



The Book of Acts - Chapter Ten

III. Acts 6:1-11:30 - The Witness beyond Jerusalem (continues)

III.f Acts 9:32-11:18 - Peter preaches in the coastal towns (continues)

Summary of Chapter Ten

The conversion of a Gentile soldier, with his relatives and close friends, is the longest narrative in Acts. The importance of the story is highlighted through repetition. The visions of Cornelius and Peter are repeated several times, and in Acts 11:1-18 is a detailed retelling of the events of Chapter 10. The incident put Peter at the centre of the mission to the Gentiles.

The account starts at the house of a Gentile, God-fearing Roman Centurion, named Cornelius, who was based in Cæsarea. He was visited by an angel, who acknowledged the centurion's prayers to God and gifts to the poor. The angel gave a detailed instruction of the location of the apostle Peter and instructed Cornelius to send for Peter to come to Cæsarea. Cornelius immediately complied and sent three of his men to Joppa, where Peter was staying with Simon the Tanner, following the resurrection of Tabitha (Chapter 9).

While waiting for his lunch to be prepared, Peter went up onto the roof of the house to pray and had a vision of all kinds of animals, reptiles and birds being lowered down in a sheet from heaven. He was instructed three times to 'kill and eat', which would be contrary to Jewish dietary laws so Peter declined, but the voice from heaven instructed him that nothing God has made clean can be called unclean.

Just then, the three men from Cæsarea arrived and the Holy Spirit instructed Peter to go with them. Peter welcomed them into Simon's house as guests, something unheard of for a Jew, and then travelled with them to Cæsarea the following day.

On arrival at Cornelius' house, Peter was apprised of everything the angel had instructed Cornelius to do and then Peter started to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to Cornelius and his household, friends and family, who were gathered with him. All of them were Gentiles.

Peter's Gospel account was cut short by the Holy Spirit, who descended on the Gentiles, imparted his gifts on them and they immediately started to speak in tongues. This amazed the Jewish converts who had travelled from Joppa with Peter. At this, Peter instructed them to baptise these new believers with water.

Following their conversion, Peter agreed to stay for several days, probably living in the same house and sharing fellowship meals with these Gentiles; thus showing full acceptance of them into the church of Christ.

III.f.ii Acts 10:1-8 - Cornelius calls for Peter

¹ At Cæsarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment.

Acts 10:1

Cornelius resided at Cæsarea, a city on the coast, 31 miles or 50 km north of Joppa. Cæsarea was the seat of the Roman government of Judæa. Cæsarea was commented on in Acts 8:40.

Cornelius was a centurion, a commander of 100 men, and a member of the Italian Regiment, or cohort in some translations. A regiment consisted of 600 men, under the command of six centurions, but with auxiliary forces in remote areas such as Judæa, a regiment might have as many as 1,000 men. Ten regiments formed a legion. Centurions were paid very well, as much as five times the pay of an ordinary soldier, so Cornelius would have been socially prominent and wealthy. There is some debate whether a centurion would be a Company Sergeant Major or a Captain in the British Army.

Cornelius is the second Centurion to come to our attention. In Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10, we read of one who had great faith in Jesus to be able to heal his servant.

One historian from the 1st Century wrote: 'Centurions are desired not to be overbold and reckless, so much as good leaders, of steady and prudent mind, not prone to take the offensive to start fighting wantonly; but able, when overwhelmed and hard-pressed, to stand fast and die at their posts'. Cornelius, therefore, was a man, who first and foremost, knew what courage and loyalty were.

Italian Regiment. Cæsarea was the seat of government for Judæa and this regiment was probably the governor's personal guard, used both for his personal security and as a guard of honour. The Italian Regiment was manned completely with professional officers and men, all of whom were native Romans and not citizens from other parts of the empire.

² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

Acts 10:2

Devout and God-fearing, as here and in v.22, identifies Cornelius as a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God and was in some way attached to a synagogue but who had not submitted to Jewish conversion rites, especially circumcision. Many such Gentiles, wearied of the multitude of gods they encountered, and held fast to the pure ethic of worshiping the one true Jewish God. He followed two of the primary expressions of Jewish piety: prayer and almsgiving. God-fearers, as they were known, were found in many synagogues, e.g. in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch: <<Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!>> (Acts 13:16), and: <<Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent>> (Acts 13:26).

His search for God had clearly made him love other people, especially the poor of this foreign nation, where he currently served, and those who love others are not far from the Kingdom. This is in line with Jesus teaching: <<On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live.">> (Luke 10:25-28), although this particular man had no intention of seeking first the Kingdom of God.

³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

Acts 10:3

Three in the afternoon was a set hour of prayer for Jews, not according to the OT but according to later tradition.

He distinctly saw refers to this probably not being a vision but an actual manifestation of an angel of God.

Cornelius is called by name, helping to confirm we are all known individually to God.

⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.

Acts 10:4

Stared at him in fear. Cornelius was a professional soldier and would have been a very courageous man, but was in awe of the angel and rightly showed reverential fear. This is a theme throughout the bible, such as: Joshua (Joshua 5:14), Manoah and his wife (Judges 13:20), Daniel (Daniel 8:18 and 10:9), Zechariah the priest (Luke 1:12), Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:29), the shepherds (Luke 2:9), the man with leprosy before Jesus (Luke 5:12), Peter, John and James on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:6), and John (Revelation 1:17). And, almost as a comical aside, it happened to the Philistine god Dagon, an image of a non-god, in his own temple before the Ark of God (1 Samuel 5:3).

The designation of Cornelius' piety as a memorial offering is sacrificial language: <<The priest shall burn the memorial portion of the crushed grain and the oil, together with all the incense, as an offering made to the Lord by fire>> (Leviticus 2:16), indicating that something has been 'remembered' by God. We can also make our offerings to God by giving to the church and its officers: <<I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God>> (Philippians 4:18).

A memorial offering has been described as the sign, whereby the worshipper is reminded or taught that the whole offering is in fact owed to God, but that he is pleased to accept only a part of it as a token, while remitting the burning of the rest of it on the altar so that it may be otherwise consumed. Thus the focus of remembering is placed on the worshipper and not on God. This is similar to our other giving, e.g. time, money, skills, etc. where it all belongs to God anyway but we only give a relatively small proportion of it to God, when really we should give it all. But God is gracious and lets us keep most of what he has given us for our own benefit.

⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.

Acts 10:5

Joppa, modern day Jaffa, was discussed at some length in Acts 9:36 and 9:43. It was more than a day's walk for the three men he sent.

Bring back a man. The angel did not proclaim the Gospel to Cornelius but instructed him to send for a man who would: <<It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking>> (Hebrews 2:5).

Simon, who is called Peter. It was the Lord Jesus himself who gave Simon the name Peter: <<And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter)>> (John 1:42).

⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

Acts 10:6

Simon the tanner lived by the sea, as its winds would help to dry the hides of his animals without them cracking. Because he was dealing with dead animals, he was permanently unclean and therefore it was prudent to live away from town dwellers, where he would clearly cause offense. By staying with Simon, Peter showed that he was gaining an understanding that he could live apart from some of the laws. But to associate with Gentiles would take a lot of 'unlearning' a life time of regulations that he had always adhered to.

⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.

Acts 10:7

Cornelius sent two of his most trusted servants and a soldier, whose description as being devout likely indicates he was a God-fearer himself.

Some commentators have claimed that the soldier was not a true believer but pretended to be in order to ingratiate himself with the centurion. This seems a rather cynical viewpoint and there is no supporting evidence in scripture. What seems more likely is that Cornelius frequently shared his faith with his men and some of them, who would normally have a great deal of trust and respect for their leader, would have come to believe in God for themselves. It would then be natural for Cornelius to choose such men as his personal assistants, in order to give him more opportunities to teach them further: <<My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me>> (Psalm 101:6).

⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Acts 10:8

Told them everything. He probably did this partly out of excitement at this remarkable experience but also, as a professional soldier, he knew the importance of passing on complete and accurate information to be relayed to others.

III.f.iii Acts 10:9-23a - Peter's vision

⁹ About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.

Acts 10:9

About noon the following day indicates the men must have left Cæsarea fairly soon after Cornelius had instructed them, and that they had walked late into the night, with only a brief stop during the night.

Noon was one of the standard times for the Jews to pray along with 09:00 and 15:00: <<Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice>> (Psalm 55:17).

Houses in Judæa typically had flat roofs accessible by ladders or outside stairways. It was from his flat roof that David first saw Bathsheba: <<One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The

woman was very beautiful>> (2 Samuel 11:2), and we have the story of the four men in Capernaum, who took their paralytic friend to be healed by Jesus, and lowered him down from the roof: <<Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven">> (Mark 2:3-5).

¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.

Acts 10:10-11

His trance-like state was probably Spirit-induced and refers to Peter having a vision.

Heaven opened reminds us of several other occurrences of this phenomenon: <<In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God>> (Ezekiel 1:1), <<As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him>> (Matthew 3:16), <<When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased">> (Luke 3:21-22), Jesus speaking to Nathaniel: <<He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man">> (John 1:51), Stephen, just before he was stoned: <<"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God">> (Acts 7:56), and in John's vision: <<I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war>> (Revelation 19:11).

¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air.

Acts 10:12

All kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles and birds would have included both clean and unclean animals. Jewish law forbade the consumption of unclean animals, see Leviticus 11:2-47.

¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

Acts 10:13

The command from Jesus to kill and eat made no sense to Peter, since it would have violated Jewish food laws.

¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

Acts 10:14

Surely not is an understandable, if incorrect response from Peter. If God gives us a clear instruction then it must be obeyed even if it seems to contradict something we have been taught or even instructed to do in the past. It is not that God changes his mind but that different responses are required for different situations: <<God is not a man, that he should

lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?>> (Numbers 23:19), <<And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'" Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant>> (Hebrews 7:20-22). Nothing on earth is forever and we are not called to be 'surely not' disciples.

Peter had made a similar mistake before: <<Jesus replied, "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" >> (John 13:7-8).

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

Acts 10:15

Verse 15 is the key: God was overturning the old clean/impure distinctions and dietary laws in general, along with all other ceremonial laws in the Mosaic covenant, including laws about sacrifices, festivals and special days, and circumcision. Nothing like this was to get in the way of fellowship with the Gentiles, as Galatians Chapter 2 also shows.

The acceptance of Gentiles should not have come as a surprise to Peter, as it had been long prophesied: <<I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles>> (Isaiah 42:6), and: <<he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" >> (Isaiah 49:6). And it had been part of Jesus final command to them on the Mount of Olives: <<But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth>> (Acts 1:8). Surely, they did not think 'the ends of the earth' meant Diaspora Jews only!

¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

Acts 10:16

Three times. Numbers in scripture often play an important part in understanding the significance of what is being said. There are four perfect numbers, which are:

- 3 - divine perfection;
- 7 - spiritual perfection;
- 10 - ordinal perfection;
- 12 - governmental perfection.

In scripture, the number three represents that which is solid, real, substantial, and something in its completeness. For example: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This number usually indicates something of importance or significance in God's plan of salvation by identifying an important event in Salvation History. This number operates as a sign-post in scripture study for the reader to pay attention to the significance of the next event.

Like the 'doubling of Pharaoh's dream' in Genesis 41:1-7, the tripling of Peter's vision shows 'the thing was certain'.

¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.

¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

Acts 10:17-20

Peter was wondering, still thinking about the vision: It seems that Peter had only received a partial revelation as to the full meaning of the vision and was still working through the full implications and the impact this would have on his ministry, or else the enormity of it in reality was hard for him to comprehend.

Stopped at the gate, they called out. The Gentiles, living in Palestine, were well aware of the requirements of Jewish laws and would not knowingly violate them, which these men would have done had they entered the property.

Again, the timing of Cornelius' men arriving, and the Spirit revealing to Peter that he was to comply with their request, shows the level of detail that goes into God's planning of important events, such as that which was about to transpire.

Do not hesitate was stated quite categorically by the Spirit to ensure he did not elicit another, <<surely not Lord>> from Peter.

Jesus had promised the disciples that the Spirit would speak to them and guide them on occasions just like this: <<But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come>> (John 16:13).

For I have sent them indicates the Spirit was working in Cornelius even while the angel was speaking to him.

²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

Acts 10:21

Why have you come? Either the Spirit did not reveal this to Peter or else he wanted to hear confirmation from them.

²² The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."

Acts 10:22

They gave a glowing but brief introduction of Cornelius, before mentioning his visit from the holy angel. The latter would have been sufficient to get Peter's attention but, because of the cultural differences, and the difficulties the ceremonial law placed upon the Jews association with Gentiles, it perhaps seemed prudent to the men to introduce him in this way.

^{23a} Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Acts 10:23a

Invited the men into the house. It would have been entirely forbidden for a Jew to entertain Gentile guests in his home under the ceremonial law. However, Peter and, assuming he too was a convert, Simon (whose house it was), now lived under grace and not the law. Peter's vision had already had an impact on his thinking and his actions.

III.f.iv Acts 10:23b-48 - Peter at Cornelius' house

^{23b} The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.

Acts 10:23b

Some of the brothers from Joppa went along. It was only Peter who had received the revelation about Gentile association being acceptable but the other men were willing to accept his word on it.

This is something of significance to us in the church today, as God often gives revelation just to one leader expecting the rest to follow in faith, although this does not mean blind faith and leaders need those around them with gifts of discernment to ensure the church remains on track. Other examples where God has given such revelation and instruction are: Moses instructed to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage on Mount Horeb in Exodus Chapter 3 but none of the Israelites were told: <<The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?>> (Exodus 2:14a); and Paul's vision of the call by the Man of Macedonia in Acts 16:9 <<During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us">>. Silas, Luke and Timothy all went with Paul, without question, even though they had not received the vision.

²⁴ The following day he arrived in Cæsarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

Acts 10:24

As stated previously, it is just over 30 miles from Joppa to Cæsarea and it took the men the best part of two days to walk there. This is assuming they left fairly early in the morning on the first day and, as Cornelius account in v.30 indicates, they arrived around mid-afternoon.

²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

Acts 10:25-26

Entered the house. The men had no apprehension about going into the Gentiles house, which was contrary to the ceremonial law of the Jews.

Fell at his feet in reverence. Given Peter's reputation and the type of work he had been engaged in, it is easy to see why Cornelius might react this way. Peter's CV was indeed remarkable: <<Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say>> (2 Corinthians 12:6), but he knew it is not his work but the Spirit in him.

I am only a man myself. We have similar accounts of John before angels: <<At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy">> (Revelation 19:10), and: <<I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to

worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" >> (Revelation 22:8-9). If we are not to show reverence to angels, then we are certainly not to show it to men, no matter how great they may seem in our eyes!

²⁷ Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.

²⁸ He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.

Acts 10:27-8

Against our law. Not in terms of violating OT commands but in the sense of not following the later customs of strict Jewish traditions about uncleanness. The Jewish traditions of purity made it virtually impossible for them to associate with Gentiles without becoming ritually unclean.

God has shown me refers to the vision of vv.10-16, in which Peter addressed the giver of the vision as Lord, using the Greek word associated with Christ. Thus he is acknowledging the deity of Jesus. This shows how Peter had interpreted his vision, which seems to be accurate in light of the Spirit telling him 'do not hesitate' to go to Cornelius' house in v.20.

²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

³⁰ Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. ³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' ³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Acts 10:29-33

Without raising any objection. Ananias had been instructed by Jesus to go to Saul in Damascus. He started to raise some doubts given Saul's reputation and treatment of men like Ananias but Jesus simply told him 'Go!' (Acts 9:13-15).

Cornelius repeated his experience in full so that Peter had a complete understanding of the situation. Luke records it in full so that readers will understand just how important this occasion is to all Gentile believers. This is not just another group coming to faith, as marvellous as that is, this is a message that Jew and Gentile, men and women of all nations, are equal in God's sight and should be united in the one church of Jesus.

Everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us shows that Cornelius had an expectation that God would have briefed Peter on what he was to do.

The following message given in vv.34-43 to the Gentiles is unique among the sermons of Acts in providing a summary of Jesus' ministry. It contains no scriptural proofs and was cut short before Peter could give an invitation to trust in Christ. It is quite likely, of course, that the speech was an extended one, of which Luke gives an abbreviated account.

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism ³⁵ but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Acts 10:34-35

God does not show favouritism indicates Peter had accepted equality among the various race groups, where before Jews had considered themselves superior as God's favoured people. Also, it shows that God will judge everyone equally although there are two key exceptions:

1. Jews were given special additional privileges and promises over the other nations. When they squandered their opportunities they were judged and punished with appropriate severity (Romans 3:1-2 and 9:4-5).
2. Christians, especially those who teach others, will also be punished more severely if they mislead people (James 3:1), or fail to use their 'mina' appropriately and effectively (Luke 19:11-27).

From every nation. Not just among Jews: <<Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all>> (Colossians 3:11), <<For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love>> (Galatians 5:6), <<what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas>> (Psalm 8:4-8), and: <<After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands>> (Revelation 7:9).

A missionary tells how he once officiated at a communion service in Africa. Beside him was an elder, an old chief of the Ngoni that could remember the days when the young warriors had left behind them a trail of burned and devastated towns, and had come home with their spears still dripping with blood and the other tribe's women as their spoil. At this communion table sat the Senga and Tumbuka, the very tribes the Ngoni used to fight. Such is the power of Christ in uniting people from every nation, if only we would give it the chance.

Accepts men. The word used here is the Greek dektos, which means acceptable or welcome. It does not refer to legal justification before God, for which the NT uses Greek dikaios and related terms, nor is Peter talking about the basis for justification. Rather, the question here is whether God's favour is made available to Jews only, i.e. partiality (v.34), or is now available to Gentiles also, i.e. 'from every nation'.

Fear him and do what is right. This expression summarises the behaviour of someone whose life is pleasing to God. Although Peter does not explicitly mention saving faith, as he will in v.43, it would likely be included or implied in the meaning of these two terms in this context. See comments on v.2. After all, faith is trusting in God and responding to him.

³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Acts 10:36

The references to the good news of peace and to Christ being Lord of all echo Isaiah 52:7 <<How beautiful on the Mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who

proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" >>, and [Isaiah 57:19](#) <<creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the Lord. "And I will heal them" >>. [The Gospel is for all people, including Cornelius and his fellow Gentiles.](#)

³⁷ You know what has happened throughout Judæa, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached — ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

[Acts 10:37-38](#)

[You know what has happened](#) is a clear indication that news of Jesus, his ministry, miracles, death and reported resurrection had been widely disseminated around the region, and was known to Gentiles as well as Jews.

The simple statement [he went around doing good and healing](#) is a profound summary of Jesus' life, and an ideal to which all Christians would do well to aspire.

³⁹ "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree,

[Acts 10:39](#)

[We are witnesses of everything](#) includes the teaching, the miracles, the debates with the Jewish leaders, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension. There is nothing more powerful or convincing than the words of those who actually witnessed the events.

[They](#). Although it was the Romans who had crucified Jesus, the apostles and disciples all blamed the Jewish religious leaders as being primarily culpable of this crime. It would seem to be God's opinion too, for he would bring destruction on them in AD70 at the hands of the Romans.

The Cross is referred to as [a tree](#), making a clear connection with the use of the same Greek word *xylon* in the Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 21:23c <<because anyone who is hung on [a tree](#) is under God's curse>>. Jesus was put in a position that the OT says is 'under God's curse', thus taking on himself the penalty for sin: <<Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" >> ([Galatians 3:13](#)).

⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

[Acts 10:40-41](#)

[Who ate and drank with him](#) shows that Jesus was not a ghost or a spirit but had a real physical body after his resurrection. Eating and drinking are also signs of sharing close personal fellowship.

⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Acts 10:42-43

Appointed as judge of the living and the dead. Paul will later confirm this in Berea: <<For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead">> (Acts 17:31), to the church in Rome: <<This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares>> (Romans 2:16), and shortly before his death he wrote: <<In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge>> (2 Timothy 4:1), and to all of us: <<Then the trees of the forest will sing, they will sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth>> (1 Chronicles 16:33), <<Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son>> (John 5:22), <<And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man>> (John 5:27), <<There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day>> (John 12:48), <<But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead>> (1 Peter 4:5), and: <<Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him" >> (Jude 14-15).

All the prophets. From Moses to Malachi and then John the Baptist, all proclaimed, in detail, the coming of the Christ. All the evidence of his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension fully support Jesus of Nazareth to be the one.

Everyone who believes. In Acts 2:21, Peter had quoted the prophet Joel on the day of Pentecost: <<And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved>> (Joel 2:32).

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

Acts 10:44

The Holy Spirit came on all in a way that was visible and audible from the response of the people on whom he fell, see v.46. These Gentiles had come to genuine saving faith in Christ and had received the new covenant power and fullness of the Holy Spirit, which was a sign that they had been accepted by God as full and equal members of his church. The fact that they had not followed any Mosaic ceremonial laws, such as those concerning circumcision, sacrifice, and dietary restrictions, before receiving the gift of the Spirit, is an important point, which becomes evident later in Jerusalem and is recorded in Acts 11:15-17.

The first Jews called by Jesus to be disciples were fishermen and a tax collector, something that had been an affront to the Jewish religious leaders, men of intellect and learning, who saw themselves as much more worthy, superior and honourable. Now, to add insult to injury, the first Gentile called was a Roman officer, the very type of person the Jewish leaders thought the Messiah was going to free them from, as they were the very symbol of Jewish oppression.

⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Acts 10:45-46^a

The circumcised believers. Luke clearly distinguishes Peter's companions, who had travelled with him from Joppa (v.23b), as being Jewish converts to the faith.

Were astonished. It was clear that this miraculous gift was given so overtly, not just for the benefit of the recipients, who would feel the presence of the Spirit in them anyway, but was to convince the Jewish converts that Christ really is for everyone.

Speaking in tongues and praising God outwardly demonstrated the Spirit's presence and God's acceptance of Gentiles without circumcision, which had been required for conversion to Judaism.

^{46b} Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

Acts 10:46^b-47

Baptising these people with water would be an outward sign of an inward work of God in their hearts and of their personal commitment to Christ.

Just as we have is a reference to the reception of the Spirit at Pentecost. Speaking in tongues also occurred at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), although it had been speaking in human languages to the Diaspora Jews, whereas here it was probably in a spiritual language. This will be repeated later, with the Ephesian twelve in Acts 19:6, and perhaps had also occurred among the Samaritans (see Acts 8:18). In every case, speaking in tongues validates that those in view belong to the people of God and have received the Holy Spirit in new covenant fullness.

Speaking in tongues is not the only outward manifestation of the Spirit and believers who have not received this gift should not doubt their salvation just because this gift is lacking.

⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 10:48

So he ordered confirms Peter is their leader and seems to imply that he did not baptise anyone but instructed his six companions from Joppa to perform this task. Although Jesus had not baptised anyone but left it to his disciples: <<The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptising more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptised, but his disciples>> (John 4:1-2). It seems more likely here that Peter had in mind the same as Paul later would: <<so no one can say that you were baptised into my name>> (1 Corinthians 1:15).

To be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ was fully discussed in Acts 2:38. The Samaritans were also baptised in the name of Jesus by Philip (Acts 8:16).

To recap, it is no different from being baptised 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19). Even though different words are used here in Acts, the meaning is the same because in biblical usage a person's name represents the person's character, everything that is true about the person. The name, i.e. character and attributes, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same as the name, i.e. character and attributes, of Jesus Christ. In fact, in Matthew 28:19, the word name, the Greek word *onoma*, is singular, indicating that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share one name, i.e. one character. To be baptised into that name is a sign of identifying with that name and taking on Christ's character, as well as committing to live one's life from that point on as a representative of that name, i.e. to accept Jesus Christ as Lord of one's whole being.

Although baptism is a public display of a person giving their life to Jesus, and accepting him as Lord, it is also the church accepting that person on behalf of Jesus and promising to be at one with him - one in the same body of Christ.

Stay with them for a few days. Peter's willingness to stay with them likely involved his sharing meals with the Gentiles, a bold step for one who formerly was so concerned about clean and unclean foods. It showed a whole new mindset: <<Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind>> (Romans 12:2a).

In the past, the Egyptians would not eat with Joseph, despite his prominent position, as he was a Jew (Genesis 43:32); and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego all refused to eat the king's food, and possibly faced death in doing so, as it would defile them (Daniel 1:8).

In Galatians 2:11-21, Paul writes of a confrontation with Peter over eating with Gentiles. Peter had been participating in meals, where Jewish and Gentile Christians ate together, but in Antioch he drew back and separated himself, eating only with Jewish Christians. Although this was perhaps due to peer pressure, someone of Peter's stature should not have succumbed due to the influence he had on others. Yet we must not judge him as we are all human and there is only one who is perfect.