

CORNELIUS MEETS JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Summer 2021, Acts 10:1-48

September 5, 2021

The Peter began to speak: "I now realize the God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ . . ."
Acts 10:34

Introduction:

Now, it is to the work of the Holy Spirit that I shall this morning specially direct your attention; and I may as well mention the reason why I do so. It is this. We have received continually fresh confirmations of the good news from a far country, which has already made glad the hearts of many of God's people. In the United States of America there is certainly a great awakening. No sane man living there could think of denying it. There may be something of spurious excitement mixed up with it, but that good, lasting good, has been accomplished, no rational man can deny. Two hundred and fifty thousand persons—that is a quarter of a million—profess to have been regenerated since December last, have made a profession of their faith, and have united themselves with different sections of God's church. The work still progresses, if anything, at a more rapid rate than before, and that which makes me believe the work to be genuine is just this—that the enemies of Christ's holy gospel are exceedingly wroth at it . . .

Charles Spurgeon, "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit" from 1858

Scene 1: A prayer closet in Caesarea

¹At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³One 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!"

⁴Cornelius 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. ⁵Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Acts 10:1-8

- 1) Cornelius is obedient to the light he has (look for more on Lewis' Tash Principle)
- 2) Cornelius knows he is inviting a Hebrew into his life

Scene 2: The following day on a rooftop in Joppa

⁹ About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 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. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³ Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

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

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

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

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.”

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

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.” ²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Acts 10

1) Fasting principle: Peter denies what is good in order to receive from God what is *tov m’od*

2) Three time is important

3) “common” is a better translation than “impure”

Note 1: God provides Peter with the link between the *koinos* animals and the *koinos* persons. If nothing in creation is “common” then no person can be considered “common.”

Note 2: There are two wonderful plays on words in this context:

1) What God has “clean-ized” we should not “common-ize”

→ from *akatharos* to *katharidzō* and from *koinos* to *koinoō*

2) The *koinonia* that the church has enjoyed since Acts 2:42 is now extended to all creation creation!

4) Peter is immediately obedient to this new revelation – which isn’t really new at all → “common” is not applied to people in the Law! According to the Law, people can be

Scene 3: The next day in Cornelius' crowded home in Caesarea

²³ The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. ²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 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."

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. 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."

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. 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. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout Judea, 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.

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, 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. 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."

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

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 10

- 1) Both Peter and Cornelius receive the other and retell their God stories
- 2) The outpouring of the Holy Spirit confirms the work that has already been going on in hearts in Caesarea (and certainly encouraged by the presence of Philip!)
- 3) Everything Peter does includes the new believers → one church!

Lessons for the church

- 1) Remember the Holy Spirit (see the title on our poster!)

How am I open to the work of the Holy Spirit? Hint: How much is the Spirit honored?

And now another thought. If we would have the Spirit, beloved, we must each of us try to honor him. There are some chapels into which if you were to enter, you would never know there was a Holy Spirit. Mary Magdalen said of old, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," and the Christian might often say so, for there is nothing said about the Lord until they come to the end, and then there is just the benediction, or else you would not know that there were three persons in one God at all. Until our churches honor the Holy Spirit, we shall never see it abundantly manifested in our midst. Let the preacher always confess before he preaches that he relies upon the Holy Spirit. Let him burn his manuscript and depend upon the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit does not come to help him, let him be still and let the people go home and pray that the Spirit will help him next.

Spurgeon's conclusion from "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit"

- 2) One gospel, two testimonies of Jesus Christ

How does my own testimony reflect the story of Jesus?

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. You know what has happened throughout Judea All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him received forgiveness of sins through his name.*

Acts 10:36-43

- 3) Meeting Jesus and the Holy Spirit completed the already incredible faith story of Cornelius

Where do I have the opportunity to encourage, rather than discourage, a faith story?

⁴⁵ *The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured even on the Gentiles*

Acts 10:45

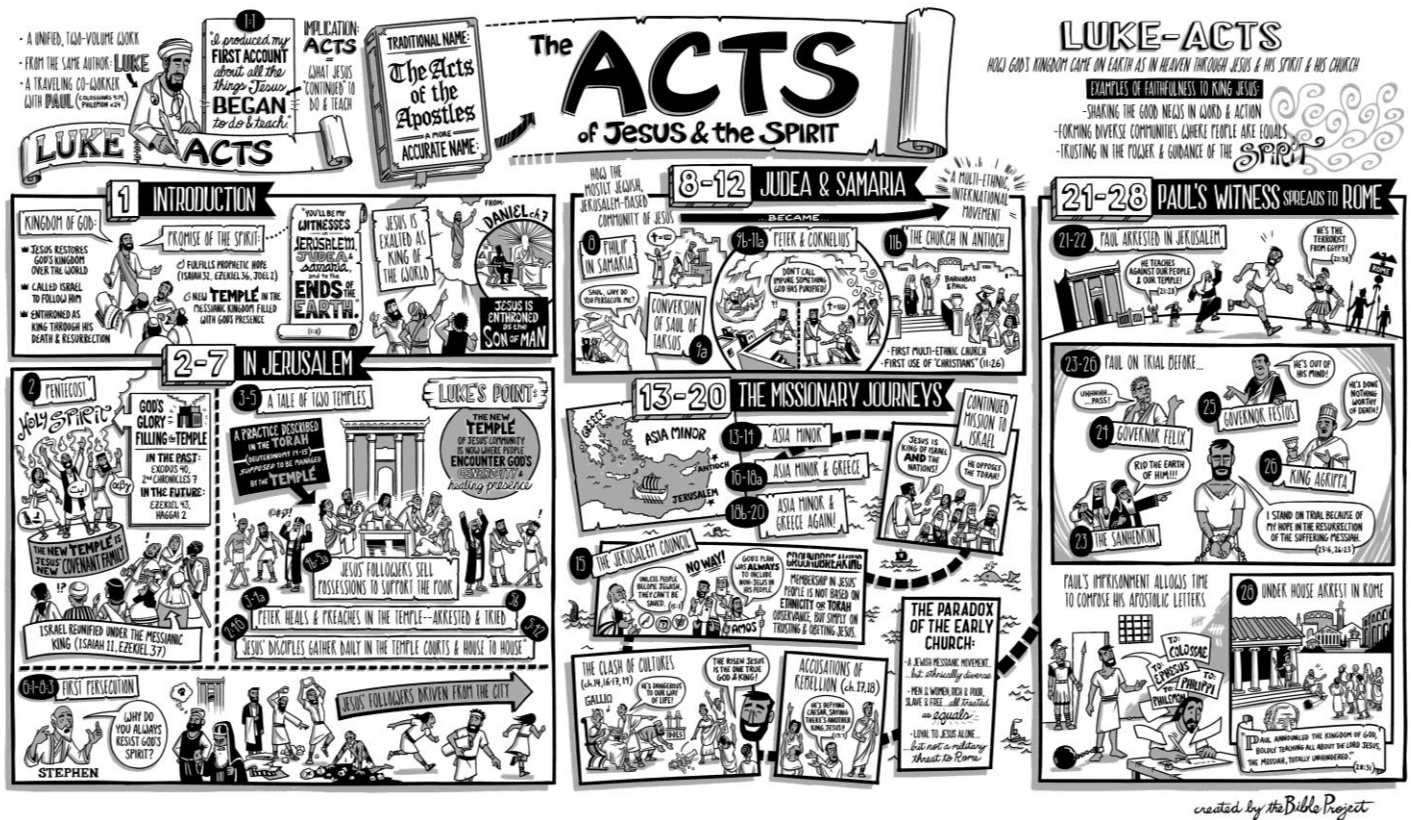
- 4) One Holy Spirit, one people of God

How am I engaged in this "being built together" work of God in his church?

¹¹ *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ*

¹⁹ *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

Ephesians 2:11-22



Resources for further studies in Acts

The Bible Project team has great stuff on Acts at <https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg>

Spurgeon has fewer sermons on Acts available than I would hope at

http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r_ac.htm. His "Outpouring of the Holy Spirit" on this text is at <https://www.monergism.com/outpouring-holy-spirit>

I really appreciate J.C. Ryle's essay on conversion in Acts: <https://www.monergism.com/conversion-j-c-ryle> <https://www.monergism.com/conversion-j-c-ryle>

Alexander Maclaren has an especially helpful commentary on Acts available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/8397/pg8397.html>

Deffinbaugh has a helpful introduction at <https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-contribution-book-acts>

His Acts series is at <https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts> His sermons on this text are at

<https://bible.org/seriespage/15-perfecting-peter-acts-932-1048G> and

<https://bible.org/seriespage/gentile-faith-jewish-fears-acts-1036-1130>

George Whitefield has a sermon on Saul's conversion at <https://www.monergism.com/sauls-conversion>

I have really appreciated John Stott's *The Spirit, The Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (IVP, 1990) and F. F. Bruce's work: *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1980) and *The Book of the Acts* (Eerdmans, 1984). For this passage, I also like Kistemaker's commentary (Baker Book House, 1990).

Carl Trueman has a good analysis of the world's opposition in his recent essay "Dogma Drives the Christian Life" at <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2021/08/dogma-drives-the-christian-life>

Carl Trueman's conclusion in *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Crossway, 2020) influenced my thinking on the church. His third point, the importance of proper natural law thinking, is reflected in Kevin DeYoung's blog at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/gods-good-gift-in-making-us-men-and-women/>

Acts Timeline (ESV Study Bible)

	A.D.	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Death, resurrection of Christ (A.D. 33 [or 30])†		█										
Pentecost (30/33)		█										
Stephen stoned (31/33)		█										
Paul converted (33/34*)		●										
Paul meets with Peter in Jerusalem (36/37*)			█									
Paul ministers in Syria/Cilicia (37–45)			█	█	█							
Peter witnesses to Cornelius (38*)			●									
James, brother of John, martyred (41–44)				█	█							
Peter rescued from prison, leaves Jerusalem (44)				●								
Paul's second Jerusalem visit (famine relief) (44–47*)				█	█							
Paul's first missionary journey (46–47)					●							
Peter and Paul at Jerusalem council (48–49*)					█							
Paul's second missionary journey (48/49–51*)					█	█						
Claudius expels Jews from Rome (49)						●						
Paul's third missionary journey (52–57*)						█	█					
Paul ministers in Ephesus (52–55)						█	█					
Claudius dies; Jews allowed back to Rome (54)						●						
Nero's reign (54–68)							█	█	█			
Paul arrested in Jerusalem (57*)							●					
Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (57–59)							█	█				
James, brother of the Lord, martyred (62)								●				
Paul under house arrest in Rome (62*)								●				
Luke writes Gospel of Luke and Acts (62*)								●				
Paul released, resumes ministry, rearrested (62–64)								█	█			
Paul and Peter martyred in Rome (64–67*)								█	█			