

### Acts 9:31-12:24

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- The narrative moves back to Peter
- Peter witnesses the conversion of the gentiles, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit followed by tongues as a sign to the Jewish apostles that God does not show favouritism and that the gentiles are legitimate people of God
- God has to deal with Peter through vision and miracles to convince him to accept gentile followers (cf Gal 1-2)

### Acts 9:31-43

- Mission of Peter in coastal areas - Lydda (the healing of Aeneas who had been bedridden for 8 years) and Joppa (raising Tabitha from the dead)
- Reflects the miracles that Jesus did – raising the widow's son in Nain and Jairus' daughter (Luke 7:11-17; 8:41-56)
- Note that in Acts 20:7-12, Luke also narrates similar miracle done by Paul

### Acts 9:31-43

- Miracle in Lydda
  - Peter addresses Aeneas by name
  - Peter announces that Jesus is the healer
  - Peter commands Aeneas to get up and make his bed
  - The miracle results in people believing in the Lord
  - The purpose of miracles: never for self, but always results in the advancement of the gospel

### Acts 9:31-43

- Miracle in Joppa
  - Tabitha is highly praised by Luke as someone “devoted to good works and acts of charity” particularly caring for widows and making garments for them (9:39).
  - Loved by those who were beneficiaries of her charitable acts, as demonstrated by their weeping (9:39)
  - The resurrection of Tabitha results in many people coming to faith – the purpose of miracles

### Acts 10:1-11:18: Some Questions

- Why is the vision of animals crucial for Peter's acceptance of gentiles?
- Why is it that Luke provides lengthy narratives for us that Peter is instrumental in the conversion of Cornelius? Do you think this prepares Peter for the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15?
- Why is there a need to emphasise the gift of tongues given to Cornelius?
- How does the narrative of the conversion of Cornelius become the turning point for the mission to the gentiles?

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Two visions:
  - Cornelius is directed to send for Peter
  - Peter is prepared to accept Cornelius' invitation
- Note that Peter saw the vision 3x, and cf. this to 10:9-16; 10:28; and 11:5-10
- All prepares Peter's mission to the first gentile convert

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Cornelius:
  - Centurion is responsible for 80 men
  - Religious obligations: "He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God."
  - Vision from God – suggesting that God is the one initiating the conversion of the first gentile. Cornelius is to look for Peter

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Cornelius
  - Responded immediately by sending 2 slaves and a soldier for Peter in Joppa (60km away)
  - They arrived around noon the next day. Cornelius' vision is at 3pm – so the team has about 9 hours to cover the distance – possible.

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Peter
  - Vision appearing 3x
    1. Peter saw the heaven opened
    2. All sorts of unclean animals
    3. The voice commanding Peter to eat
    4. The protest of Peter to eat anything profane or unclean
    5. Rebuke from the Lord – God has made all things clean

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Clean and Unclean Animals
  - OT precedent – concept of holiness
  - Lev 11:44-45; 20:22-26
  - Ex 22:29-31
  - Deut 14:4-21
- Peter still operating within this framework
- Social identity of "us" and "they" – we are clean they are unclean, and therefore has nothing to do with table fellowship with gentiles

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- The issue: see 11:3 - eating with uncircumcised gentiles prohibited, as Israel's dietary laws extend to prohibition of table fellowship with those who eat unclean food; and thereby any fellowship with gentiles contaminate themselves

### Acts 10:1-11:18

Think:

- Why is there a need for the vision to be repeated 3x to Peter?
- What does this suggest about Peter's understanding of mixing with gentiles?

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- At the end of the vision:
  - Peter is puzzled
  - Then Cornelius' delegation arrived
  - The voice of the Spirit affirming that God has sent the team from Cornelius – Peter is not to make distinction, thereby confirming the vision again (4<sup>th</sup> time telling Peter not to make distinction)
  - However, Peter still does not know the reason for the visit by the delegation

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- The delegation explains the reason for the visit
- Peter hosts them for a night!
- Following day, Peter travels with the 3 men together with another 6 from him (11:12 – 6 brothers are mentioned by Luke). These brothers serve as witnesses later (10:45)

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Caesarea
  - Cornelius has been expecting them with all his relatives and friends – suggests that they expect Peter to speak
  - Peter's willingness to address the group reflects his changed understanding of gentiles
    - Gentiles are not unclean
    - He will not be defiled

### Acts 10:1-11:18: Discussion

Compare Peter's speech to Cornelius (10:34-25) and his earlier speeches in Pentecost (2:14-39) and to the crowd (3:11-26)

- What similarities and differences do you see?
- Who is the significance of these similarities and differences?

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- The baptism of the Holy Spirit followed by speaking in tongues
  - Why this is crucial for Peter as seen in 11:1-18
- Water baptism followed immediately
  - Gentiles can even receive water baptism – just like all the Jewish believers

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Peter back in Jerusalem (11:1-18)
  - The circumcised believers criticized him
  - “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?”
  - Suggesting the Jewish believers are not ready to accept the gentiles as believers
  - Peter needs to recount the gentiles “pentecost”

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Peter back in Jerusalem (11:1-18)
  - Luke narrates in length Peter’s vision – purpose of this is to emphasise the legitimacy of gentile mission and believers
  - The climax: If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?”
  - The response: “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.”

### Acts 10:1-11:18

- Summary
  1. The Lord prepares Peter to acknowledge God’s granting of salvation through Jesus with no required obedience to the Law
  2. Jews need no longer separate pure and profane food; and pure and profane people
  3. Gentiles must be accepted as members of God’s people

### Acts 10:1-11:18: Reflection

- Why do you think Peter later on succumb to pressure when he later visited Antioch and refused to fellowship with the gentiles (see Gal 2:11-14)?
- The multiethnic identity of the church means no one may be regarded as a second class member of God’s people. Are we willing to give up prejudices concerning people with other ethnic and cultural backgrounds?

### Acts 11:19-30

- Mission in Antioch
  - The expansion of the gospel cannot be stopped:
  - “Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the word to no one except Jews. But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus.

### Acts 11:19-30

- Barnabas being sent from Jerusalem to Antioch
  - Attempt by Jerusalem church to exert control over the new congregations?

### Acts 11:19-30

- Barnabas sought help from Paul
  - What was Paul doing in Tarsus (210km from Antioch, approximately 8-day journey)?
  - Why did Barnabas ask him to join in his work in Antioch?
- Begins a partnership – worked for a year

### Acts 11:19-30

- “It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”
  - Χριστιανός/Χριστιανοί – in the NT, it only occurs in the lips of outsiders (Herod Agrippa in 26:28; opponents in 1 Pet 4:16)
  - Josephus, Pliny, and Tacitus use this term (see Josephus, *Ant.* 18:64; Pliny, *Ep.* 10:96-97; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44)
  - Graffito in Pompeii (CIL IV 679) dated before 79CE also used this term

### Acts 11:19-30

- “It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”
  - “were called” (χρηματίσαι) – passive (be called/named, be identified as)
  - This means “Christians” is used by others, and not a self-designation of the early Christ followers
  - The self-designation of followers of Jesus – disciples, believers, brothers, followers of the Way

### Acts 11:19-30

- “It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”
  - So who coins this term, Χριστιανοί?
  - Possibly by the Roman authorities in Antioch for new religious groups (see Justin Taylor, “Why Were the Disciples First Called ‘Christians’ as Antioch? (Acts 11,26),” *RB* 101 (1994): 75-94.
  - More so this group begins to separate themselves from the synagogue congregations and acquire an identity as a separate group.

### Acts 11:19-30

- Severe famine
  - Claudius reign (41-54CE)
  - Food crises in Egypt, Syria, Judaea and Greece in 45-47CE
  - The Antioch church sends support to believers/brothers (ἀδελφός) in Judea, each contributes according to their ability
  - The monetary contribution was delivered by Barnabas and Saul
  - Gentile church support Jewish churches

### Acts 11:19-30: Reflection

The solidarity between the gentile church in Antioch and the Jewish congregations in Judah is reflected in the financial support given by the gentiles to the Jews.

- Does your church practise this solidarity? If so, what does your church do?
- In what ways we could stand in solidarity with our poorer brothers and sisters?
- In what practical ways we could help those less fortunate than us?

### Acts 12:1-25

- The persecution by King Herod – Agrippa I who ruled from 41-44CE
  - James, brother of John killed
  - Charge? Possibly more than a religious nuisance, perhaps threatening the security of the state

### Acts 12:1-25

- The persecution by King Herod – Agrippa I who ruled from 41-44CE
  - Peter is next – to eliminate the leaders of the Jerusalem church
  - Peter is imprisoned
  - The church prays
  - Peter’s miraculous escape

### Acts 12:1-25

- The persecution by King Herod – Agrippa I who ruled from 41-44CE
  - The church could not believe Peter’s release (so what could possibly be the prayers of the church for Peter?)
  - Peter instructs the church to report to James (the brother of Jesus, one of the pillars) and the brothers

### Acts 12:1-25

- 12:17 – Peter “left and went to another place.”
- His life is in danger, and he leaves to carry out his ministry elsewhere – perhaps to Antioch (Gal 2:11-15)
- Luke is silent on where Peter travels to

### Acts 12:1-25

- 12:18-19 – the shameful morning when the soldiers discover Peter is gone, and they could not find him. The guards are executed

### Acts 12:1-25

- 12:19-20 – King Herod travels to Caesarea, possibly living in the luxurious palace built by Herod I.

### Acts 12:1-25

- Herod presided over a dispute
- “The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!” – a reflection of the Greco-Roman worldview. See 14:11-13

### Acts 12:1-25

- “And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.”

### Acts 12:1-25

- Circumstances surrounding Herod’s death  
– See Josephus Ant. 19.343-350 – corresponds with Luke’s account

### Josephus

Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Cesarea, which was formerly called Strato’s Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival, a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. <sup>344</sup> (19.8.2) On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun’s rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him;

### Josephus

<sup>345</sup> (19.8.2) and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, “Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.” <sup>346</sup> (19.8.2) Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, as he presently afterwards looked up, he saw an owl<sup>1</sup> sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner.

### Josephus

<sup>347</sup> (19.8.2) He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, “I whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.” <sup>348</sup> (19.8.2) When he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time.

### Josephus

<sup>349</sup> (19.8.2) But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. <sup>350</sup> (19.8.2) And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign;

### Acts 12:1-25

- “And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.”
- Cf. Josephus: “A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner”
- Literary device to describe the character of Herod – a villain, a bad character whose death was deserved.

### Acts 12:1-25

- But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents
  - Nothing can stop the spread of the gospel