

Acts midweek study 3

So far in our midweek studies we have seen the gospel start with Galilean Jews. The only non-Galilean was Judas Iscariot, and he was replaced with Matthias, another Galilean Jew. The believers who were waiting on the Lord were a mixture of Galilean Jews and Judean Jews, but on the day of Pentecost the message crossed over to Hellenist Jews – Jews living amongst Greek culture. Then, following the stoning of Stephen, the gospel crosses over to the Samaritans. Today, we will see it cross the last divide.

Pause the video and read **Acts 10**, stopping to ask questions and make observations.

Peter was a total Hebrew Jew. Why do you think God had him receive the message of salvation for the Gentiles, i.e. the rest of the world? What made him credible to be able to witness this groundbreaking circumstance?

In what way was Peter to Paul like John the Baptist to Jesus?

Do you think you need a gift to reach across cultural divides? What about Peter suggests that he had this gift? Do you think Paul had this gift?

Cornelius was a God-fearer. Remember the categories? We have Hebraic Jews, we have Hellenist Jews, we have proselytes and God-fearers. As they were still Gentiles, they were considered unclean by the Jews.

Can anyone in your group testify to seeing an angel? What was the purpose of the sight?

Seeing a vision or a dream was not a stretch for Peter. He was in prayer, he was really hungry, so he may have even been fasting. Compare and contrast the sheet animals with the animals found in **Leviticus 11**. This was not a massive temptation, the thought of eating any of these creatures would have made them feel ill. E.g. the thought of a wet market, with bats and stuff, is not something that I have to battle in my mind! I read about the Mongols with their mare's milk mixed with mare's blood. There is nothing in me that wants to try that.

Peter has a strong reaction, and just to make sure, God repeats the vision twice. While he is still thinking about it, 3 men show up, and he invites them in – something he NEVER would have once done. No orthodox Jew invites 3 gentiles in. You might think, yeah, but Bron, Peter is a Christian now, not a Jew. Peter was a Jew until the day he was killed. He just followed Jesus. He would probably never have stopped observing Torah, and all the things contained therein, bar associating with gentiles. But then – worse! He stays in a gentile's house! That is so much worse than entertaining gentiles. He would now be considered unclean himself.

Discuss what **verse 34** means to you.

Then, incredibly, they begin speaking in tongues! Peter feels he has no choice but to baptise them into the body of Christ. And that, brothers and sisters, is our origin story.

Feel free to delve into **chapter 11** to see the reaction to us being included in the gospel plan.

God's choice of Cornelius to lead the first notable conversion of Gentiles was deliberate. *What were the two or three principal reasons God would have chosen Cornelius as opposed to one of a thousand other Gentiles?*

What opposition did he risk? Would you risk such opposition to cross cultural barriers with the gospel?