

The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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Prayer Requests

- May peace reign in America.
- Church leadership as they plan to reopen the church in the near future.
- All leadership in the country as the country re-opens.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- The “players’ in the ACTS 10 drama are Peter and Cornelius.
- We saw last week that the Peter and Cornelius were both prepared in advance for their roles.
- What we did not talk about last week is the critical concept of “**light given, light received**”.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Clearly the Jew had an advantage over the Gentile because God was working through the Jew to provide the Messiah and his word to the world.
- We might think “how unfair (unjust) of God to favor the Jew in an eternal matter”.
- But that **presents a theological problem** because we believe God is just in all matters.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- A common question is, “if God was working through Israel to execute his plan of redemption how can he hold the Gentiles accountable for truth they were not given?”.
- **He doesn't.**
- No one will be accountable for what they did not know, but all will be accountable for what they knew.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- We spoke last week of what it meant in the 1st century to be labeled as a “**God-fearer**”.
- A “God-fearer” was a gentile who had settled in his mind that **Jehovah is God**, had adopted the O.T. Jewish system of **ethics**, and had joined into the **worship** of Jehovah in the local synagogue.
- A “God-fearer” was one on his way to converting to Judaism but not quite all the way there yet.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- What that tells us about Cornelius is that as he was given light (**awareness of God and truth**) he responded to the light he received.
- God is now going to show Cornelius even more light as Peter preaches the gospel to him.
- So what might we take away from the example of Cornelius and how the justice of God works in how he judges all?

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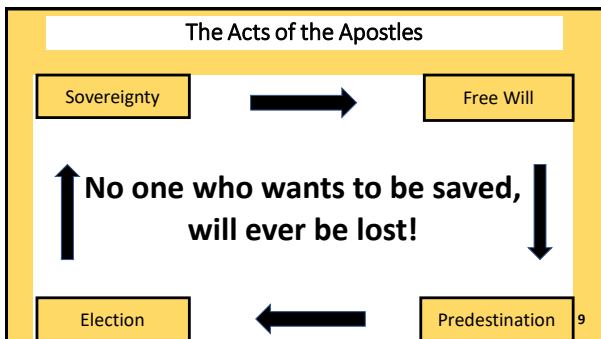
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The Acts of the Apostles

- Cornelius' life actually answers the age old "**are the heathen lost?**" question.
- The bible does not address this question as head on as we may like but does answer it in principle.
- The one who has never heard the gospel will be treated justly by God on judgment day because of this beautiful text in Genesis 18 "**shall not the judge of all the earth do right?**".

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The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 10:22 They said, "We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message." 23 So Peter invited the men to stay for the night. The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa. 24 They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 **As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him.** 26 But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!" 27 So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled. 28 Peter told them, "**You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.**" 29 So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me." NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **"As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him"**
- We see how eager Cornelius is to worship – thankfully, Peter is a humble man and corrects him quickly.
- Peter, who started out as a **fisherman**, became part of Jesus' **inner circle**, then **denied** that he even knew Jesus, **saw 3,000** respond to his first sermon, and had his bigotry **torn apart** on a rooftop -has been sufficiently humbled for this moment.

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- The lesson for us is perhaps to remember who we are without Christ when people start to get carried away with who we are in Christ. (like Peter, we should know who we are)
- Peter effectively says, "whoa, don't worship me – if you knew me apart from Christ, I would be the last person you would think of worshipping!"
- When Christ uses you and the praise starts to roll in, remember that you too are, "just a man, or just a woman".

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The Acts of the Apostles

• “You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.”

• This is where Peter is definitely the right spokesperson – what an obnoxious thing to say to people who have welcomed you into their home.

• He just said, “you people have not been good enough for we who are Jews”.

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• Peter wasn't wrong regarding the prohibition on fellowshipping with gentiles – he was just one covenant behind for the time. 😊

• Duet 7:2 When the LORD your God hands these nations over to you and you conquer them, you must completely destroy them. Make no treaties with them and show them no mercy.³ You must not intermarry with them. Do not let your daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters,⁴ for they will lead your children away from me to worship other gods. Then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and he will quickly destroy you. NLT

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• What the Jew had come to think was superiority turned out to be only about purity.

• Meaning that lost gentiles behaved like lost gentiles and God's plan for the O.T. time was for a **sanctified and separated** people he could use.

• Israel had an abysmal track record when it comes to purity and apart from God's intervention would have fared no better than the gentiles.

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- Israel's history, despite having the prophets and God's blessing, was one of fall after fall after fall into idolatry.
- It happened in the wilderness, it happened during the judges, and during the kings - the nation of Israel had no real reason to feel spiritually superior to anyone!



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- Acts 10:30 Cornelius replied, "Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. 31 He told me, '**Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God!**' 32 Now send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.' 33 So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. **Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you.**" 34 Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. 35 In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. 36 This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. 38 And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- "**Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God!**"
- We are not saved by our works, but apparently our works are always important even prior to salvation.
- I had never thought of this before – we know our sins (past, present, and future) are all forgiven when we come Christ, but are our pre-salvation works "in play" at the Bema Seat?

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The Acts of the Apostles

Are our pre-salvation works “in play” at the Bema Seat?

Isaiah 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. NASB

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- Also look at “prayer” (singular) – could it have been, “**Lord I need to know for certain what is THE truth**”.

- You have to wonder if he had heard of Jesus and salvation in his name – at this point more than 3 years had passed since Jesus began his ministry in Galilee.

- He was a “God-fearer”, was worshipping Jehovah in the local synagogue, and would have been hearing the O.T. read each week – can you relate to his pre-salvation days?

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- Acts 10:39 “And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. **They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, 41 not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses.** We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify **that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead.** 43 He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that **everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.**” 44 Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. 45 The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. 46 For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, 47 “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” 48 So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days. NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“Then God allowed him to appear, not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses.”**
- More “favoritism” to ponder? Why did he choose the witnesses he did?
- **Because he had to choose someone – and “more light, more accountability”.**

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With **favor** comes responsibility – many of the “favored” witnesses would end up as martyrs because of the **favor** God showed to them.

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- Acts 10:42 And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that **Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all**—the living and the dead. NLT
- John 5:21 For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. 22 In addition, **the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge,** 23 so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him. NLT

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- So the question of just who it is that will sit on the Great White Throne is solved – it is Jesus.
- He has already been fully identified as the Judge at the Bema Seat – the judgment of the believer’s works.
- And we see here that the Judge of all includes **the living and the dead** – there are no other categories needed to cover all people of all time!

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- **“as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message”**
- Please notice that Peter did not walk them through the “sinners prayer”, he didn’t give an invitation, he did nothing mechanical.
- Basically he gets out, “Jesus is the Messiah”, “it is through him that sins are forgiven”, and all of sudden Cornelius’ band is saved and speaking in tongues.

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The Acts of the Apostles

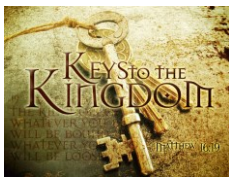
- Just like with the Jews on Pentecost and the Samaritans in Acts chapter 8 – when Peter uses that 3rd kingdom key and preaches to the gentiles, the Holy Spirit is given.
- Peter and his associates are immediately disarmed of any notions that the gentiles cannot be saved **and the sign that convinced them was “tongues”**.
- They knew what happened to them at Pentecost so they knew it had to be God doing a work of grace in gentiles.

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Jew-Samaritan-Gentile



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- Over time the Jews came to think of “elect” to be the same as preferred, or superior – false!
- In fact, throughout the O.T. God meticulously recorded many of the sins and flaws of his people perhaps so that future generations of Jews would not be prideful.
- It is not as though God constructed his elect people to be better than others – he didn’t.

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- In fact the DNA pool from which all people come is the same – this is why our founders said, **“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal”**.
- So forget whether mankind is Jew or Gentile and focus on whether one is dead or alive spiritually.
- With God it is never about ethnicity, nationality, or any other distinction – we are all equal in his eyes.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Gal 3:26 **There is no longer Jew or Gentile**, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you. NASB
- Hosea 9:23 At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself. I will show love to those I called 'Not loved.' **And to those I called 'Not my people,' I will say, 'Now you are my people.' And they will reply, 'You are our God!'"** NLT

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We should drop all the tribal identities and not just in the world, but especially in the church.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 10:47 Then Peter asked, "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" NLT
- Talk about a question with an obvious answer – if they've been baptized by the Spirit why couldn't they be water baptized!



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Questions

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