

# The Gentiles are Granted Repentance Unto Life (Acts 11:1-18)<sup>a</sup>

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## Context - highlighting aspects related to today's passage

### 1. Acts 1

- A. Prior to His ascension, Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for “the Promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4)
- B. The Promise of the Father involves being baptized with the Holy Spirit
  - I. Jesus said, “for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5)
- C. This new ministry, baptism with the Spirit, had never occurred before in history (John 7:38-39; John 16:7).
  - I. Spirit baptism could not occur until Jesus had been glorified
    - a. John tells us, in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of his gospel, *the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified* (John 7:39)
  - II. Spirit baptism could not occur until after Jesus ascended
    - a. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus told His disciples, *It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you* (John 16:7)
- D. Spirit baptism would empower the followers of Jesus to be witnesses in three regions to three people groups - like a target with three concentric rings
  - I. Bullseye = Jerusalem & Judea → Jews
  - II. Middle ring = Samaria → Samaritans
  - III. Outer ring = The end of the earth → Gentiles

### 2. Acts 2 (A.D. 33<sup>1</sup>)

- A. On the Day of Pentecost, the “Promise of the Father” arrives, and the disciples . . .

I. . . . experience miraculous manifestations (Acts 2:2-3)

II. . . . are baptized with the Holy Spirit

III. . . . praise God in foreign tongues recognized by visiting Jews from the diaspora (Acts 2:4-12)

IV. . . . preach the gospel and thousands of Jews are saved

B. This is the initial fulfilment of the bullseye of the target: *You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea . . .* (Acts 1:8a)

3. Acts 8 (3-4 years after Pentecost, A.D. 36-37<sup>2</sup>)

A. Philip preaches in Samaria and many Samaritans come to faith (Acts 8:6,12)

B. Later, when John and Peter arrive from Jerusalem, Samaritans are baptized with the Spirit by the laying on of hands from the Jews (Acts 8:16-17)

C. This is the initial fulfilment of middle ring of the target: *You shall be witnesses to Me in . . . Samaria . . .* (Acts 1:8b)

4. Acts 10 - previous presentation (6 years after Pentecost, A.D. 39<sup>3</sup>)

A. God gives Peter a vision indicating that Gentiles should no longer be considered “unclean.”

B. God sends an angel to an Italian soldier, a Gentile by the name of Cornelius —instructing him to send to Joppa for Peter

C. Peter travels to the house of an Italian soldier named Cornelius and preaches the Gospel

D. During Peter's message, God Spirit-baptizes the Gentiles who erupt in praise to God speaking in unlearned foreign languages

E. This was completely unexpected by the Jews

I. . . . *those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also* (Acts 10:45)

F. This is the initial fulfilment of the outer ring of the target: *You shall be witnesses to Me . . . to the end of the earth* (Acts 1:8c)

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. [2] And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, [3] saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" [4] But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: [5] "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. [6] When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. [7] And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' [8] But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' [9] But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' [10] Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. [11] At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. [12] Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. [13] And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, [14] 'who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' [15] And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. [16] Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' [17] If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" [18] When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."<sup>4</sup>

## To the ends of the Jewish earth?

1. **Rather than rejoicing at the success of Peter's ministry, his fellow Jews contented with him (Acts 11:2-3)**
2. **Did the Jews initially mis-understand the Great Commission?**
  - A. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the [Jews among the?] nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19)**
  - B. **And [Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every [Jewish?] creature." (Mark 16:15)**
  - C. **Then [Jesus] said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to [the Jews in?] all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47)**
  - D. **But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and**

***you shall be witnesses to Me [to the Jews?] in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the [Jews living in the?] end of the earth (Acts 1:8)***

3. Next time, we'll see additional evidence this was so

A. ***Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only (Acts 11:19)***

## **At the beginning**

1. A beginning

A. ***Peter relates, . . . as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning (Acts 11:15)***

B. Which beginning? The beginning of what, when?

C. ***Peter continues, Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 11:16)***

D. ***About 9 years later, at the Jerusalem counsel, Peter will relate the same events concerning the Holy Spirit coming to the Gentiles, which James will summarize as follows:***

I. ***“Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name” (Acts 15:14)***

E. The “beginning” of what? What “first?”

F. This *beginning*, this *first* . . .

I. . . . followed the ascension of Jesus

II. . . . began with Spirit baptism

III. . . . took place on the Day of Pentecost at the initial giving of the Spirit: the Promise of the Father

2. Why is this important?

A. ***FIRST: The Church is not found in the Old Testament<sup>7</sup>***

I. The formation of the Church was yet future in the gospels

- a. **Jesus said, . . . on this rock I will build [future tense] My church . . . (Mat. 16:18)**
- b. **Paul tells us the Church is founded upon the apostles (Eph. 2:20) — but there were no apostles in OT times.**
- c. **One will search the OT in vain for any information pertaining to a spiritual body**
  - i. As Dr. Charles Ryrie observes
    - “A concordance examination of the word body indicates that the idea of a body into which redeemed people are placed is nowhere found in the Old Testament. The first occurrences of the word body in connection with the Body of Christ is in 1Cor. 12:12-25 and the next is in Rom. 12:5. The remainder occur in Ephesians and Colossians. This further supports the truth that the mystery of the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the one Body of Christ was unknown and unrevealed in the Old Testament.”<sup>8</sup>

## **II. Therefore the Church is not the “New Israel”**

- a. **Promises made to Israel have not be redirected, subsumed in spiritual form by the Church**

## **III. Conversely, the behavior and norms of OT Israel do not provide marching orders for the Church**

- a. **The Church is led by *elders*, not priests, nor a leadership style modeled after Moses**
- b. **The Church does not walking according to OT law**
- c. **The purpose of the Church is not to impose a theocracy—essentially recreating OT Israel—in today's culture**

## **B. *SECOND*: Acts is a transitional book**

- I. **Acts stands at the crossroads between Jesus on earth in the gospels and Jesus departed to heaven**
- II. **The literal body of Christ departs**
- III. **The spiritual body of Christ is formed—the Church (1Cor. 12:13,27; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 3:6; Col. 1:28)**
- IV. **The initial coming of the Spirit in a new ministry: Spirit baptism forming**

the body of Christ which did not exist prior to Pentecost

V. **DANGER: assuming our experience today should match what is recorded in Acts — ignoring historical context**

a. **Acts 2 - Day of Pentecost**

- i. Sound as a mighty rushing wind
- ii. Divided tongues, as of fire, sat upon each one
- iii. Spoke in unlearned bona fide human languages
- iv. Spirit baptism *after* salvation
- v. A unique situation which Peter refers to as “the beginning” and James calls “at the first.”

b. **Acts 8 - Samaritans**

- i. No rushing wind (difference from Acts 2 already!)
- ii. No divided tongues, as of fire (difference from Acts 2 already!)
- iii. Spirit baptism *after* salvation (Acts 8:12-16)
- iv. Inference: spoke in unlearned bona fide human languages
  - An inference: what did Simon see, how did they know the Spirit was given when they laid hands on the Samaritans? Acts 8:17-19)

c. **Acts 10 - Gentiles**

- i. No rushing wind (difference from Acts 2)
- ii. No divided tongues, as of fire (difference from Acts 2)
- iii. Spoke in unlearned bona fide human languages
- iv. Spirit-baptism *simultaneous with* salvation (difference from Acts 8 already!)

d. **Salvation Today**

- i. Among those who insist on seeking Spirit-baptism as a second work today
  - Traveling to Jerusalem to tarry is not deemed necessary (nor did they in Acts 8, 10, or 19) — why not?
  - None produce the miraculous manifestations of Spirit-baptism as recorded in Acts — why not?
    - No mighty rushing wind (ala Acts 2)
    - No divided tongues, as of fire (ala Acts 2)
    - No speaking in unlearned bona fide human languages (ala Acts 2, 10, 19, and possibly 8)
- ii. Today, the gospel is mainly being preached to *the end of the earth*—to the mass of non-Jewish nations—as we are here



- A. **But which words?**
- B. **Peter's message in Acts 10 stretches from verse 34 through 43 — there are numerous things that are said**
- C. **How can we know the key?**
- D. **The Holy Spirit gives us the key: at what point does the Holy Spirit interrupt Peter?**
- E. **When does the Spirit imply, “that's enough words, Peter!”?**
- F. **Following verse 43—the last verse Peter speaks before the Spirit falls: *To Him [Jesus] all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43)***

### 3. Salvation . . .

- A. . . . is not attained through devotion
- B. . . . is not earned by giving
- C. . . . is not granted from God in response to lengthy prayer
- D. . . . requires the remission of our sins!
- E. . . . is a free gift received by trusting in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to pay for our sins.
- F. . . . requires sinless perfection—which can only be attained by trusting in the merit of the perfect Lamb of God *Who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29,36)

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1. Ref-1307, 342-345
  2. Ref-1307, 342-345
  3. Ref-1307, 342-345
  4. NKJV, Acts 11:1-18
  5. Ref-0081, 225
  6. Ref-0200, Volume 149, Vol. 149, (1992): 261
  7. “This word [ecclesia] translated church or assembly is found in at least four important meanings in the New Testament. It is used (1) to mean an assembly of people. In this sense it has no special theological meaning. It can refer to Israel as a gathered people in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) or a regular assembly of citizens (Acts 19:39) or a group of people gather for a religious worship (Heb. 2:12). (2) The same word is used for an assembly of Christians in a local church (Acts 8:1,3; Acts 11:22,26) and in the plural for a group of such churches (1Cor. 16:19; Gal. 1:2). Each assembly or church has a local gathering composed of professed Christians. That all in the assembly are not necessarily true believers is clear from the messages to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2-3). (3) Ecclesia is also used of the total of professing Christians without reference to locality and is practically parallel in this sense to Christendom (Acts 12:1; Rom. 16:16; 1Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Rev. 2, Rev. 2:3:Rev. 2:1-22; etc.). The same word is used (4) of the body of Christ, composed of those baptized by the Holy Spirit into the church (1Cor. 12:13). Ecclesia used in this connection becomes a technical word referring to the saints of this age.”<sup>5</sup> “The term [ecclesia] is also used to describe non-believers (ἐκκλησία is used in Acts 19:32,38,41 to describe the Diana-worshiping mob of Ephesians).”<sup>6</sup>
  8. Ref-0056, 134
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#### Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0056** Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).
- Ref-0081** John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959).
- Ref-0200** Roy B. Zuck, ed., *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, n.d.). [[www.dts.edu](http://www.dts.edu)].
- Ref-1307** Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing, 2011). ISBN:978-0-7586-2799-5<sup>d</sup>.
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#### Links Mentioned Above

- a - See [http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts\\_by\\_Tony\\_Garland/34\\_Acts\\_11\\_1-18/index.htm](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/34_Acts_11_1-18/index.htm).
- b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- d - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-7586-2799-5>.