miles) they arrive to Caesarea. Cornelius had invited family and friends to gather, which later will become crucial. One commentator says, “Cornelius was evidently convinced that the divine message that he hoped to receive from Peter was relevant not only for himself but for other people as well. Luke’s narrative gives the impression that Cornelius and his relatives and close friends were gathered in Cornelius’s house, ready to hear Peter speak as soon as he arrives. Cornelius’s encounter with God’s angel has made him eager to encounter God’s messenger and hear from him God’s words (vv. 5, 22).”[[22]](#footnote-23)
* V. 25-26 ~ As Peter walks in, “Cornelius met him and fell at his feet and worshipped him.” The centurion fell at Peter’s feet as a sign of reverence and admiration, and worshipped him.[[23]](#footnote-24) Peter immediately stops him and rejects this display of veneration by saying, “I too am just a man.”
* Vs. 27-29~ As Peter enters the house, he sees the many that had gathered and he reminds him of how abnormal this situation is for a Jewish person.
  + Notice verse 28- “how unlawful it is…” A Jewish person because of his religion was not allowed to **associate with a foreigner or visit him**. Now in the Mosaic Law there was no such prohibition, but his became a later addition to the tradition. The only thing that was forbidden was to eat unclean foods.[[24]](#footnote-25)
  + “yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean”- Peter now gets to the interpretation of the vision that he saw in verses 11-16; not calling unclean what God had not called unclean, in this case Peter is referring to people and not to food.
  + And in verse 29, Peter explains that the reason he came without “raising any objection” was because God had shown him that he could not call “any man unholy or unclean.”
  + And then Peter asks, why am I here? He knows there is a spiritual reason, but his question is a prompt to get Cornelius to tell him about his encounter with the angel.
* V. 30-32~ Cornelius immediately recounts for Peter what happened those “four days ago.” The retelling of this event is almost verbatim to the events in verses 5-6. Focusing the attention on the words of the angel and therefore highlighting that the initiative was divine.[[25]](#footnote-26)
* V. 33~ “Everyone there, however, *including* Peter, was certain of one thing: *God* had brought them together.”[[26]](#footnote-27)
* To summarize:
  + Cornelius had sent for Peter because the angel told him to do so.
  + Peter had come because the voice from heaven told him to go with those men that came where he was lodging.
  + Those who were family and friends were there because their host had invited them.
  + Even those 9 men that traveled with Peter (3 gentiles and 6 believers) were there for a reason.
* There was no mistaking the fact that God had gathered everyone there. Now, Peter had a message which had been “commanded by the Lord” and those present were ready to hear it.
  + Kistemaker writes, “What an opportunity to preach God’s Word! What an audience! What an intense desire to listen to the gospel! What a joy and satisfaction for Peter to proclaim it! Cornelius asserts that this gathering of people has come to hear the Word of God and for that reason everyone in the audience stands in God’s sacred presence. That is, God is going to speak to them through the mouth of his servant, the apostle Peter.”[[27]](#footnote-28)

# **Day Three- Questions**

1. How do you see the sovereignty of God in verses 17-20?
2. How do Cornelius’ men describe their employer? What is significant this?
3. Why did Peter start off his conversation with those gathered in Cornelius’s house in such a peculiar fashion?

# Day Four

### Peter’s Sermon (34-43)

* Peter’s sermon in Acts 10:34-43 is the first sermon that is directed towards a Gentile audience. Though the address seems similar to the others sermons preached in 2:14-40 and 3:11-26, this sermon has information about Jesus’ ministry after the resurrection. It is noteworthy, as Constable says, that this sermon has no direct quotations from the Old Testament, though there are many allusions to it.[[28]](#footnote-29)
* V. 34~ “Opening his mouth, Peter said:” This was a way to introduce an important word, a “weighty utterance” (Matthew 5:2; 13:35 [quoting Psalm 78:2]; Acts 8:35).[[29]](#footnote-30)
  + Based on Simon Peter’s vision and the grace that Cornelius was shown by his own vision and revelation directing him to Joppa to find the apostle, Peter finally understands that God does not show favoritism, and because of this, believers should follow His example.
* V. 35~ God does not show partiality; what He is interested in is someone who fears Him and does what is right before him.
  + Note the phrase “every nation” that goes in consonance with the previous statement that God does not show partiality, God accepts Gentiles and Jews alike.
  + However, v. 35 says that God’s acceptance is predicated on fear and obedience. We know that Cornelius, though doing acts of a religious person, was not accepted based on his morality or his prayerfulness, so what does this verse mean?
    - It does not appear that Peter is talking about Cornelius in particular or even an unbeliever; rather he is saying that there is a level playing field between Jews and Gentiles. You are not “in” just because you are Jewish and you are not “out” just because you are a Gentile. Peter is highlighting that God welcomes every nation that fears him and obeys him.
* V. 36~ After Peter’s introductory comments regarding God’s heart towards all nations, he begins to preach the gospel by asserting that Jesus is the one sent by God to the Israelites to preach peace.
  + This “peace” is not the absence of hostilities, but rather this is associated with *shalom* a period of well-being linked to an eschatological era with the coming of Messiah.[[30]](#footnote-31)
  + In this way Peter is saying that first this peace was announced to the Jews, but now this very Jesus is “Lord of all.”- Both Jews and Gentiles. [[31]](#footnote-32)
    - **Lord of all** was a title that Peter borrows (used for a pagan deity). This title is later appropriated for Jesus by the early church.[[32]](#footnote-33)
  + Longenecker summarizes the verse in this fashion, “So Peter’s sermon in Cornelius’s house concerns (1) a new revelational understanding of God’s message of peace, (2) which is given the sons of Israel as its primary recipients, but (3) which also includes Gentiles under the rubric of Christ as “Lord of all,” with “all” understood personally as connoting Christ’s lordship over both Jews and Gentiles.[[33]](#footnote-34)”
* Vs. 37-38~ Peter begins to describe Jesus’ ministry in all Judea. He even expects them to know not only who Jesus was, but also what He did. Some commentators have argued, rightly, that Jesus was a phenomenon of sorts; a Jewish Man who was performing miracles and teaching large crowds would not have been gone unnoticed.
  + Also in v.38, Peter speaks of Jesus being anointed by the Spirit at His baptism and that his miracles were connected to his baptism. Luke speaks of this in his Gospel (Luke 4:18ff he is quoting Isaiah 61:1ff).
* V. 39a~ Peter makes the point that he is a witness of “all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.” This is Peter’s apostolic witness (Acts 1:8), in **the land of the Jews**, meaning both Galilee and Judea and later he mentions Jerusalem[[34]](#footnote-35). This is the fact that the apostles were witness of Jesus’ ministry of teaching, miracles and even as we see in the next phrases his death and resurrection.
* V. 39b-40a~ The apostles were also witnesses of Jesus’ death and resurrection.
  + “They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.” Peter blames the Jews for killing Jesus, he emphasizes the terrible way in which He was put to death. Hanging on a cross was not only shameful, but horrific as well[[35]](#footnote-36).
  + However, the apostle also mentions the resurrection. God was the one that raised Jesus from the dead on the third day and the apostles were witness of that very fact.
* V. 40b-41~ God caused Jesus to be seen by a selected group of people who not only corroborated the fact that he was alive, but also ate and drank with Him as proof that he was alive!
  + “He undoubtedly recounts that Jesus broke bread with the two men from Emmaus (Luke 24:30), ate a piece of broiled fish in the upper room (Luke 24:42–43), and had breakfast with seven disciples on the beach of the lake of Galilee (John 21:13). Peter provides absolute proof that Jesus’ physical body has been raised from the dead and that the Lord is alive. The comforting assurance Peter proclaims is that the apostles have fellowship with Jesus not only during his earthly life but also after his resurrection (Matt. 28:20).[[36]](#footnote-37)”
* Vs. 42-43~ Peter refers to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), which Jesus gave before His ascension. And later he highlights that this “preaching” would either lead to judgement (v.42) or salvation (v.43).
  + “The key phrase is, **Everyone who believes in Him**. This Greek construction consists of a present participle with an article, which is almost the equivalent of a noun (in this case “every believer in Him”). The key element in salvation is faith, belief in Christ. This message of **forgiveness of sins** (cf. 2:38; 5:31; 13:38; 26:18) **through** faith in the Messiah was spoken of by the prophets (e.g., Isa. 53:11; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:25–26).”[[37]](#footnote-38)

### The Spirit’s Coming upon the Gentiles (44-48)

* The Spirit was poured out on those Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4), on the Samaritans in Samaria (Acts 8:15-17), and on the Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10:44-46). Thus, fulfilling Jesus commission to the Apostles in Acts 1:8.
* Vs. 44-46a~ Peter’s sermon is cut short like in Solomon’s portico (Acts 4:1), but this time it wasn’t the temple guards that stopped his gospel presentation, it was the Holy Spirit as He was being poured out on those who were hearing the message. Those who had accompanied Peter were witnesses of what occurred.
  + Peter had been a witness to the Spirit’s work in Jerusalem and Samaria, but now, in Cornelius’ house, he observes this new outpouring indicating that these Gentiles are welcomed into God (35).
  + Those circumcised believers are witnesses of another miracle, so much so that they are astonished and what causes this astonishment is the fact that they are hearing them speak in tongues, these languages that were not a part of their normal speech. This is a Gentile Pentecost!
  + Contable writes, “Probably Peter and his Jewish companions heard these Gentiles praising God in Aramaic, which these Gentiles would not have known previously, since Aramaic was a language that the Jews spoke and understood. The Jews present would have understood Aramaic immediately, and they would have recognized that the ability to speak in an unstudied language was an evidence of Spirit baptism, as it was at Pentecost. This is further evidence that "tongues" were languages.”[[38]](#footnote-39)
* Vs. 46b-47~ As Peter is witnessing another Pentecost, he speaks and realizes that God is the one causing this event. He discerns that they are believer, and though they were not circumcised, he calls for them to be baptized.
  + Just like the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:36, nothing prevented theses uncircumcised believers from being baptized. This was a public declaration that they had in fact believed in Christ.
* Vs. 48~ So Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus and they asked him to stay on for a few days. If these had not been truly converted Peter would not have stayed.
* As a summary of this unit: This section is a significant turning point in the book of Acts. Here Luke shows how God chooses Peter to preach the gospel to gentiles and they joined the church based on their faith, not ethnicity or circumcision. The ground is ready for missionary journeys to take place and for Christians communities to sprout throughout the Roman Empire.

# **Day Four- Questions**

1. Look at verse 35. Is Peter saying here that someone is rewarded with God’s acceptance based on his/her fear and obedience of God?
2. Why did Peter mention being a witnessed of Jesus’ ministry? How is Jesus’ ministry part of the gospel? (look at verses 39-41)
3. Why was it significant that the Holy Spirit was poured out over the Gentiles?
4. What was the outward sign of the Spirit coming on the Gentiles? And why was it important?

# Day Five

## Peter’s Report in Jerusalem

* Luke, being a historian, records for Theophilus the effect that the conversion of Cornelius and his friends (all Gentiles) had in the early church. In these verses, we can observe the honesty and integrity of this historian as he addresses a tremendously difficult topic. Thus, in this section he describes the Jerusalem leadership’s criticism of Peter and at the same time, Luke articulates the apostles’ account of what the Lord has done in the Gentiles. Finally, we see the leadership’s submission to the Lord’s miraculous work of salvation with those outside the Law.

### Accusation against Peter (1-3)

* News of what had transpired in Caesarea had, most likely, reached believers all over Judea. One could imagine that it was met with mixed responses. One such response was recorded for us in verses 1-3.
* V.1-3~ These events take place sometime after what we saw in chapter 10. When Peter is back in Jerusalem.
  + V.1~ Both the apostles and brothers hear of the news that now Gentiles have repented. Observe the phrase at the end of verse 1 “had received the word of God.” This is synonymous with the gospel, the apostolic preaching of God’s word. So, there was NO doubt that these Gentiles were actually believers and part of the church.
  + V. 2~ Peter received criticism from “those who were circumcised.” These are not unsaved Jews but Jewish believers. Also, it is important to know that this phrase does not seem to encompass all Jewish believers. Rather this is a group of them that seems to come to confront the apostle. As a footnote, these are believers that most likely, by conviction, are following Moses’ Law.
  + These are rumblings of factions in the early church. Incidentally, I don’t think these are the famed Judaizers based on their response in verse 18; however, one can understand that the Judaizers will become a problem which Paul has to address in the book of Galatians.
  + V.3~ The accusation against Peter is clear: “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” Apparently, Peter stayed with them for a few days (cf. 10:48) and had his meals with Cornelius and the new Gentile believers. Luke does not go into detail as to what had occurred during that time. But these circumcised Jews were bothered by the mere thought of Peter eating unclean food.
  + “The primary problem was not his preaching to Gentiles but his eating with them (cf. Mark 2:16; Luke 15:2; Gal. 2:12). This gives even greater significance to Peter’s vision (Acts 10:9–16). Eating with someone was a mark of acceptance and fellowship (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11). This problem could have caused a serious break in the church.[[39]](#footnote-40)”

### Peter’s Testimony (4-17)

* Peter’s testimony is divided in different sections where he recounts his vision (5-7), his response to the vision (8-10), and the trip to Cornelius’ house (11-14). He also talks about the outpouring of the Spirit in these believers (15-16), and finally, he attributes it all to God (17).
* V. 4~ Luke narrates that Peter answered and he proceeded “to explain in orderly sequence.”
  + Peter “explains” (conveying information by careful elaboration.[[40]](#footnote-41)) in an “orderly sequence,” which could be translated as “step by step.” This actually means that he carefully tells the story and draws out the significance of the events. This is what Luke’s purpose was in Luke 1, he wanted to tell the story after he had researched completely how all these events had occurred.
* Vs. 5-7~ Peter leaves out some details, but he shares the narrates the experience of seeing a vision in the roof. It is important to notice the detail in which Peter tells his vision, he leaves out that he was hungry, that he was in Simon the tanner’s house, and other things. However, he does make sure he recounts what exactly was on the sheet that came down from the sky—since the accusation is about food.
* Vs. 8-10~ In these verses, Peter narrates the conversation with the voice that was asking him to kill and eat something that has been prohibited by the Law to do. He also relates what the voice says verbatim, “what God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.”
* Vs. 11-12~ Peter now moves on to talk about how it came about that he ended up in Caesarea. He speaks about these three men that had been “sent to” him. He does not mention Cornelius’ name in this account. Then he focuses on the Spirit leading him to Caesarea and the fact that six men accompanied him.
  + In verses 13-14, finally Peter talks about Cornelius’ vision, without using his name. Even the angel’s conversation with Cornelius is shortened only focusing on Peter’s message of salvation for his household. “The significance of the entire event has been boiled down to the salvation of a Gentile household.”[[41]](#footnote-42)
* Vs. 15-16~ Peter shares what happened when he started to preach the gospel; the Spirit fell on these Gentiles.
  + Look at the words “just as” in verse 15. Peter is equating what happened in Caesarea to what had occurred in Jerusalem at Pentecost! Same outcome, different event and different people. As an example, the apostles had spoken in tongues (2:4) and so did Cornelius and his friends (10:46).
  + In verse 16, Peter explains that at that time he remembered something Jesus had said in Acts 1:5. Clearly, he is referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not saying that water baptism was not necessary, but he is equating these two events to make one point: the Gentiles are part of the church. Both Jews and Gentiles are part of the same family.
* V. 17~ Peter ends his testimony by asserting that it was not he who did any of these things that he described in the previous verses. It was not he who gave Cornelius the vision or poured the Spirit on the Gentiles, it was all God. So, there is only one fitting conclusion: “Who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” If God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, if he gave them both the same gift of the Spirit, then who was Peter, and by extension, who are you circumcised Jews to stand in God’s way?

### The Church’s Acceptance and Joy over God’s Plan of Salvation (18)

* Peter’s testimony proved to be a clear reminder that God is the one who saves and the response from these men accusing Peter tells us that they believed that as well.
* V.18~ Peter’s argument seemed to appeased these accusers. They first quieted down and later glorified God.
  + They had no more objections. They with Peter had to remind themselves that it was God who had done this amazing work; a second Pentecost!
  + They, instead, glorified God. “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.” In short, they credited God for giving them the gift of salvation. In the same way they themselves were saved, God granted the Gentiles true repentance that leads to life.
* This is a momentous section; the first Gentiles are saved and are validated by the outpouring of the Spirit. However, there are some unanswered questions that the incipient church will have to deal with: Do they need to be circumcised? What about the Law of Moses? Should we follow a Jewish lifestyle? What do we do when pagans want to repent? Many questions that they will deal with in Acts, but for now, let’s enjoy God’s work on the first Gentiles!

# **Day Five- Questions**

1. Who are these “who were circumcised?” (11:1) What was the issue they had with Peter?
2. Compare the actual account with Peter’s version of the events. Are there any differences? If so, why did he focus on some things and leave out others?
3. What was Peter’s final words in verse 16? What do they mean? What is this same gift?
4. What does it mean that they “quieted down?” (18) What was their final response?

1. Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 480. If the verb is linked with the preceding geographical term, Aeneas may not have been a believer. The lame beggar in Jerusalem who was healed by Peter (3:1–8) was presumably not a believer; since 3:11 states that he attached himself to Peter and John, and since a corresponding statement is missing in 9:32–35, the lame man in Lydda is more likely to have been already a believer. For the narrative as told by Luke, the man’s spiritual status makes no difference. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Longenecker, 381. – “Peter’s words, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat,” are recorded in the present tense by Luke. They should be understood neither as a consummative perfect (“Jesus Christ has healed you”) nor as a durative present (“Jesus Christ is engaged in healing you”) but as an aoristic present (“this moment Jesus Christ heals you”).” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. I borrowed some of the language from Longenecker, 381 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Polhill, 248. “In the Aramaic churches who cherished the story of Tabitha, the similarity would not be missed. In the footsteps of his Master, and through the power of his Master (the *prayer* shows that), Peter worked the same miracle of “resurrection.” As with Jairus’s daughter, the widow’s son at Nain, Lazarus, and Dorcas, it was not a matter of resurrection but of resuscitation, of temporary restoration of life. But all the miracles of raising from the dead are in a real sense “signs,” pointers to the one who has power even over death and is himself the resurrection and the life for all who believe and trust in him.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Polhill, 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Peterson, 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Toussaint, 379. He speaks of how this chapter is significant and repeated because they are are fulfillment on Christ’s Word “The geographic extension of the gospel in Acts is an initial fulfillment of Jesus’ words in Matthew 8:11: “Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places … in the kingdom of heaven.”” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Peterson, 326. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Peterson, 326. [Barrett 1994, 499. There were no legionary troops in Judea ad 6–66, but the Roman governors commanded auxiliary forces. The ‘Italian Regiment’ would presumably have been so called because it was originally raised in Italy. Inscriptional evidence indicates the presence of an Italian cohort in Syria in ad 69, and possibly earlier. Cf. Witherington 1998, 346] [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Toussaint, 379. Also see Curtis Vaughan, *Acts*, Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2009), 71. [Cornelius’ *religious character* is described as follows: “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (v. 2, asv). “Devout” men who “feared God” were Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel and took part in synagogue services without becoming full-fledged proselytes to the Jewish religion. Sometimes they were called “proselytes of the gate.” Such persons were uncircumcised and were therefore looked upon by the Jews as unclean.] [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Schnabel, 486. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Pollhill quotes several verses (Lev 2:2, 9, 16; cf. Phil 4:18; Heb 13:15ff) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/mntacts2?ref=Bible.Ac10.1-8&off=4353&ctx=orial+before+God.%EF%BB%BF%E2%80%9D+~God+knew+Cornelius%E2%80%99s), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. The times for private prayer in Israel were morning, noon and evening. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Hendricksen writes about this, “Palestinian houses in those days had outside staircases that led to flat roofs, where the people could either sleep during the hot summer nights or, in the case of Peter, enjoy the cool breezes from the Mediterranean Sea during the day. The house of the tanner apparently lacked an upper room. Peter ascends the roof at noon that day for the purpose of spending time in private prayer.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Polhill says that “This is the same threefold division of the animal world as found in the Noah account of Gen 6:20 and the creation account of Gen 1:30. Cf. Rom 1:23.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Cheng and Stutzman [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Schnabel, 490–491. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Schnabel, 491 “The verb “made clean” (ἐκαθάρισεν) is the term used in the LXX for the pronouncements of the priests concerning persons which had been impure and which, after the appropriate purification, were then declared clean (cf. Lev 13:6, 13, 17). [Cf. Luke 4:27; 5:12–13; 7:22; 17:14, 17, concerning the healing of people with leprosy; cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 184.]” [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Schnabel, 494. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Witherington III, 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Schnabel, 495. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Polhill. [Such behavior would not have been unusual for a Gentile like Cornelius. Prostrating oneself at the feet of another was a common Near Eastern gesture of respect, and Cornelius surely identified Peter with his angelic vision and may well have seen him as more than an ordinary man. Bowing as an act of reverence is particularly frequent in Matthew: cf. 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; cf. Luke 8:41; Acts 9:4; 22:7.] [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Schnabel writes, “But contact with Gentiles was always a potential source of moral defilement for Jews (see on vv. 15–16). A Jewish text exhorts its readers, “Keep yourself separate from the nations, and do not eat with them; and do not imitate their rites, nor associate yourself with them” (*Jub.* 22:16). A devout Jew had the following options when they were invited by a Gentile: he can refuse to enter the house of a Gentile and disapprove of all table fellowship with Gentiles; he can accept the invitation and bring his own food to the house of the Gentile; he can eat at the table of Gentiles with the explicit or implicit understanding that the food that was served was not prohibited in the Torah and was not tainted by idolatry; he can eat only certain foods from the menu provided by the Gentile host. Some have argued that a strict position was the norm, certainly among Palestinian Jews, but also among diaspora Jews. Others regard the situation as more fluid, particularly in the diaspora, allowing for the possibility that Jews could eat with Gentiles without transgressing the Jewish law.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Schnabel, 498. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Polhill, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Constable, 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Longenecker, 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Peterson, 336. “There is also an echo of Isaiah 52:7, with its promise that someone would come ‘proclaiming peace’ *(euangelizomenos eirēnēn)* to God’s people. In its fulfillment, that long-expected *peace* has now been proclaimed ‘*through Jesus Christ*’ (cf. Lk. 1:67–79 [Zechariah’s prophecy]; 2:14 [the heavenly host]; 4:16–21 [Jesus’ preaching]). Peace in Luke-Acts is a synonym for salvation, as it is in Isaiah 52:7 (cf. Lk. 2:14, 29–32; 19:42), involving release from the judgment of God through the forgiveness of sins and freedom to serve God in holiness and righteousness (cf. Lk. 1:67–79).” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Peterson, 336. “However, since Jesus is *Lord of all* (cf. 2:36 and Rom. 10:12–13, which both apply Jl. 2:32 to Jesus), his message of peace is for all who fear him (10:34–35). Jews and Gentiles who are reconciled to God through Christ can therefore experience a new peace with one another in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:14–18). The overall perspective of Luke-Acts is that ‘the messianic lordship of Jesus, which brings peace to the Jewish people in fulfillment of scriptural promises, applies to all peoples, for they are invited to share with Israel in this messianic peace’.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Longenecker, 393. This was properly a pagan title for deity (cf. Cadbury, BC, 5:361–62), but it was rebaptized by the early Christians to become an appropriate christological title (cf. Col 1:15–20). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Longenecker, 393. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Luke’s account of Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem in Luke 19:28–21:38 is more extensive than Matthew’s and Mark’s; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 465. On the Twelve as “witnesses” commissioned by Jesus to give testimony about him and his ministry see Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:41; 13:31; 22:15; 26:16. Cf. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 93–147. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Schnabel writes, “The expression “hanging him on a cross” alludes to Deut 21:22–23 and thus to God’s curse on executed people who are hanged on a tree (see on 5:30), the significance of which Peter may have explained to Cornelius.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Kistemaker and Hendriksen, 395–396. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Toussaint, 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Constable, 249. “"Peter did not pray for them that they might receive the Spirit nor did he lay hands upon them. There is no indication that Cornelius himself prayed to gain this experience. In fact, he probably didn't know about the phenomenon of speaking in tongues (note his previous silence and that of Peter on this subject)." Gromacki [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Toussaint, 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Cf. BDAG, s.v. ἐκτίθημι 2, “to convey information by careful elaboration, *explain, expound*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Parsons,160–161. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)