

The Book of Acts: Verse-by-Verse

Study Notes: Acts 10:44-48

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

As Peter was still speaking about God not distinguishing between the Jews and the Gentiles, the Spirit came on ... fell on ... enveloped ... empowered ... the Gentiles at Cornelius' house.

Why did the Spirit come upon them? “Because, as Peter was preaching, their hearts were open to the Gospel message. The Word of God had found its target.

These Gentiles did not have the exact experience as those who gathered at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. They also did not have the same experience as the Samaritans, recorded in Acts 8.

- **Acts 2: The Jewish Pentecost**

- The sound of a mighty wind.
- A flame of fire divided into 20 tongues.
- All 120 spoke God's praises in foreign languages.

- **Acts 8: The Samaritan Pentecost(?)**

- Phillip preaches the gospel.
- The Samaritans believe the gospel and are baptized.
- Days later, the Samaritans receive the indications of the Spirit as Peter and John laid hands of them.
- No solid indication of the Samaritans speaking in tongues.

- **The Cornelius Incident:**

- The Holy Spirit falls on a house full of Gentiles.
- They receive the gifts of the Spirit first.

- Afterwards, they are baptized in water.

- **A Uniform Pattern?**

- The Samaritans were saved and received the gifts of the Spirit later.

- The Caesarea Maritima Gentiles received the indications of the Spirit and were baptized later.

Uniformists insist that believers hear the Word first, be baptized second, and receive the indications/gifts of the Spirit third. But what about the Gentiles? Why give them the Spirit and its indications first, and have them water baptized later?

- **Astonished At The Gift Of The Spirit: vv. 45-46**

“The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.”

“The circumcised believers”: 1. Some scholars suggest this simply refers to Messianic Jews. 2. Some suggest that Luke is referring to a group within the Messianic Jews who believed that circumcision was necessary for incorporation into the Church.

- Evidence for the latter stance:

In Acts 10:23, “they of the circumcision” most likely refers to the six Jewish Christians who accompanied Peter to Caesarea. However, Acts 11:2-3 records, “So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

Later in the early Church, “Those of the circumcision” became known as “The Judaizers” – and taught that God still required everyone to observe the Mosaic rituals and laws to be accepted by Him.

By the time that Paul writes Galatians, the “circumcision” or “Judaizers” have become a serious threat to Christian unity. Galatians 2:21: “I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make

us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.”

- **Astonished At The Gift Of The Spirit – Continued:**

Why did God give the Cornelius household the Spirit and its indications first, and have them water baptized later?

The six Messianic Jews that accompanied Peter were shocked when the entire room of Gentiles suddenly began to “speak in tongues” just as the 120 had on the Day of Pentecost.

Luke's Greek word for their surprise indicates that the circumcision stood back and were utterly shocked at what they saw. Why? Because a group of “goyim” was experiencing the same supernatural “glossolalia” that the 120 had encountered on the Day of Pentecost.

What was the real tipping point in the Jews' belief that these Gentiles had been saved? “For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.”

Were “those of the circumcision” happy about these Gentiles receiving the same gift of the Spirit? Unfortunately, no. They would oppose Peter at the Jerusalem Council.

- **Was It A Separate Pentecost?**

Was the Gentile experience of receiving the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues a separate Gentile Pentecost?” Was there one Pentecost for the Jews and another for the Gentiles?

Dr. Alexander: “[It was] ... a type of the reconciliation between Jew and Gentile, whose alienation had for ages been secured and symbolized by differences of language.” – Dr. Alexander

For centuries the Jews and Gentiles had been largely separated by language – but in both versions of Pentecost, the Messianic Jews and Christian Gentiles were speaking God's praise in a heavenly language neither knew innately.

It makes sense to see the Caesarea Maritima incident as the Gentiles joining the already present experience of Salvation and Spirit infilling.

- **“Should We Prevent The Gentiles From Being Baptized?”- vv. 47-48**

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

Peter could have just said, “Since these have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, let's baptize them.” Instead, he said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?” (A throwback to Acts 8:36: “Look, here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?”)

Why does Peter put the sentence in the negative format?

The Six Jewish Christians from Joppa were shocked that Cornelius and company receive the Holy Spirit. But are they rejoicing over the Gentiles' experience? Not at all.

Peter grasps the situation. “So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” Peter did not do the baptizing. The context may well indicate that he had the six Messianic Jews do it. They were now part of the story – whether they wanted to be or not.

- **Staying A Few Days: v. 48**

“Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.”

After the baptisms, Cornelius and the rest of the new Christians asked Peter to stay a few days. They had an apostle among them – one who had been with Jesus for years. They wanted Peter to stay and tell them as much as he could about Jesus.

That's a happy picture, isn't it? It's like Mary sitting at Jesus' feet as he explained the kingdom of God to her. It's like the disciples sitting at Jesus' feet as he explained future events.

The Gentiles were now a part of the New Testament Church, and it all began with a devout God-fearer asking God to show him the path to salvation.