**Come Home to Community**

**Acts 10:27-48** (NLT)

**27So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled.**

**28Peter told them, “You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean. 29So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me.”**

**30Cornelius replied, “Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o’clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. 31He told me, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God! 32Now send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.’ 33So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you.”**

**34Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. 35In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. 36This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. 38And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.**

**39“And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, 40but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, 41not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. 43He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”**

**44Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. 45The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. 46For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God.**

**Then Peter asked, 47“Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” 48So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.**

This is a welcome home story. We love those kinds of stories where the people move toward home.

1. **God is searching out and inviting every kind of person**

**Vs 1-3 In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. 2He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. 3One afternoon about three o’clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. “Cornelius!” the angel said.**

This is Caesarea – intimidating place

Who would have thought that a Roman army officer would be drawn toward Christ.

He appeared to be moving toward something more than the typical Roman superstitions. Caesar

Cornelius feared God and gave to charity and regularly prayed to God.

Interesting that he was a Roman army officer. He was a seeker? Or God was already seeking him? What was he? Being a Roman officer it is a surprising background – he is there to enforce Rome on the people – the almighty hand of Rome. He would have commanded 100 men. He may have gone back to Rome and the good news spread.

Peter was staying at a leatherworkers house….could he already be getting past his Jewish prejudices and staying with someone who works with dead animals?

Joppa is 32 miles from Ceasarea

1. **Entrance is through a relationship with Jesus and not religion**

**Vs 36. 36This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all…. 43He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”**

It is Good News that we don’t get in through our religious rules.

1. **The Holy Spirit totally transforms people and communities**

**Vs 44-4644Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. 45The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. 46For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God.**

What a new world they lived in after the Holy Spirit was moving among them.

Peter needed changing. He needed to be transformed. Here he was – having been touched by the Holy Spirit – led out of prison, performed miracles…and he was still prejudiced against non jewish people.

If there is a people group that you are

Invite the Holy Spirit

Life Notes:

***A Gentile God-fearer (10:1–11:18).*** It would be hard to overestimate the importance of Peter’s encounter with Cornelius. Peter was the leading apostle. This incident convinced him that God was including the Gentiles in His kingdom. As a result, Peter later became the defender of Paul’s Gentile mission (Acts 15:7–11). Luke emphasized the importance of this event. He emphasized the significance of Peter’s and Cornelius’s visions by repeating them no fewer than three times in this passage. He presents the incident in his characteristic dramatic fashion. It can be outlined in seven scenes.

*1. The Vision of Cornelius (10:1–8)*. Cornelius is identified as a Roman soldier, residing at Caesarea, and a particularly pious “God-fearer.” God-fearers were Gentiles who devoutly believed in God and attended the synagogue but who had not become full converts (“proselytes”) to Judaism. Cornelius had a vision of an angel who directed him to send to Joppa for Peter.

*2. The Vision of Peter (10:9–16)*. Peter’s vision was more graphic—of a sheet descending to earth filled with all sorts of animals, both clean and unclean. Three times he was instructed to “kill and eat” of these animals. To do so was to break the Jewish food laws. It went against everything Peter had been taught from his childhood. How could a heavenly voice direct him to break the food laws?

*3. Peter’s Visit to Cornelius (10:17–23)*. Peter’s vision coincided with the arrival of the messengers from Cornelius. Directions from the Spirit to accompany them served to convince Peter that God had something special in store at Cornelius’s house. Next day Peter went with the messengers on the thirty-mile journey to Caesarea.

*4. Shared Visions (10:24–33)*. When Peter arrived at Cornelius’s house, both he and the centurion shared their visions with one another in some detail. The narrative is quite repetitious, but this serves to underline the importance of the events.

*5. Peter’s Witness (10:34–43)*. Convinced by his vision that God considered no one “impure or unclean” Peter now proceeded to share the gospel with Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles. It is Peter’s third and final major sermon in Acts. The sermon basically was a summary of Jesus’ ministry, emphasizing the significance of His death and resurrection. What was really striking about it was Peter’s opening statement which recognized that God accepts people of all races and nations.

*6. The Impartiality of the Spirit (10:44–48)*. Peter didn’t finish his sermon. The Spirit descended on the gathering of Gentiles, who outwardly demonstrated the Spirit’s presence by their ecstatic speech. Recognizing their possession of the Spirit, Peter arranged for their baptism. Now he fully understood his vision. He had no trouble accepting the hospitality of his Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ, although it surely involved some relaxation of the kosher food laws.

*7. Endorsement of the Witness to the Gentiles (11:1–18)*. The final scene takes place in Jerusalem, where Peter was questioned by some of the more conservative Jewish Christians about his having dined with Gentiles. Peter related the whole incident to them. Both visions are given in detail for the third time. The reader cannot miss the importance of the event. Peter’s critics could not deny the Spirit’s work, so they had to agree with Peter that God was including the Gentiles in Christ. Not all the details had been settled. The issue would arise again in the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15. But the general principle of the Gentile mission had been agreed upon. The door was now open for the mission of the Antioch church.

***Antioch’s Witness (11:19–30).*** The church of Antioch in Syria was established by some of Stephen’s fellow Hellenists who had fled the persecution in Jerusalem. Antioch was a city of Greek culture and language. The Christian Hellenists witnessed to the Jews of the city first but eventually turned to the Gentiles. They were the first Christian congregation to undertake a Gentile mission. That is probably why the name *Christian* was first used there. “Christian” is a Latinized formation and was undoubtedly used first by the Gentiles whose attention had been drawn by the Christian outreach.

Antioch’s Gentile mission came to the attention of the Jerusalem church, which sent Barnabas to check it out. Barnabas quickly determined its authenticity and joined in the outreach himself. He remembered Paul, who was himself a Greek-speaking Jew of the Dispersion, one who would be particularly suited for a ministry to Gentiles. Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Paul, and brought him to Antioch. There the two witnessed for a whole year. The Antioch outreach prepared the two for their own mission to the Gentiles, which they would soon undertake.

*Verses 27–30* relate a special project undertaken by the Antioch church. Agabus, a Christian prophet from Jerusalem, predicted that a severe famine would soon occur throughout the Roman Empire. A major famine did indeed occur at that time, during the reign of Claudius. The Antioch Christians saved up and assisted the Judean churches when the famine struck. Paul and Barnabas administered the offering. It served as a pattern for Paul, who would later undertake a major collection from his Gentile congregations for the Judean Christians.[[1]](#footnote-1)

***Preparation (vv. 1–22)*.** Before He could save the Gentiles, God had to prepare Peter to bring the message and Cornelius to hear the message. Salvation is a divine work of grace, but God works through human channels. Angels can deliver God’s messages to lost men, but they cannot preach the Gospel to them. That is our privilege—and responsibility.

Caesarea is sixty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem and thirty miles north of Joppa (Jaffa). At that time, Caesarea was the Roman capital of Judea and boasted of many beautiful public buildings. In that city lived Cornelius, the Roman centurion, whose heart had tired of pagan myths and empty religious rituals, and who had turned to Judaism in hopes he could find salvation. Cornelius was as close to Judaism as he could get without becoming a proselyte. There were many “God fearers” like him in the ancient world (Acts 13:16) and they proved to be a ready field for spiritual harvest.

It is interesting to see how religious a person can be and still not be saved. Certainly, Cornelius was sincere in his obedience to God’s Law, his fasting, and his generosity to the Jewish people (compare this to Luke 7:1–10). He was not permitted to offer sacrifices in the temple, so he presented his prayers to God as his sacrifices (Ps. 141:1–2). In every way, he was a model of religious respectability—and yet he was not a saved man.

The difference between Cornelius and many religious people today is this: he knew that his religious devotion was not sufficient to save him. Many religious people today are satisfied that their character and good works will get them to heaven, and they have no concept either of their own sin or of God’s grace. In his prayers, Cornelius was asking God to show him the way of salvation (Acts 11:13–14).

In many respects, John Wesley was like Cornelius. He was a religious man, a church member, a minister, and the son of a minister. He belonged to a “religious club” at Oxford, the purpose of which was the perfecting of the Christian life. Wesley served as a foreign missionary, but even as he preached to others, he had no assurance of his own personal salvation.

On May 24, 1738, Wesley reluctantly attended a small meeting in London where someone was reading aloud from Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans. “About a quarter before nine,” Wesley wrote in his journal, “while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed, I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” The result was the great Wesleyan revival that not only swept many into the kingdom, but also helped transform British society through Christian social action.

God sent an angel to instruct Cornelius and, in true military fashion, Cornelius immediately obeyed. But why send for Peter, who was thirty miles away in Joppa, when Philip the evangelist was already in Caesarea? (Acts 8:40) Because it was Peter, not Philip, who had been given the “keys.” God not only works at the right time, but He also works through the right servant; and both are essential.

Peter also had to be prepared for this event since he had lived as an orthodox Jew all of his life (Acts 10:14). The Law of Moses was a wall between the Jews and the Gentiles, and this wall had been broken down at the cross (Eph. 2:14–18). The Gentiles were considered aliens and strangers as far as the Jewish covenants and promises were concerned (Eph. 2:11–13). But now, all of that would change, and God would declare that, as far as the Jew and the Gentile were concerned, “There is no difference” either in condemnation (Rom. 3:22–23) or in salvation (Rom. 10:12–13).

Why did God use a vision about food to teach Peter that the Gentiles were not unclean? For one thing, Peter was hungry, and a vision about food would certainly “speak to his condition,” as the Quakers say. Second, the distinction between “clean and unclean foods” was a major problem between the Jews and the Gentiles in that day. In fact, Peter’s Christian friends criticized him for eating with the Gentiles! (Acts 11:1–3) God used this centuries-old regulation (Lev. 11) to teach Peter an important spiritual lesson.

A third reason goes back to something Jesus had taught Peter and the other disciples when He was ministering on earth (Mark 7:1–23). At that time, Peter did not fully understand what Jesus was saying, but now it would all come together. God was not simply changing Peter’s diet; He was changing His entire program! The Jew was not “clean” and the Gentile “unclean,” but *both Jew and Gentile were “unclean” before God!* “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all” (Rom. 11:32). This meant that a Gentile did not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian.

Even though Peter’s refusal was in the most polite terms, it was still wrong. Dr. W. Graham Scroggie wrote, “You can say ‘No,’ and you can say ‘Lord’; but you cannot say ‘No, Lord!’ ” If He is truly our Lord, then we can only say “Yes!” to Him and obey His commands.

God’s timing is always perfect, and the three men from Caesarea arrived at the door just as Peter was pondering the meaning of the vision. The Spirit commanded Peter to meet the men and go with them. The phrase “nothing doubting” (Acts 10:20) means “making no distinctions.” You find it again in Acts 11:12, and a similar word is used in Acts 11:2 (“contended with him”=“made a difference”). Peter was no longer to make any distinctions between the Jews and the Gentiles.

***Explanation (vv. 23–33)*.** The fact that Peter allowed the Gentiles to lodge with him is another indication that the walls were coming down. Peter selected six Jewish believers to go along as witnesses (Acts 11:12), three times the official number needed. It would take at least two days to cover the thirty miles between Joppa and Caesarea. When Peter arrived, he discovered that Cornelius had gathered relatives and friends to hear the message of life. He was a witness even before he became a Christian!

How easy it would have been for Peter to accept honor and use the situation to promote himself; but Peter was a servant, not a celebrity (1 Peter 5:1–6). When he announced that he did not consider the Gentiles unclean, this must have amazed and rejoiced the hearts of his listeners. For centuries the Jews, on the basis of Old Testament Law, had declared the Gentiles to be unclean, and some Jews even referred to the Gentiles as “dogs.”

The remarkable thing in this section is Peter’s question, “I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?” (Acts 10:29) Didn’t Peter know that he had been summoned there to preach the Gospel? Had he forgotten the Acts 1:8 commission to go to “the uttermost part of the earth”? Today, we can look back at developing events in the church and understand what God was doing, but it might not have been that easy had we been living in the midst of those events. In fact, the Jerusalem church questioned Peter about his actions (Acts 11:1–18), and later called a conference to deal with the place of the Gentiles in the church (Acts 15).

Cornelius rehearsed his experience with the angel and then told Peter why he had been summoned: to tell him, his family, and his friends how they could be saved (Acts 11:14). They were not interested Gentiles asking for a lecture on Jewish religion. They were lost sinners begging to be told how to be saved.

Before we leave this section, some important truths must be emphasized. First, the idea that “one religion is as good as another” is completely false. Those who tell us that we should worship “the God of many names” and not “change other people’s religions” are going contrary to Scripture. “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22), and there can be no salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ, who was born a Jew. Cornelius had piety and morality, but he did not have salvation. Some might say, “Leave Cornelius alone! His religion is a part of his culture, and it’s a shame to change his culture!” God does not see it that way. Apart from hearing the message of the Gospel and trusting Christ, Cornelius had no hope.

Second, the seeking Saviour (Luke 19:10) will find the seeking sinner (Jer. 29:13). Wherever there is a searching heart, God responds. This is why it is essential that we as God’s children obey His will and share His Word. You never know when your witness for Christ is exactly what somebody has been waiting and praying for.

Third, Peter certainly was privileged to minister to a model congregation (Acts 10:33). They were all present, they wanted to hear the Word, and they listened, believed, and obeyed. What more could a preacher ask?

***Proclamation (vv. 34–43)*.** There can be no faith apart from the Word (Rom. 10:17), and Peter preached that Word. God is no respecter of persons as far as nationality and race are concerned. When it comes to sin and salvation, “there is no difference” (Rom. 2:11; 3:22–23; 10:1–13). All men have the same Creator (Acts 17:26), and all men need the same Saviour (Acts 4:12). Acts 10:35 does not teach that we are saved by works, otherwise Peter would be contradicting himself (Acts 10:43). To “fear God and work righteousness” is a description of the Christian life. To fear God is to reverence and trust Him (Micah 6:8). The evidence of this faith is a righteous walk.

Peter then summarized the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cornelius and his friends knew about Christ’s life and death, for “this thing was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). Peter made it clear that Israel was God’s instrument for accomplishing His work (Acts 10:36), but that Jesus is “Lord of all,” and not just Lord of Israel. From the very founding of the nation of Israel, God made it clear that the blessing would be from Israel to the whole world (Gen. 12:1–3).

The public at large knew about Christ’s life, ministry, and death, but only the Apostles and other believers were witnesses of His resurrection. As in his previous sermons, Peter laid the blame for the Crucifixion on the Jewish leaders (Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30), as did Stephen (Acts 7:52). Paul would pick up this same emphasis (1 Thes. 2:14–16).

Having finished this recitation of the historical basis for the Gospel message, Christ’s death and resurrection, Peter then announced the good news: “Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sin” (Acts 10:43; see 2:21). His hearers laid hold of that word “whosoever,” applied it to themselves, believed on Jesus Christ and were saved.

***Vindication (vv. 44–48)*.** Peter was just getting started in his message when his congregation believed and the Holy Spirit interrupted the meeting (Acts 11:15). God the Father interrupted Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:4–5), and God the Son interrupted him in the matter of the temple tax (Matt. 17:24–27). Now, God the Spirit interrupted him—and Peter never was able to finish his sermon! Would that preachers today had interruptions of this kind!

The Holy Spirit was giving witness to the six Jews who were present that these Gentiles were truly born again. After all, these men had not seen the vision with Peter and come to understand that the Gentiles were now on an equal footing with the Jews. This does not suggest that every new believer gives evidence of salvation by speaking in tongues, though every true believer will certainly use his or her tongue to glorify God (Rom. 10:9–10). This was an event parallel to Pentecost: the same Spirit who had come on the Jewish believers had now come on the Gentiles (Acts 11:15–17; 15:7–9). No wonder the men were astonished!

With this event, the period of transition in the early history of the church comes to an end. Believers among the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles have all received the Spirit of God and are united in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27).

These Gentiles were not saved by being baptized; they were baptized because they gave evidence of being saved. To use Acts 2:38 to teach salvation by baptism, or Acts 8:14–16 to teach salvation by the laying on of hands, is to ignore the transitional character of God’s program. Sinners have always been saved by faith; that is one principle God has never changed. But God does change His methods of operation, and this is clearly seen in Acts 1–10. The experience of Cornelius and his household makes it very clear that baptism is not essential for salvation. From now on, the order will be: hear the Word, believe on Christ, and receive the Spirit, and then be baptized and unite with other believers in the church to serve and worship God.

Peter tarried in Caesarea and helped to ground these new believers in the truth of the Word. Perhaps Philip assisted him. This entire experience is an illustration of the commission of Matthew 28:19–20. Peter went where God sent him and made disciples (“teach”) of the Gentiles. Then he baptized them and taught them the Word.

That same commission applies to the church today. Are we fulfilling it as we should?

CHAPTER ELEVEN[[2]](#footnote-2)

We noted in Acts 8 that, when God wants to do a work, He calls a man of God, empowers him with the Spirit of God, and enables him to preach the Word of God. This same program is seen in operation in this chapter.

**I.** **Preparation by the Spirit of God (10:1–22)**

*A.* *The Spirit prepares Cornelius (vv. 1–8)*.

Caesarea was a Roman city, the Roman capital of Palestine. Cornelius was a God-fearing Gentile who did not know the truth of the Gospel. He was devout, honest, generous, and sincere; but he was not a saved man. It is possible to be very religious but still be lost! Were it not for the fact that God in His grace spoke to Cornelius, he would never have become a believer. We see here a fulfillment of Christ’s promise in John 7:17, “If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know the truth.” An angel spoke to him and told him to send for Peter. Why did not the angel give Cornelius the message himself? Because God has not given to angels the ministry of sharing the Gospel with sinners. What a privilege we have in telling the Gospel to lost souls, a privilege angels cannot have! Peter was thirty miles away at Joppa, but with soldier-like obedience, Cornelius called for two servants and a guard and sent them on this important mission. The Spirit was leading all of this activity (vv. 19–20).

*B.* *The Spirit prepares Peter (vv. 9–22)*.

Whenever God is at work, He leads “at both ends of the line.” He prepares us for what He is preparing for us. Peter saw all kinds of creatures, both clean and unclean (ceremonially speaking, cf. Lev. 11) and was commanded to kill and eat. His “Not so, Lord!” reminds us of Matt. 16:22, where he told Christ not to go to the cross. Anyone who says “Lord” cannot say “Not so!” If He is truly Lord, we must obey Him. While Peter thought about this vision, which occurred three times, the Spirit spoke to him directly and told him, “Arise and go!” Peter did not go to the Gentiles because he understood the vision, but because the Holy Spirit Himself told him to go (see 11:11–16). Later, he fully understood the meaning of the vision, that God had, through the cross, broken down all division between Jews and Gentiles.

**II.** **Obedience of the Man of God (10:23–33)**

Keep in mind that, up to this time, the Apostles had not preached to the Gentiles. Even the Samaritans (Acts 8) were “half-breed” Jews with reverence for the Mosaic law. Peter did not go to the Gentiles because he was obeying the Great Commission (although he was), but because the Spirit had distinctly commanded him to go. In fact, when he arrived at Cornelius’ house, he asked, “For what reason have you sent for me?” (v. 29, NKJV) And when he preached, God had to interrupt him in order to accomplish His purpose (v. 44 and 11:15–16). Like the other apostles, Peter was still clinging to the Jewish outlook, and he knew that the Gentiles could not be reached until the Jews had accepted their Messiah and He had set up His kingdom. But now Peter was going to learn that God was introducing a new program—the church. Please do not assume that Peter understood all about this new program; in fact, Paul later had to rebuke Peter for his inconsistency (see Gal. 2). During this period of transition (Acts 8–12) we see Peter disappearing from the scene and with him the kingdom message to Israel.

**III.** **The Preaching of the Word of God (10:34–48)**

A prepared preacher and a prepared congregation make a wonderful team! Read Heb. 11:6 in connection with v. 35; Peter did not say that all who “do good” are saved. He began with the message of Christ to Israel, starting with the ministry of John the Baptist. He stated that Cornelius and his friends knew already the message about Christ’s miracles, His death, and His resurrection and that these events were related especially to Israel. In v. 42 he said, “And He commanded us [Jewish witnesses] to preach unto the people” (meaning the Jews), which is what the apostles did up to that time. What Peter had said was simply that Christ came to save the nation of Israel, but now he realized that with God there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. He spoke the key truth in v. 43 when he said, “whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (NKJV).

At this point the Spirit interrupted Peter and wrought a miracle in the hearts of these Gentiles. They believed the Word! And when they believed, the Spirit was poured out upon them, the evidence being that they spoke with tongues. (See Gal. 3:2.) The Jews with Peter were astonished that God would save the Gentiles without first making them Jewish proselytes. Led by the Spirit, Peter commanded that they be baptized; and Peter and his friends stayed and ate with these new believers (11:3).

Review once again the relationship in Acts between the Spirit and baptism. In Acts 2, the Jews believed and had to be baptized to receive the Spirit. In Acts 8, the Samaritans believed and were baptized, but they received the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles’ hands. But here in Acts 10 we are on true “church ground,” for these Gentiles heard the Word, believed, received the Spirit, and then were baptized. The events of Acts 2:38 and 8:14–17 are not the pattern for the church today. Ephesians 1:13–14 should be read carefully. The Spirit’s coming was actually a baptism, as Peter explained in Acts 11:15–16. Only two times is the word “baptism” used in Acts with reference to the Spirit: in Acts 2, when the Spirit came upon the believing Jews, and in Acts 10, when He came upon the believing Gentiles. This fulfills what Paul describes in 1 Cor. 12:13, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.” This “one body” is the church (Eph. 2:11–22). In fact, in 11:15 Peter stated that the baptism in the home of Cornelius was identical to the one at Pentecost. Today, when sinners accept Christ, the Spirit comes into their bodies, and they are baptized into the body of Christ.

As we will see in Acts 11 and 15, the conversion of the Gentiles created a great problem for the Jewish believers, not because they were guilty of prejudice, but because they did not understand “the mystery” of the church (Eph. 3).

They thought that the Gentiles could be saved only through Israel’s rise as a kingdom; but God revealed through Paul that through Israel’s *fall* the Gentiles were saved (Rom. 11:11–25). The message of the kingdom given through the prophets (Acts 3:18–26) was replaced by the message of the grace of God, revealed in its fullness through Paul (Acts 13:38–43). Israel was set aside and will not be prominent in God’s program on earth again until after the church has been raptured. (Read carefully Acts 15:13–18.) To mix kingdom truth and church truth is to confuse the Word of God and hinder the work of God.

The church’s commission today is found in Matt. 28:19–20. We are to make disciples, which calls for evangelism; we are to baptize, which implies fellowship in a local assembly; and we are to teach the Word, which the Spirit uses to convict the lost. Let us be busy sowing the seed of the Word, watering it with our prayers and tears (Ps. 126:5–6; Acts 20:19) and patiently waiting for the harvest.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Polhill, J. B. (1998). Acts. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (D. S. Dockery, Ed.) (511–512). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Ac 10:1–Ac 11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (301–304). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)