

The Gentile Pentecost – Acts 10

I. God Begins Calling the Gentiles (1-23)

A. A Gentile Hears From God (1-8)

1. Cornelius is a Devout Centurion (1-2)

a. Cornelius is a Roman Gentile (1)

- i. He is a Roman Centurion – which means he would be considered the enemy by the Jews
- ii. He was a Gentile and would be considered ceremonially unclean by the Jews
- iii. As a Roman officer, he would have to have much contact with those worshiping pagan deities and Roman polytheism
- iv. He was as far from the people of God as one could possibly be

b. Cornelius is a God-Fearer (2a)

- i. These were Gentiles who desired to worship Israel's God
- ii. They were not circumcised or proselytized into Israel
- iii. They did not keep ceremonial laws or go into the Temple

c. Cornelius Practiced Devotion to Israel's God (2b)

- i. He constantly prayed to Israel's God – he most likely observed the prayer times of the Jews
- ii. He gave generously to those in need as an offering to God
- iii. His household followed him in his devotion
- iv. He was as Jewish as a Gentile could be

2. Cornelius Receives a Divine Vision (3-6)

a. An Angel of God Appears to Cornelius (3)

- i. He “clearly” saw the Angel of God
- ii. This happened at 3 o'clock so it was no dream
- iii. It happened during the Jewish time of prayer

b. An Angel Tells Cornelius God has Received his prayers and offerings (4)

- i. God has heard his prayers of devotion
- ii. God has received his “memorial” – the word memorial is used in the Old Testament to signify the sacrifice of grain offering to the Lord – his giving alms was not just generosity, it was an offering to the Lord
- iii. This doesn't mean that Grace is owed to Cornelius because of his prayers and good works. Luke is showing us that Cornelius is as close to God as the Jews themselves are (which

means he is doing all he can but still needs the Messiah just like they do)

- c. An Angel of God tells Cornelius to Send for Peter (5-6)
 - i. This demonstrates that good works are not enough for salvation
 - ii. The angel tells Cornelius to call Peter so that the gospel can be preached to him

- 3. Cornelius Immediately Obeyed the Angel's Instructions (7-8)
 - a. Cornelius sends two slaves and one soldier to find Peter
 - b. The soldier is called "devout" which possibly identifies him as a God fearer also
 - c. He sends them to Joppa which is 37 miles south of Caesarea

B. Peter Hears From God About the Gentiles (9-16)

- 1. Peter Receives a Vision of Unclean Animals (9-12)
 - a. Peter goes up to the roof to pray (9)
 - i. Many people hung out on the flat roofed houses
 - ii. It was much cooler than being inside
 - b. Peter falls into a trance (10)
 - i. God decides to speak to Peter
 - ii. We are not told the nature of this "trance"
 - c. Peter is shown unclean animals (11-12)
 - i. A sheet descends from heaven with all manner of animals in it
 - ii. Many animals were deemed unclean and forbidden for Israel to eat.
 - The point of the unclean food laws was to distinguish Israel from the surrounding nations
 - They had nothing to do with dietary or nutrition issues
 - The food is not morally evil in itself, but was declared ritually impure.
 - God gave them food laws as a grace to demonstrate that they were God's chosen people – the problem is that they started thinking this made them right before God

2. Peter is Instructed That All Foods Are Now Clean (13-16)

- a. Peter is told to kill and eat (13)
 - i. God does not distinguish between the clean and unclean animals anymore
 - ii. God tells Peter to kill and eat – so much for vegetarianism!
- b. Peter refuses the Lord's command (14)
 - i. Peter doesn't understand why God commands this

- ii. Peter has been raised with these binding food laws
 - Leviticus 11:44-45 shows that these animal restrictions are a visible sign of Israel's separation to God
 - Land animals had to chew the cud and have a split hoof to be eaten
 - Sea animals had to have both fins and scales to be eaten
 - Winged insects had to have jointed legs to hop to be eaten
 - Birds of prey, reptiles, and crawling things were off limits
- iii. This was a major culture shift for Peter
- c. Peter is told that all foods are now clean three times (15-16)
 - i. The distinction between common (impure) and pure things has been taken away
 - ii. The distinction between what is Holy and defiled still exists
 - The superficial distinction between ceremonially clean and unclean is taken away to reveal the true division
 - The true division is a matter of the heart
 - The heart is man's problem not the ritual cleanness

NOTE: Peter rightly interprets the vision to deal not just with food but with people. (See 10:28) It is not birth, nationality, or identity that defiles a person before God. The problem lies with the heart. True cleansing can't come from any ritual or induction into a nation. Neither can any people group claim holiness before God based on their lineage. True holiness is needed by all and is a matter of the heart.

C. Peter is Sent to the Gentiles (17-23)

1. Peter is Commanded to Go With the Gentiles (17-20)

- a. Cornelius' men Arrive Searching For Peter (17-18)
 - i. Just as the vision ends, Cornelius' men arrive
 - ii. Peter is puzzled by the vision until he realizes that it has to do with the Gentiles
- b. The Spirit Commands Peter to Go without Hesitation (19-20)
 - i. Peter is to go with the Gentiles without doubting
 - ii. He is not to treat them as common any longer.
 - iii. Jews were always worried about ceremonial uncleanness so they would never fellowship with Gentiles
 - iv. This would be a test of Peter's obedience

2. Peter Obeys the Spirit's Instructions (21-23)
 - a. Peter is told why Cornelius seeks his presence (21-22)
 - b. Peter brings Jewish believers with him to Cornelius' house (23)
 - i. This will be very important later
 - ii. The Jewish believers will be witnesses to the Holy Spirit's work in the Gentiles
- II. The Gentiles Are Brought Into the People of God (24-48)
 - A. The Gentiles Hunger For God's Word (24-33)
 1. Peter is Greeted With Honor and Praise (24-26)
 - a. Cornelius called together his family and friends to see Peter (24)
 - i. Cornelius believed Peter's words are not just for him but his entire family
 - ii. Cornelius' encounter with the angel made him eager to hear Peter
 - b. Cornelius bows at Peter's Feet (25)
 - i. He obviously sees Peter as a divine messenger
 - ii. He bows before him as Romans did to those who were their superiors, more powerful people
 - iii. This would be very humbling for Cornelius to do in front of his friends and family
 - c. Peter rebukes Cornelius for bowing to him (26)
 2. Peter Explains that God Has Called the Gentiles Clean (27-29a)
 - a. Peter tells them that Jews are forbidden to associate with Gentiles (27-28a)
 - i. Jewish law forbade the intermingling with Gentiles – simply visiting a Gentile home defiled a Jew and rendered him unclean
 - ii. Cornelius was also a Roman officer who would have been doubly hated by the Jews
 - b. Peter tells them God has deemed all men clean (28b-29a)
 - i. Peter interprets his food vision to include Gentiles as being clean before God and able to receive the gospel
 - ii. He will state in 11:9 that God has cleansed the Gentiles
 3. Cornelius Desires to Hear God's Word (29b-33)
 - a. Peter asks why they sent for him (29b)
 - b. Cornelius relates the vision he received from God (30-32)
 - c. Cornelius and his family desire to hear God's Word through Peter (33)
 - i. Cornelius understands that God's presence is with them

- ii. They are all assembled before God to hear what God has commanded Peter to speak
- B. Peter Preaches the Gospel to the Gentiles (34-43)
 - 1. Peter Explains that God Accepts People from Every Nation (34-35)
 - a. God does not show partiality between Jew and Gentile
 - b. Religious affiliation and nationality no longer define a relationship with God
 - c. God accepts anyone from any nation who fears him and practices righteousness
 - i. The point here is not that men can be good enough to merit salvation or practicing righteousness carries God's favor
 - ii. Peter is expressing the fact that Gentiles (who need salvation just like Israel) can find that salvation in Christ apart from Judaism
 - iii. Men do not have to become Jews in order to come to Christ
 - 2. Jesus Ministered for the Kingdom of God (36-38)
 - a. Jesus the Lord preached peace to Israel (36)
 - i. Peter tells of Jesus ministry of Peace
 - ii. Peace here is the Hebrew idea of "Shalom" which means a total state of well-being
 - Jesus has brought peace between man and God
 - Jesus has brought salvation and forgiveness and eternal life
 - b. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power (37-38a)
 - i. The Father anointed Jesus as Messiah and Christ
 - ii. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit
 - This doesn't mean Jesus was just a man whom God blessed with power and favor
 - Jesus, the 2nd person of the Trinity humbled himself and took the likeness of men. He set aside the prerogatives and use of his divine power to become a man
 - He did NOT lay aside his divine nature or godhood. He laid aside the use of them
 - The miracles, signs and wonders he did on earth were done by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was in the perfect will of the Father working through the Holy Spirit.
 - c. God was with Jesus as He brought the Kingdom to the people (38b)

- i. Jesus went from place to place healing those who were in the grip of the devil's power
 - ii. He freed those who were under the devil's power by exorcising spirits and curing disease
 - iii. Not all disease and sickness is from the devil but all of it is caused by the fall of humanity
 - 3. Jesus Was Crucified and Rose From the Dead (39-41)
 - a. Jesus was crucified and God raised Him from the dead (39-40a)
 - b. Jesus appeared to many after rising from the dead (40b-41)
 - 4. Jesus Offers Forgiveness to All who Believe (42-43)
 - a. Jesus commanded the Apostles to preach the Lordship of Christ (42)
 - i. Jesus is not just Lord and King of Israel
 - ii. Jesus is Lord of all
 - b. Jesus brings forgiveness to all who will believe (43)
 - i. Jew or Gentile, faith in Christ brings forgiveness
 - ii. All people can come into the kingdom of God
- C. The Gentiles are Brought Into the Kingdom of God (44-48)
 - 1. The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles at Salvation (44)
 - a. As they listened to Peter, Cornelius and his house believe and are saved (see. 11:17)
 - b. When they believe, the Holy Spirit indwells them
 - c. This happens much to the surprise of Peter and the Jewish believers who came with him
 - 2. The Holy Spirit Proves their Inclusion by Repeating Pentecost Events (45-46)
 - a. Pentecost (Acts 2) was the fulfillment of OT prophecies and promises to Israel
 - b. Here the Gentiles received the same promise with the same evidence
 - c. The Holy Spirit came upon them in such a way that is could not be denied that God has included all people in the kingdom of God
 - d. They spoke in other languages as proof that the Gentiles were included in God's people
 - i. The Jews would have never believed it if Peter would have just told them – they had to see it for themselves
 - ii. Gentiles coming into God's people would have been a tough thing for them to swallow
 - iii. In Acts 2, the tongues spoken are explicitly said to be languages of different nations

- iv. Here the Jewish Christians heard them speaking in languages and understood that they were exalting and praising God
 - This indicates that Cornelius and the Gentiles were speaking either Hebrew or Aramaic – the Jews understood that their words were magnifying God
 - Romans and Gentiles would not have known these languages but were given their utterance by the Holy Spirit
 - This is the same manifestation we saw at Pentecost
- 3. The Gentiles Are Baptized Into the People of God (47-48)
 - a. The Gentiles are baptized into the community of faith
 - b. The Gentiles are brought into the covenant of God that was foretold throughout the Old Testament
 - c. There is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile
 - d. God initiated the salvation of all nations of the world