

ACTS 10

Peter's New Challenge for Gentile Mission

“God is no respecter of persons.” To a certain degree, this is the dominant theme of [Acts 10](#). Jews who considered themselves as custodians of the covenant acted as if God had no agenda with other people, the Gentiles. Luke, knowing the Jewish mind-set, included stories of the Jews among the Gentiles in witnessing God’s personal involvement with the Gentiles. For this matter, the story of Cornelius was significant during the early apostolic ministry of the church. It is stamped with a trilogy of proofs of the divine agenda for the Gentiles. The contrariety with the status quo, as Luke recounts, consists of depicting Cornelius as God-fearing, fasting, prayerful, and benevolent by giving alms to the poor. In Luke’s time, these were the very characteristics of a Jewish spirituality. At this moment, one wonders if Luke has intentionally expanded on Cornelius’s spirituality in contrast to Saul, a Jew, in [Acts 9](#), whose spiritual characteristics are limited to a zeal for God and his religion is devoid of the humane and pious traits we see in Cornelius. Moreover, Luke depicts the supernatural manifestations that affirm heaven’s approval of Cornelius’s heart for God: an angelic appearance and the delivery of a message ([10:1–8](#)). These again are experiences by most of the prominent figures among Jewish patriarchs. Let us call this: “God’s agenda for Gentiles proof #1.”

In relation to the above, Luke’s intention to demonstrate God’s approval of Gentiles continues with Peter’s personal story. To be sure, [10:9–16](#) put together a narrative of the same heaven dealing ahead of time with Peter’s possible doubt as to whether or not he should go to the Gentiles with the gospel of Jesus. It is only when Peter received messengers from Cornelius that he will understand the meaning of the figurative language of the dream he had just had about clean and unclean animals. Three times, the hungry Peter would resist killing and eating what God considers appropriate. It all meant that Peter had to go to “all nations” and preach Jesus Christ. This section is clear enough concerning God’s plan for the uncircumcised. The dream could be called “God’s agenda for Gentiles proof #2.”

The last long section of [Acts 10 \(10:24–48\)](#) portrays what happened at Cornelius’s house. The latter met Peter and reiterated his obedience to the angel’s instruction. Cornelius was speaking to an obedient apostle who had dared to do an unacceptable

thing in the sight of the Jews. This outmoded attitude of every Jew, Peter did not hide from Cornelius. However, to everyone's surprise, Peter had not finished talking when the Holy Spirit fell on the entire gathering of Gentiles, filling them and enabling each of them to speak in other tongues just like when he came upon the disciples in the upper room. The baptism in the Holy Spirit brought the Gentiles even closer than the Jews would think. This other supernatural happening is "God's agenda for Gentiles proof #3." As a whole, the story in Acts 10 is a pleasant and enriching blessing in the life of Cornelius, his household, Peter, and the circumcised Jews who had traveled with him to Caesarea.

THE TWO VISIONS (10:1–23A)

In Acts 10, Luke's focus shifts. Nonetheless, church expansion still remains as his persistent interest. In the previous chapters of Acts, Luke is attentive to the numerical growth of the church in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (e.g., 1:15; 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 6:7; 9:31). The present account and the following accounts deal with further developments regarding the evangelization of those beyond the Jewish religion and life standards.¹ From the beginning of Acts, Luke has related the story from a demographical and geographical point of view;² Jerusalem, its surrounding regions, and Samaria are the geographical areas concerned, respectively.

On the other hand, Caesarea Maritima in Judea (Acts 8:40; 9:30; 10:1, 24; 11:11; 12:19; 18:22; 21:8, 16; 23:23, 33; 25:1, 4, 6, 13), which should be distinguished from Caesarea Philippi (cf. Matt 16:13), was originally a fortified Phoenician port built on the seashore.³ Caesarea Maritima is situated on the Mediterranean coast of Palestine and about half-

¹ Pervo 2009: 264 comments that Cornelius's conversion is the longest story in Acts. He further argues that its story has sixty-six verses, while sixty verses are devoted to the trip to Rome (27:1–28:16), which is the next longest story.

² See Metzger 2003 [1965]: 197–98 for the geographical specifications regarding the Holy Land. In addition to a systematic analysis of Luke's literary arrangements that he discloses to raise the reader's awareness of Luke's interest in the details, statistics on the number of involved countries, islands, and cities are provided.

³ For a detailed explanation of Caesarea Martima, see Hengel 1995: 55–58. Cf. Fitzmyer 1998: 415, 448.

way between Joppa and Dora. In Strabo's time, along the coast of Palestine, there was a small town called "Strabo's Tower"; in the time of Tacitus, Caesarea developed into the head of Judea. Between Strabo's and Tacitus's time, the city was rebuilt by Herod the Great, who expanded the city greatly (*Josephus, Ant. 15.331–341*). It became the official residence of the Herodian kings,⁴ Festus, Felix, and other Roman procurators of Judea. Caesarea became part of the Roman province of Syria during Pompey's reign and would serve as the regional headquarters of the Roman government in Palestine for over six hundred years. In many aspects, therefore, Caesarea represented not only the presence of an invader, colonizer, and exploiter of Israel but also the existence of a detestable and unclean race, the Romans, who should be driven out at all cost. Pagan nations represented by Roman authorities were not merely political rivals and occupiers of the Israelites. They were also worshipers of strange deities, entities that had to be shunned religiously. They were the tenants of the Israelites' properties through heavy taxes. For a Jew, associating with these people meant divorcing with Moses' law and thus, with the true God of Israel. However, it is at this place that the narrative begins with Cornelius, the Roman centurion, as its protagonist.⁵

Thus, this figure that bears a name that is evocative of nobility and value, undertakes the difficult and delicate task of securing the Roman Empire's interests in the socially complex metropolis of Caesarea. Just as this port played a critical role in the entire Roman Palestine region, so did Cornelius and his regiment. Thus, if Cornelius was well spoken of by all Jews despite their antagonism toward not only pagan and polytheistic communities but also colonizers, he could be the man fit for bridging people of different faiths, cultures, and temperaments.⁶

⁴ While reviewing Kokkinos's book (1998), Bryan 2002: 224–38 presents some noteworthy information concerning these historically important characters. Both authors agree on the complexity of the Herodians' identity. Based on the description therein, one may see the possibility of leaving room for the permanence of these kings' residence.

⁵ The terms "centurion" and "Italian Cohort" indicate that Cornelius would have commanded a force of around a hundred men who were enrolled in periods of great need. Thus, Cornelius's occupation further reinforces his image as an invader and an entity that symbolizes uncleanness. Cf. Peterson 2009: 326.

⁶ Tenney 1961: 247.

At this stage, Luke expands the narrative to reveal how the thick wall between the Jews and the Gentiles collapsed.⁷ The persecutions engendered by the diverging perceptions regarding Jesus' identity had somehow abated. God had, to a certain degree, dealt with the persecution by creating harmony in the church. Moreover, as Luke comments about the priests and Pharisees, several had surrendered to Jesus by this time. The momentary shift of focus from Jews to Gentiles will be seen throughout Acts 11; 13, and 15, as well. In these chapters, Peter extends God's grace to non-Jews, while Paul and Barnabas are ordained by the Holy Spirit to minister to the Gentiles. Furthermore, the church in Jerusalem convenes the first council to decide on the integration of the Gentiles into the newly founded faith. Here and in the subsequent accounts regarding Paul's ministry among Gentiles, Moses' law is presented as a pointer to the messianic grace in which the door to seek Christ Jesus is open for both Jews and Gentiles. This is the reason why Jesus is preached to both Jews and Gentiles to fulfill the promise of God that all who believe will be saved. At this point, as Fitzmyer considers, Peter's preaching to Cornelius and his household—delivered from Peter as a representative of the Twelve—is an “official” inauguration of the mission to the Gentiles and the “split of Christianity from its Jewish matrix.”⁸ Therefore, from a theological perspective, Cornelius's conversion cannot be considered as any different from the former ones.

The importance of the Peter-Cornelius incident can be seen by how heaven worked three times to show the timeliness and urgency of the Gentiles' need of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to Peter (Acts 10:9–16).⁹ Regarding the composition of the leadership of the early church, it was completely Jewish from its very root and the leadership's priority was to reach out to the Jews. There was no intention of going to the nations to preach the gospel; there was no such strategy that would take teams to the Gentiles. The possibility of converting the Gentiles remained only through a divine or providential push.

⁷ Johnson 1992: 186 calls it the “most fundamental and dangerous step” in which the early church would later face a great melee, requiring her to reinterpret her identity about the world's ethnic and religious differences.

⁸ Fitzmyer 1998: 447.

⁹ Concerning the immediate relevancy of this heavenly vision, some commentators contend that this vision was necessary and applicable to Peter's current situation while others tend to view it from a macroscopic perspective as an allegory of how all men are “clean.” See Marshall 1980b: 186.

Three repetitions convinced Peter, and the same vision presented justification since Peter would not want to go on the mission¹⁰ due to his convictions based on his Jewish tradition. Hence, the conversion has far-reaching effects on the universal church history and, more specifically, on Christian spirituality—a considerable change in the Judaism-born faith occurs.¹¹

For Cornelius, angelic activity initiates the process of the Gentile's participation in this new stage of the development of the gospel. As Cornelius was a **devout man who prayed constantly to God** (Acts 10:2), he would have encountered the angel while he was praying—the **ninth hour of the day** was the time for Jewish sacrifice and prayer.¹² Regarding angelic activity, this is a reoccurring manifestation in Luke's several narratives in his Gospel and Acts. An angel appeared to the priest Zacharias while he was serving and told him that his prayer was heard (Luke 1:11, 13, 18–19) which is similar to what the angel did with Cornelius (Acts 10:3–6). As a matter of fact, Luke in Acts, as in his Gospel, consistently has angels involved in almost all major narratives (1:10; 5:19; 8:26; 10:3, 7, 22; 11:13; 12:7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 23; 23:8, 9; 27:23). Angelic initiative and activities can be seen clearly in this important narrative about the mission for the Gentiles (10:3, 7, 22). More specifically, the angel told Cornelius that both his prayers and alms, offerings given in commemoration to God, have ascended (10:3–4). This repeated divine intervention accompanied by good tidings marks Luke's evangelistic bias in his historiography of Acts.

Furthermore, the account of Cornelius's vision evokes the account of an unnamed centurion in the Third Gospel (7:1–10). The account of the centurion in Luke's Gospel has notable parallels with that of Cornelius. Both centurions are esteemed citizens among Jews although they are foreigners from pagan nations. The centurion in the Third Gospel is introduced to Jesus by elders of the Jews (Luke 7:3); similarly, it was

¹⁰ Bock 2007: 389 argues that Peter's emphatic rejection of eating anything unclean is demonstrated by Luke's use of two negatives (*mēdamōs* with *oudepote*) in 10:14; the use of two negatives in the NT with the conjunction "and" only appears here.

¹¹ This revelation that God has cleansed all foods implies (1) an elucidation of Jesus' teachings, (2) the termination of the temporary law to keep Israel holy, and (3) the initiation of a new stage in the development of the gospel. See Peterson 2009: 330.

¹² Witherington 1998: 348.

Peter, a Jew, who makes [Jesus](#) known in Cornelius's home and neighborhood. Moreover, the unnamed centurion is said to have shown great love to the nation of Jews by building a synagogue for them ([Luke 7:5](#)). Cornelius, on the other hand, is described as one who has a good reputation among all Jews ([Acts 10:22](#)).¹³ Still, the notion of unworthiness appears in the centurion story of the Third Gospel, as is the case with Cornelius, who was an unworthy Gentile. The nameless centurion declares himself unworthy of receiving [Jesus](#) at his home. Likewise, Cornelius falls at Peter's feet in reverence, as if the former is unworthy in front of the latter ([10:25](#)). In both cases the unworthiness is purported in relation to God. The centurion in Luke's Gospel, despite his reputation and wealth, sees [Jesus](#) as too holy to come under his shelter ([Luke 7:6](#)). In the case of Cornelius, it is Peter who thinks that the divine law is too holy to allow a Jew to mingle with the Gentiles ([10:28](#)). Interestingly, both accounts insinuate a high expectation as the result of a command by the most honorable visitor ([Luke 7:7](#); [Acts 10:33](#)). Finally, there is a similarity of the heavenly approval toward Cornelius's and the nameless centurion's faith. The latter is literally admired by [Jesus](#), who found it as a matchless faith, since the centurion had an absolutely authoritative understanding of [Jesus](#)' words ([Luke 7:9](#)). Likewise, Cornelius's prayers and deeds are declared by heaven as a memorial before God ([10:4](#)). In this way, undoubtedly, Luke shows an intention that overarches these different literary works. His purpose is indeed evident as he endeavors to demonstrate how the Gentiles' faithfulness to the God of Israel is even greater than that of the Jews. In each situation, God is revealing that He is already pleased by the Gentiles beforehand and that their faith brings about God's greater actions.

Besides, Luke's pattern of writing is repeatedly evocative of a sort of Lucanism in relating God's action to men's lives; especially, the dialogues with heaven evoke this.¹⁴ There are seven elements that can be compared regarding Saul's experience on the road

¹³ Although not circumcised, as it can be seen in the questions regarding circumcision later on, Cornelius was a sympathizer with Judaism and adopted its acts of piety such as prayer or almsgiving—this may also imply some exposure to the synagogue. See Bock 2007: 386.

¹⁴ Peterson 2009: 328 notes that the divine origin of Cornelius's dialogue with the angel can be most clearly seen in the angel's knowledge of Simon Peter's exact location—his residence with a tanner near the sea. Cornelius's immediate obedience to seek Peter in this slightly unexpected location—tanners were considered unclean people—symbolizes divine authority.

to Damascus and Cornelius’s interaction with the angel. The seven elements underscore Luke’s rhetorical skill with a sustained attention on angelic nature and function. The following chart helps see them synoptically:

Saul	Ch. 9	Ch. 10	Cornelius
(1) He was called upon by a voice while in the company of other religious authorities.	v. 4	v. 3	(1) The angel called Cornelius’s name audibly such that it was clear the message was addressed to him.
(2) He was overwhelmed by the presence of Jesus and the light strongly shocked his sight.	vv. 5–7	v. 4	(2) Cornelius was afraid because of seeing an angel face to face and being addressed by that heavenly creature.
(3) His response Who are you Lord reveals his being humbled. His interlocutor presents himself.	v. 5	v. 4	(3) Cornelius responded What is it Lord? ¹⁵
(4) He was instructed on what to do after an authoritative reprimand and grave warning.	v. 6	vv. 5–6	(4) When he was instructed what to do, on top of being complimenting for his consistent and sacrificial devotion, Cornelius acted upon it.
(5) He was assisted by Ananias who would usher him on a new spiritual journey.	vv. 11, 15–16	vv. 5–6	(5) Assisted by Simon Peter, he was helped to understand the new dimension in his relationship with God.
(6) Saul’s obedience prepared him to radically change his perspective of faith and discover his life purpose. Ananias, who was also hesitant, finally gave in to accomplish God’s plan.	v. 8	vv. 7–8	(6) Cornelius obeyed the heavenly messenger to learn more about what God was leading him into; in addition, the angel gave him a pleasing report concerning his prayer life and almsgiving. Peter was the reluctant assistant who eventually understood God’s plan that he willingly joined.
(7) The assistance was sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. Saul’s sight was restored. He	vv. 17–18	vv. 44–46	(7) Peter’s introduction of Jesus and the good news to Cornelius, his household, and those from his neighborhood were

was baptized and empowered by the Spirit.

backed by heaven. The Holy Spirit was poured on them just as on the Day of Pentecost.¹⁶

Peter did not doubt to baptize those the Holy Spirit had already filled.

The parallelism makes it clear that Luke is just a voice of his informants. Nonetheless, Luke's schema in arranging elements of his stories remains unchanged through and through. Above all, God, by means of His representatives, is at work carrying His plan and purpose with and through the two pairs—Saul/Ananias on the one hand and Cornelius/Peter on the other.

Peter's vision ([Acts 10:9–16](#)), moreover, is another instance of a Lucan supernatural storytelling. Its structure varies slightly from the traditional composition but the elements are of equal nature and value. It would be noteworthy to observe them one by one. First of all, the word (*horama* in [10:3](#)) used in Cornelius's vision is closely related to the one (*theō reō* in [10:11](#))¹⁵ used in Peter's context. However, there is an important nuance to accentuate here because, in the first situation, Cornelius is in prayer at **the ninth hour** in the afternoon, which suggests that he was fully awake with a sharp consciousness. The circumstances of Peter's vision happened **on the roof** (*dōma*),¹⁶ **about the sixth hour**,¹⁷ on the contrary, are marked by unconsciousness (*ekstasis* [**trance**])¹⁸ in [10:10](#)). Since Peter was physiologically in need of food,¹⁹ there is room to associate the vision occupied by the necessity of eating with what was going on in his body rather than the mission to the Gentiles. Peter's spiritual awareness emerges above his corpo-

¹⁵ Barrett 1994: 506 argues that the word *theō reō* is used in Acts in relation to supernatural vision ([7:56](#)) in addition to natural vision ([3:16](#)).

¹⁶ Cf. [Jdt 8:5](#) (NRSV), “at home where she set up a tent for herself on the roof (*dōmatos*) of her house. She put sackcloth around her waist and dressed in widow's clothing.”

¹⁷ Some poorly attested MSS (Ⲛc 225) have *enatēn* (ninth) instead of *hekēn*. The variant is probably to make Peter's prayer coincide with Cornelius's prayer in [10:3, 30](#). Metzger 2000 [1971]: 326.

¹⁸ BDAG 309 explains that the word *ekstasis* means “a state of being in which consciousness is wholly or partially suspended ... associated with divine action.”

¹⁹ See Witherington 1998: 350 on the argument for Peter's refusal to eat.

real demand to convince Luke's reader that the phenomenon was not merely a physiological one. In this context, the first clue to get closer to God's perspective is to consider the symbolism²⁰ that fills the vision: **heaven opened**, an apocalyptic phrase reminiscent of Daniel and other prophetic imageries, and **four-footed beasts and creeping things of earth and birds of heaven**, a description of creatures that recalls the Mosaic law. Above all, Peter is aware of being in the presence of the Lord in spite of being in a trance and the latter is working out a new way to perceive His creations. Though the meaning of the dream-vision (10:10) could not be sufficiently clear to Peter until he was received in Cornelius's home, the interpretation ascribed by Peter regarding the dream-vision arouses no objection among biblical scholars. Whereas Cornelius's vision is straightforward and the message is clear (10:3), Peter's dream-vision is highly metaphorical and complex, which renders it unclear. The eating imagery would prove to have insinuated the developing intimate relationship of the Jews with the Gentiles.²¹ Although Peter was confronted in the dream and would later understand what God was implying,²² this was merely on an individual level. There was a need for the entire early church leadership to reevaluate what admitting the Gentiles into the fellowship of the church would entail in terms of circumcision and torah observance. In fact, God was initiating the reconstruction of the character and composition of the church from a solely Jewish movement in Jerusalem and anywhere else in order to make a multiethnic community well positioned to take this gospel of Jesus to the ends of the earth . Being the apostle-in-chief, Peter himself represented the bodies of other apostles and the church. God knew what He was doing by starting this radical transformation of perspec-

²⁰ Miller 2010: 452–55 argues that Peter's vision is categorized as one of the "symbolic dream-visions"; interpreting these visions is not straightforward as it generally is for "message dreams and visions." He acknowledges that this dream-vision "transcends" the limits of physical realities. Symbolic dream-visions' functions include (1) providing a medium by which apocalyptic thinkers could envisage and describe a supernatural reality and (2) hinting at God's direction without rendering God directly responsible for the specific actions taken by human interpreters.

²¹ Matson and Brown 2006: 453–54.

²² Regarding exactly what God was implying and what Peter learned, Tannehill 1994: 133–38 contends that Peter was aware of the Gentiles' salvation before this vision—only their cleanliness was confirmed in this vision for Peter.


tive within Peter.

As Peter was immersed in this vision, **the three men²³ sent by Cornelius arrived at the gate of his residence—Simon the Tanner’s house (Acts 10:17)**. The complexity of the vision hindered Peter from perceiving the current situation and it was at this point that heavenly intervention occurred once again (10:19–20). This final divine guidance seals any reservation that the subject might have regarding God’s vision and in this context, this situation is evocative of Acts 8:26–29.²⁴ The effectiveness of the Spirit’s prompting is demonstrated by Peter’s immediate invitation for Cornelius, which in turn precipitates a series of events in which Peter would follow God’s instructions **without hesitation (*mēden diakrinomenos*)**.²⁵

Fusing the Horizons: Law Morphed into Liberty

The account of Acts 10 and 11 leaves the reader with a clear sense of a new frame of spirituality and profound social transformation. Three households are brought into the picture to explain this agenda that God had. The social setting in focus here is concerned with Judaic discrimination toward the unclean, common, and holy. Uncleanness was imputed to any Jew who touched dead creatures, ate restricted animals, or associated himself with pagans. Since the Jewish people had been given by God the law that regulated their worship service, eating practices, marriage, and social relationships, they considered themselves as constituents of a unique and holy nation and looked upon all other nations in the world as heathen, Godless, or idolaters. This was a self-conceited belief that rendered the Jewish people into taking pride in regarding themselves as superior. This attitude needed to be changed fundamentally to accommodate other people God was bringing into the new covenant.

The new covenant had come to eliminate conflict among mankind. The progression of God’s revelation begins with Cornelius. Luke describes this Roman soldier as a God-fearing, prayerful, and humane man: **He**

²³ The word *treis* (three) is strongly attested by most important MSS (P74  A C E 33 82 88 104 181 323 629 945 1739) while the term *dyo* (two) appears in MS B. Although the expression “two men” is more difficult than “three men” in view of 10:7 and 11:11, it might be that *treis* is original due to varied external evidence (so, most English translations). Metzger 2000 [1971]: 328 presents some arguments to support both numbers.

²⁴ Peterson 2009: 331.

²⁵ Pervo 2009: 272 argues that the participial phrase *mēden diakrinomenos* can mean “without doubt,” “without hesitation,” “without reservations,” “without distinctions,” or “without discrimination.” Some major translations such as **ESV**, **NRSV**, **NET**, **NLT**, and so on have “without hesitation.” Similarly, **TNIV** renders, “do not hesitate.”

was a devout man who feared God along with his whole household. He did many charitable deeds to those in need and always prayed to God (Acts 10:2). An angel appeared to Cornelius and said not to downplay his faith and deeds but to raise them to a higher level that involved hearing and comprehending the good news of [Jesus Christ](#). At that same time, God was aiding Peter to understand the essence of the new movement of which he was the leader. While Cornelius was being reoriented by an angel, Peter was being challenged by the vision he had from heaven. Both visions reveal how heaven was at work for the pagan community as well the Jews. The supernatural puzzled Peter during his lodging with Simon the Tanner, who also was a Jew, but an unclean one in his occupation. Simon the Tanner was possibly a believer in the gospel of [Jesus Christ \(9:42\)](#) and Simon Peter was the missionary in Joppa.

These different groups represented by Cornelius (a pagan by origin), Peter (an apostle of the new faith in [Jesus Christ](#)), and the unclean tanner (from the circumcised group) are God-ordained categories that are all involved in His agenda. Luke reports that Peter invited the men who were sent by Cornelius into the tanner's house to be his guests ([Acts 10:23](#)). Now, three different people in religious, social, and ethnic status stayed under one roof. What is the source that makes this outcome possible? What caused the law-dominated Jews to embrace the heathens and the unclean? No wonder that it is the power of the gospel that enabled the mingling of these three different groups of people in making them one in the new covenant. It makes Peter enter into the unclean Jew's house and Gentile guests to stay with Jews in perfect liberty of conscience and conviction. The law has morphed into this newfound liberty among all peoples as the children of God.

PETER FOLLOWS THE MOVE OF GOD (10:23B–33)

Now, God had had enough time to deal with both Cornelius and Peter while they were away from one another (Joppa and Caesarea are 48 km apart).²⁶ Cornelius and Peter had both learned to follow God's move. This section makes it plain that the expectation from each side was high, since neither of them was sure yet of what the meeting initiated from above would look like;²⁷ certainly, the agenda was not clear to all. The eagerness of the centurion had led him to generously invite more people to his home ([Acts 10:24](#)). [Acts 10:24–33](#) describes the setting of the narrative mostly in its social and spiritual dimensions. On one hand, Cornelius is portrayed as a military officer who is always ready to bow before his invitee. When he welcomed Peter, he wanted to give him the same reverence he probably would have given to the angel by bowing down or by **falling down at his (Peter's) feet and worshipping him (10:25)**.²⁸ However, Peter could not

²⁶ Marshall 1980b: 184.

²⁷ Dunn 1996: 140 is right to appreciate the incident as “the fuller, climatic manifestation of God's purpose in Christ” for Gentiles to become participants in His Kingdom.

²⁸ Some commentators such as Witherington 1998: 352 point out that the word *proskyneō* (wor-

allow Cornelius to do for him what he was supposed to do for God. Luke's rhetoric in this verse establishes human equality before God regardless of the mission and role the person has assumed in God's purpose. Moreover, these words, **I myself am also a man** (10:26),²⁹ from Peter's own mouth in the context of a Jew-Gentile interaction may retain double value. By these words Peter is asserting the absolute truth of being as mortal as any other human being and hence unworthy of special consideration. They fit right here to prepare Cornelius and the audience to realize God's impartiality, before Peter went on to remind them concerning the Jewish-Gentile disassociation (10:28). Luke consistently abides by the principle of not concentrating attention on humans in any situation, whether or not that be about miracles, but centers all attention on God, who alone deserves worship (cf. Acts 3:12–13). Moreover, Peter took advantage of that warm welcome to confess the Jewish religious bias in relation to Gentiles and admitted before the crowd that because God initiated the breaking down of barriers between the Jews and Gentiles, he had no choice but to come (10:28–29). Precedence for Peter's perplexity can be found in Deut 10:17 (cf. Sir. 35:12–13) in which Jews were supposed to know that Israel's God shows no partiality. Like Saul, who had not fully comprehended the fact that Jesus was the Messiah before the Damascus road experience, Peter needed a renewed understanding of the divine impartiality which extends to the Gentiles who were not part of God's covenant relationship as Israel was.³⁰ This announcement in itself was kerygmatic since it was no secret among Gentiles that Jews looked down on them. In addition, these words are symmetrical to his declaration later: **I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him** (10:34–35).

Cornelius's recapturing of his experience with the divine messenger is another ship) in 10:25 could indicate obeisance, a Middle Eastern greeting for important figures instead of worship for a divine figure. Either way, Peter's response emphasizes his mortality and commonality.

²⁹ Codex Bezae has a detailed description concerning Peter's refusal of Cornelius's reverence by adding *ti poieis* (what are you doing) instead of *anastēthi* (get up) and *hos kai sy* (just like you) after *eimi*. Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger 2006: 233 contend that here Peter, a Jew, put himself on the same level as a Gentile.

³⁰ Matera 1987: 62–66 (63).

important part of his interaction with Peter ([Acts 10:30–32](#)). It sets the spiritual atmosphere increasingly more appropriate for the day. This God-fearing Gentile did so to give no credit to any man, not even to himself, in spite of the recognition he had had in God’s eyes. He did so also, as hinted here above, in order to claim no agenda apart from what God had in mind, which would be shown by God’s command through his angel.³¹ Cornelius began to answer by explaining his experience, which contained his regular prayer and **the appearance of a man who wore bright clothing (10:30)**. Compared with his earlier experience in [10:3–6](#), his reply here is simple. Nonetheless, Cornelius used a new expression, **the appearance of a man who wore bright clothing (10:30b)**, instead of using the word **angel of God (10:3b)**. He seems to have expressed himself in this manner because the angel appeared to him in the form of a man.³² Or, having attempted to bow down to Peter, which as a God-fearing Gentile was not an appropriate action, Cornelius wanted to convey a message that the reason he bowed to Peter was in connection to the angel being seen as a man. If the angel had come in the form of Peter, he would not have liked to dishonor the angel. It is possible that in Cornelius’s mind, Peter could not have been just an ordinary man; heaven itself had given him the vision and the instructions to bring this man to his house. But when Peter stopped him from worshiping by saying **I myself am also a man**, Cornelius breathed a sigh of relief and then explained his rationale for doing what he had done; the angel appeared as a man and if it were the second time, he would not have known unless explained to him.

An essential element to take note of within Cornelius’s response is the fact that Cornelius said, **we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all that you have been commanded by (*hypo*)³³ the Lord ([Acts 10:33](#))**. This first confirms the fact that

³¹ Fitzmyer 1998: [462](#) argues that Cornelius’s last statement of his introductory remarks to Peter and the audience gathered in his house is literally “to listen to all the instructions that the Lord has given.”

³² Bock 2007: [394–95](#) argues that the dominant opinion regarding Cornelius’s paraphrase of the divine being that visited him is that these descriptions or the combinations of these descriptions are often attributed to angels, such as in [Luke 24:4](#) or [Acts 1:10](#).

³³ The preposition *hypo* (by) is attested by $\text{B}^*\text{H L P}$ while *apo* (from) is in P45, 74 A C D. It is not easy to decide the original preposition on the basis of the external evidence. Nonetheless, Metzger 2000 [1971]: [332](#) prefers *hypo* to *apo* due to the weight of the external evidence. Cf. Rius-

God had made it known to Cornelius, not Peter, that Peter would address him. Second, this response is evocative of [Acts 1:13–14](#) where the Jewish believers were waiting for Pentecost. Thus, this gathering can be viewed as a “Gentile Pentecost” that could serve as a catalyst to expand the mission to the far ends of the world.³⁴

PETER’S SPEECH IN FULL CONFIDENCE ([10:34–43](#))

Apart from Cornelius’s greatly open heart to accept whatever Peter had received from God, there is little immediate natural connection between Cornelius’s words and the opening statement of Peter’s speech that is his confession of God’s impartiality ([Acts 10:34](#)). However, from a holistic perspective, Cornelius’s demonstration of his direct communication with God ([10:30–33](#)) would have further confirmed the validity of Peter’s vision that would have led to his confession.³⁵ As seen earlier, Peter had been talking when Cornelius interjected to clarify about the backdrop of the day and the reason God had sent him. Thus, Peter started from where he left³⁶ after he entered the house with Cornelius.

Peter’s speech follows three main steps: (1) the *logos* and [Jesus Christ](#): an introduction of the speech ([Acts 10:34–36](#)); (2) the kerygmatic message to the entire humanity through [Jesus](#) which is the core of the speech ([10:37–41](#)); and (3) the unique privilege of being [Jesus](#)’ witness ([10:42–43](#)) concludes the message. Apart from his words that Luke reports from the Jerusalem council ([Acts 15](#)), this is the last missionary speech by Peter in Acts. Though this speech has some classic elements shared by several other speeches Peter has made before, it is nonetheless unique in various aspects. In his introduction, Peter verbalizes the lesson from his dream-vision experience. God’s attributes found in Deuteronomy—God of gods, Lord of lords, the Great and Awesome, who shows no partiality ([Deut 10:17](#) and [2 Chr 19:7](#))—are actualized in this event. Peter understood clearly that Gentiles are included in God’s redemption plan that was thought by most of the Jews to be exclusively for them. Gentiles who fear God should no longer be considered

Camps and Read-Heimerdinger 2006: 235.

³⁴ Witherington 1998: 354.

³⁵ Peterson 2009: 335.

³⁶ Some scholars such as Witherington 1998: 355 do not treat Peter’s speech ([10:34–43](#)) as a continuation of Peter’s previous comments.

as unclean people; they are equally favored by God.³⁷ The election is therefore redefined as the result of fearing God, which in turn leads to righteousness. In other words, the adoption of Israel as YHWH's firstborn people ([Exod 4:22](#); [1 Kgs 14:7](#); [22:4](#) etc.) and the admittance of Gentiles are not based on their Jewish or non-Jewish origins.³⁸ It rather results from how they treasure God—the way they relate to God with fear ([Acts 10:35](#)). Furthermore, Peter stressed the notion of **every nation** in this revelatory lesson. That is to say, Israel is no longer the exclusive nation in God's favor. Instead, in **every nation**, God is looking for and finding His people. He is not finding His people because their deeds are enough to warrant their salvation. It is because those good works are good enough to indicate their voluntary intimacy with Him as they affirm their dependence on God who alone accomplishes their salvation in Jesus ([10:35–36](#)).³⁹ Doubtless, the Cornelius narrative is a demonstration of such divine agenda. God had intended to fulfill His salvation plan in Jesus with those who took heed of His purpose since the preceding dispensations. The good deeds of Cornelius needed to be complemented by faith in Jesus, which was now the perfect way to serve God.

Still, in his introductory statement, Luke's Peter uses *logos*; a similar introduction of Jesus appears in the Johannine Gospel. Here, once again, the term *logos* indicates the object of proclamation to the children of Israel ([Acts 10:36](#)). Of course, Luke and John are not the only writers who remarked on Christ as being sent first to the Israelites. The Gospels attest that Jesus had sent his disciples to the lost children of Israel (e.g., [Matt 10:6](#); [15:24](#)). Paul in Acts, in spite of his calling to the Gentiles, would preach to Jews first ([Acts 11:19](#); [17:10, 12](#); [18:5](#); cf. [Rom 1:16](#)). And all seem to be in agreement that Scripture (cf. [Ps 107:20](#); [Isa 52:7](#)) emphasizes Israel as being primarily targeted by the gospel. That **the message of peace was preached through Jesus Christ** suggests the reconciliation ministry of Israel with God that Jesus came to accomplish ([Acts 10:36](#)). The fact that

³⁷ Marshall 1980b: 189 notes that God's lack of favoritism, his objective impartiality, on the other hand implies that there will be no grace upon evildoers on the day of judgment (cf. [Col 3:25](#); [Deut 10:17](#)).

³⁸ The usage of the word *dektos* (acceptable) in [Acts 10:25](#) indicates that the gospel will find its way to the Gentiles, and thus they will be given the opportunity to accept it. For Peter, it does not mean automatic salvation as will be demonstrated in [Acts 11:14](#) and [15:9](#). Cf. Keener 2013: 1797.

³⁹ See Thomas 2011: 302 on the implications of evangelical exclusivism in Jesus.

Luke does not intentionally use *logos* both as the message and the messenger like John does not alter the meaning of Peter's statement nor make it sound awkward.⁴⁰ Elsewhere, Jesus is presented as the "wisdom" of God (1 Cor 1:24), which entails the fact, as Peter articulates, that Jesus was the preacher of peace⁴¹ and that through him, God was mending His relationship with Israel. However, Peter has already redefined God's criterion of the "new covenant," which allows the audience—Gentiles and Jews alike—to become co-beneficiaries, since **Jesus is Lord of all** (10:36). Jews and their sympathizers who apparently made up the mini-crusaders of the day needed therefore to have a further presentation of who Jesus was. Peter goes on to do so by delineating Jesus' ministry encapsulated in the key attributes and credits ascribed to him.⁴²

Though this speech is shorter than his first one (Acts 2:14–40), Peter kept his focus on Christ. A comparison of both speeches affirms the invariables contained in the apostolic witness exemplified by Peter. Those invariables may be found rearranged, elaborated, or shortened in one speech when compared with the other. However, this variation may have been intended by the speaker according to what he wanted to emphasize. Nonetheless, the axis of the talk in the different occasions remained unchanged, although the emphasized elements are slightly different, as will be seen. At least, themes regarding Christ's pre-crucifixion life, ministry, death, resurrection, or judgment, and apostolic role of witness reoccur consistently.

As far as Jesus' life and ministry are concerned, Peter is qualified to account since he is an eyewitness. In Acts 10:36–38, Peter is pointing out that Jesus was known very well as Nazarene, a man that God had attested to Israel. For Peter, **the mighty works and good deeds that God did through Jesus throughout all Judea**⁴³ beginning from

⁴⁰ Dunn 1996: 142.

⁴¹ The term peace used in 10:36 indicates that Jesus came to accomplish not only reconciliation between God and His people but also between Jews and Gentiles, especially when taking the current context into consideration. Cf. Witherington 1998: 358.

⁴² Himes 2011: 227–43 (240) argues for a shared theology in Acts 2–3, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter in spite of their respective nuances. This particular speech is no exception. It would not be erroneous at all to learn that in his speech to Cornelius's household and those invited to share the message, Peter's preaching is a development of his earlier ones.

⁴³ Peterson 2009: 337 thinks of Philip as the one responsible for the evangelization of Judea that is

Galilee indicate that the man was sent by God (10:37). The Jews who saw Jesus performing those works would have had no doubt. More specifically, Luke uses the phrase **doing good**⁴⁴ to explain what Jesus did. In fact, for Peter, the mighty works—preaching the good news, anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, and healing those who were oppressed—manifested God’s presence with him. One might take note, nevertheless, that in the first speech Peter was driven by the circumstance of Pentecost to elaborate more on the fulfillment of prophecy, and thus did not tarry on the geographical details of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Conversely, in the speech to the Gentiles in Cornelius’s house, Peter is careful to share the background of the Good News, including Jesus’ predecessor, John the Baptist, and the geographical information of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Nonetheless, in all cases, Peter highlights the fact that Jesus was from God and was enabled by God.⁴⁵ Peter’s interest in presenting Jesus’ ministry not as a moralistic movement or principle-based proclamation but as a ministry marked by mighty works meant to heal and free the oppressed is notable in this section (10:38).

In introducing the heart of his message concerning Jesus, Luke records Peter’s phrase **you know** in Acts 10:38, which he would then go on to expound. The question to ask here is, what did Cornelius know? Or to what extent was that knowledge related to Cornelius’s salvation experience? Fitzmyer thinks the phrase **you know** is Luke’s composition directed to the readers of Acts instead of Peter’s words to Cornelius.⁴⁶ In general, his assessment of the common knowledge of Jesus’ ministry throughout the Judean countryside falls in line with Marshall’s view, in which he takes the phrase **you know** to indicate rumors that spread across the Judean countryside about Jesus with no particular personal knowledge of the subject.⁴⁷ It is doubtful to assert if such knowledge

alluded to in this summary of the spreading of the gospel.

⁴⁴ From a historical and linguistic Greek context, this phrase is a significant and powerful one; the term was traditionally used to describe the deeds of gods, heroes, politicians, and other great thinkers such as Socrates. See Bock 2007: 397–98.

⁴⁵ The observation made by Bruce 1988: 214 is pertinent. The works of Jesus were God’s, because in the first speech and in the last alike, we confront his Messiahship. Peter preached in his first speech that God made Jesus to be Christ. In the last speech he declared that Jesus was the anointed of God, which also means the same.

⁴⁶ Fitzmyer 1998: 464.

was sufficient for one's faith in Christ for personal salvation. It could also be simply a rhetorical device either employed by Peter or Luke without any actual matter of facts involved.⁴⁸ However, a minority view takes the phrase to be a genuine knowledge of the gospel of [Jesus Christ](#) to such a degree that Cornelius's household was already saved and Peter only came to confirm their salvation experience.⁴⁹ Although probable, such a view has not found much acceptability among scholars. It is difficult to pinpoint the actual moment of Cornelius's conversion, but to state that it happened prior to Peter's coming would depend more on imagination than the text allows. Amassing all the probable theories outlined above regarding the significance of this phrase, a probable proposition would be that Luke might have attempted to show the double aspects of the validity of what Peter was saying; the people have heard something about [Jesus](#) and his work, and now Peter has come to verify their general knowledge about [Jesus](#) so that [Jesus](#) can be their personal savior who would deliver them from all oppression.

The intriguing part of the phrase **you know** is that Peter summarizes a lot of who [Jesus](#) was and what he did, not only in terms of historical facts of hearsay about the person and his deeds but also in terms of the theological fulfillment of messianic prophecies in which the spiritual realities are involved.⁵⁰ Luke wants his readers to understand that Cornelius was aware of the spiritual anointing and the redemptive works of the Messiah ([Acts 10:38](#)). However, one must keep in mind that Luke's primary focus in writing this document is not Cornelius but Theophilus / the reader who must have had knowledge of the [OT](#) expectations of a Messiah who would be anointed and accompanied by God's presence in setting the captives free from bondage and oppression. For such a knowledge and connection, Luke had informed the readers in his first volume. In line with what was expected of the Messiah; all those expectations happen to be fulfilled in [Jesus of Nazareth](#), about whom Cornelius and his household seemed to be aware. Thus, Luke's Peter testifies to the household of Cornelius a straightforward

⁴⁷ Marshall 1980b: 190–91.

⁴⁸ Keener 2013: 1801 notes that several times, Luke, in his writings, assumes that the events he will narrate are widely known ([Luke 24:18](#); [Acts 26:26](#)). Thus, within this context, the phrase you know may be an informal and habitual phrase.

⁴⁹ Wilckens 1974: 65–67.

⁵⁰ Marshall 1980b: 192.

message of Jesus' life and works.

The next aspect of the christological characteristics of Peter's speech has to do with Jesus' death. Two features differentiate the two speeches by Peter regarding this aspect (Acts 2:23, 36 and 10:39b). The first distinctiveness consists of the fact that in the first speech Peter introduces the most difficult understanding of the "theology of the cross"—Jesus is destined to die by God Himself, whereas actors of the crucifixion were in reality Jews, as in *aneilate* (**you killed**, 2:23). In the last speech, Peter does not address his audience as the ones who killed Jesus, as he did in the first. Luke makes it clear in the narrative by using the third person plural form of the verb, *aneilan* (**they killed**, 10:39b).⁵¹ In the former speech, this topic composes a large part of the overall speech compared to the latter. It goes without saying that Peter did so because these speeches are tailored to fit slightly different conclusions which lead on to the second distinctiveness between the two. The first speech is targeted at calling upon the Jews for repentance of their evil deeds, namely ignoring God's anointed one and crucifying him. The message to the Gentiles, on the other hand, was intending to clarify that Jesus is the agent and his works are the basis of God's judgment of the dead and the living.

Jesus was brought back from the dead. This also was the irrevocable kerygmatic aspect of the primitive preaching Peter would not miss in his speeches (Acts 2:24, 30–32 and 10:40–42).⁵² The apostle has always cared not to incriminate his hearers without showing them the way out opened by God. Both of Peter's speeches (Acts 2 and 10) emphasize a few crucial and complementary truths contained in the apostolic message related to Jesus' resurrection. First, it is God that raised Jesus from death. In the earlier speech Peter declared Jesus' resurrection as an act of God (2:24–32). Here Peter also announces that **God raised on the third day** (10:40).⁵³ Death was merely a door that

⁵¹ Nonetheless, Peter here, as in 5:30, does stress the shamefulness of Jesus' death by commenting in unusual terms, "by hanging him on a tree." See Peterson 2009: 337.

⁵² Cf. Bristol 1949: 89–97 rightly comments on C. H. Dodd's observations concerning the basics of preaching in the early church. According to Bristol the topics featured include: (1) the expectation that the preachers of this period had of the OT, namely the coming of the Messiah; (2) the dawning of a new age with the coming of the Messiah; (3) a brief summary of the life of Jesus, mentioning his descent from David; (4) the crucifixion; (5) resurrection and exaltation of Christ; (6) the Parousia, in which judgment will have a large part; and (7) a call for repentance and faith.

would lead to his glorious realm. God was with Jesus even in his death, taking the triumph to its fullest glory by overcoming death through and by Him.⁵⁴ Thus, it becomes clear why Luke has consistently insisted on these facts through Jesus' followers such as Peter and Paul (Acts 1:3; 2:24–35; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30–32; 10:39–40; 13:33–37). Following the flow of the speech on the day of Pentecost, the second theme occurring in both speeches is about the emphasis of witnessing. At least four times the phrase or its root are used (Acts 2:32, 40; 10:39, 42–43). Peter's statement reveals how the mission of the apostles is both a privilege and responsibility.⁵⁵ This two-pronged honor that the witnesses have is elaborated here (10:40–42) with echoes of Peter's definition of the criteria that can qualify a person to be a witness of the resurrection as Luke describes in Acts 1:21–22.⁵⁶ In this overall context, these references attest that a fully equipped witness of Jesus needed to have had a long exposure to Jesus' pre-crucifixion life and ministry and participated in Jesus' forty-day appearance, conversations, and communion following his resurrection. This combined experience would make Jesus' followers fully prepared to testify for everything that concerned him.⁵⁷

The final christological trait of Peter's speech is related to Jesus' role as **judge of the living and the dead**. With this motif, Peter points to the judgment as a result of the

⁵³ This statement can be found outside the Gospels only twice, namely here and in 1 Cor 15:3. Cf. Marshall 1980b: 193.

⁵⁴ Indeed, the Lucan demonstration regarding God's agency in every detail of Jesus' career is clear. See Bock 2007: 397 for this perspective. Luke-Acts is a record of how Jesus' career right from his pre-incarnation to his glorification through his birth, childhood-related wonders, his divinely approved water and Spirit baptism, and his pre-crucifixion empowered ministry, etc., was all part of God's own agenda with His actions being evident at every point.

⁵⁵ Peterson 2009: 338 refers to Acts 10:41–42 as the "significance and plan of God" regarding post-resurrection appearances. The resurrection, Jesus' subsequent ministry, and his ascension are the climactic events that his followers, especially those who have been with him even before his crucifixion, needed to attend in order to fully know Jesus and be able to witness Jesus' plenitude.

⁵⁶ Witherington 1998: 358.

⁵⁷ The valid reality of the witnesses' experiences with Jesus is frequently demonstrated by the fact that they sat at the same table, ate, and drank with him (Acts 1:4; Luke 24:30, 43). Marshall 1980b: 193. See also Tannehill 1994: 140.

refusal to repent ([Acts 2:38–40](#) and [10:42–43](#)). Put differently, both of Peter’s speeches relate penitence with forgiveness, while the stubborn refusal to repent is related to judgment. Overall, the warning about the final judgment is pervasive in NT teaching and is also the foundation on which the NT writers set their message. There are a myriad of references concerned about the judgment day that demonstrate individuals facing an account of one’s past actions and secret motives ([John 3:36](#); [Rom 5:9](#); [Eph 5:6](#); [Col 3:6](#); [Rev 6:17](#); [19:15](#), etc.) and facing the Creator in His indignation and “holy anger.” Furthermore, Peter’s perspective of the eschatological judgment remains Christocentric⁵⁸ in the same way as his kerygmatic presentation is of the Good News ([10:42b](#)).⁵⁹ It is in the name of Jesus that whoever believes is to be saved and it is by Jesus that, in the end, God shall judge all. Thus, it is not by coincidence that one single verse talks about the command to preach and the warning about judgment ([10:42](#)).⁶⁰ Placing the ministry of proclamation first and the judgment before God last indicates God’s grace is open to everyone in advance. As salvation is personal, condemnation will come to all who rejected the grace of God. There will be no possibility to reverse and undo the past. God’s justice will hence be demonstrated.

In summary, Peter’s speech asserts God’s attachment to the repentant and fearful. Jesus is Christ and Lord and he should be acknowledged by all, including those who crucified him. God’s Spirit is the mark of this new covenant relationship with people—Jews and Gentiles, living and dead—to exercise authority over all and bring just judgment upon to all.

ANOTHER PENTECOST IN A GENTILE’S HOME ([10:44–48](#))

God’s agenda of salvation for Cornelius and his household, and by implication the Gen-

⁵⁸ Regarding the Christocentric nature of the final judgment, some scholars assert that this “adds a sense of urgency.” For more on this matter, see Keener 2013: [1807](#).

⁵⁹ There is an *inclusio* in Peter’s speech about the christological point of view: Jesus Christ is Lord of all, which introduces Peter’s speech on the one hand, and he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead, which closes it on the other hand ([Acts 10:36](#) and [42](#), respectively). See Witherington 1998: [358](#).

⁶⁰ This is one of the two most straightforward comments of Jesus as ruler in Acts; the other is [17:31](#). Cf. Peterson 2009: [338](#).

tiles, is now disclosed. The angel had simply suggested that Peter should come and say what he had to say—a command that Cornelius obeyed ([Acts 10:33](#)). However, the immutable essence of the whole matter was that God was presiding over the gathering. At last, the power from on high fell on everyone ([10:44](#)) and the account in question attests that **all who were listening to Peter spoke in other tongues** ([10:46](#)). Of the four supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit ([2:1ff.](#); [4:31](#); [8:17](#), and here) until now, this last manifestation presents irrevocable signs just as the first.⁶¹ God’s action is so controlling in this particular happening; His dominance even rendered water baptism less important following God’s own baptism in the Spirit.⁶² God was in charge of causing purposeful visions in breaking the “apartheid.” Thus, the church, heretofore Jewish, experienced a radical shift. Had it not been for God, who had initiated the gathering and Spirit outpouring, how would the Gentiles have been integrated into this new relationship otherwise? This demonstration, of the Spirit baptism made by God before Peter’s speech comes to its end, is an even stronger affirmation of God embracing the Gentiles in His community.

Concerning the function of the reception of the Spirit in the process of forgiving and cleansing the Gentiles, there is heated scholarly debate. Some suggest that prior to the reception of the Spirit, the Gentiles present in Cornelius’s household responded to Peter’s message with faith, and by giving them the Spirit, God accepted them.⁶³ Such a view would suggest a possible distinction between the Gentiles’ faith in Jesus and God’s giving of the Spirit. For others, however, there is no distinction between these two events because the actual salvation of the Gentiles took place only after they received

⁶¹ Commenting on this spiritual event, Dunn 1996: [146](#) claims that this “fourth supernatural sign”—alluding to the three preceding ones—leaves every reader persuaded of what God has done.

⁶² Barrett 1994: [154](#) notes that this indicates Luke’s handling of the matter regarding the relation between the reception of the Spirit and water baptism. In [Acts 2:38](#), the Spirit is given as the consequence of the baptismal rite. Similarly, in [8:12–17](#), the baptismal rite considerably precedes the bestowal of the gift of the Spirit. In this story, conversely, the bestowal of the gift of the Spirit takes precedence over the rite. See also Cho 2005: [142](#). “Luke is not consistently connecting the reception of the Spirit with the baptismal rite.”

⁶³ E.g., Marshall 1980b: [193–94](#).

the Spirit.⁶⁴ Support for the former position partially stems from Luke’s overall description of the outcome of the reception of the Spirit ([Acts 2:1–4](#), [17–21](#); [8:12–17](#); [19:1–7](#)). In this instance, the astonishment of Peter’s companions and Peter’s affirmation of their reception of the Spirit like with the Jews on the day of Pentecost could suggest a distinct experience from conversion. First, the astonishment was not due to their faith in Christ but due to their reception of the Spirit as faith in Christ is the inner transformation wrought by God in the hearts of those who believe with no physical evidence. Second, Peter made no distinction between this event and the day of Pentecost. According to Peter’s words, these were identical experiences in which “the believers” were filled with the Spirit. Third, this identical nature of the reception of the Spirit by Cornelius is confirmed by the similarity of the evidence of being filled with the Spirit. **Speaking in tongues⁶⁵ and praising God**, as seen in this instance, were the two most visible signs on the day of Pentecost. These two phenomena performed by the Gentiles astonished the Jewish believers. This audible pneumatic sign was the clear and irrefutable indication that uncircumcised members could also receive the gift; in this sense, the Spirit is a sign that they can be participants of salvation history.⁶⁶ As Keener properly comments, “Their reception of the empowering Spirit reveals that, rather than remaining objects of mission, Cornelius and his household immediately become partners in mission.”⁶⁷ Finally, Peter took the risk and brought down the dividing wall between the Jews and Gentiles by baptizing them without circumcision, of which he would have to stand trial in Jerusalem ([10:47–48](#)).

To be sure, unlike the first Pentecost in which the circumcised Diaspora who had gathered around Jesus’ disciples thought of them as mindless drunkards when they spoke in tongues, this “Gentiles Pentecost” manifestation faced no objection from the

⁶⁴ E.g., Dunn 1970: 80.

⁶⁵ Peterson 2009: 340 argues that the wording for speaking in tongues in [2:4](#) and [10:46](#) has a slight variation. [Acts 2:4](#) is generally considered to describe existing foreign languages whereas [10:46](#) drops the adjective *heterais* and retains *glōssais* which is understood to be an utterance without prior-known meaning and thus needs interpretation. If this is the case, the tongues of [10:46](#) are similar to that of Paul’s description in [1 Cor 12–14](#).

⁶⁶ Tannehill 1994: 143.

⁶⁷ Keener 2013: 1813.

Israelites. God's work in expanding the horizons of the church to the Gentiles was perfect. Indeed, the occasion was particularly unique to both the invitee and the host; even the entire audience with them was deeply challenged and impacted by what Peter's testimony brought about.⁶⁸ The centurion and Peter jointly played a crucial role in participating in what may be perceived as a divinely foreordained Pentecost for the Gentiles to officially come aboard the universal church. The centurion was transformed by his encounter with the good news about Christ and his power. Peter, on the other hand, was enlightened by God's much wider plan to bring the Gentiles to His election just like Israel.

⁶⁸ Likewise, Luke recounts this incident several times in his later testimonies: [Acts 11:14–18](#); [15:7–9](#)—this indicates that the conversion of Cornelius's household was of great importance to him.