

One Race, One Gospel, One Task

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[0 : 0 0] Acts chapter 10, we'll be reading the entire chapter. At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian regiment.

He and all his family were devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon, he had a vision.

He distinctly saw an angel of God who came to him and said, Cornelius. Cornelius stared at him in fear. What is it, Lord? he asked.

The angel answered, your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon, who is called Peter.

He is staying with Simon, the tanner, whose house is by the sea. When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.

[1 : 0 2] He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. About noon the following day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.

He became hungry and wanted something to eat. And while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.

It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, get up, Peter, kill and eat.

Surely not, Lord, Peter replied. I have never eaten anything impure or unclean. The voice spoke to him a second time. Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.

This happened three times and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.

[2 : 0 6] They called out, asking if Simon, who was known as Peter, was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the spirit said to him, Simon, three men are looking for you.

So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them. Peter went down and said to the men, I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?

The men replied, we have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.

Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day, Peter started out with them and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. The following day, he arrived in Caesarea.

Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.

[3 : 10] But Peter made him get up. Stand up, he said. I am only a man myself. Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.

He said to them, you are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.

So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me? Cornelius answered. Four days ago, I was in my house praying at this hour at three in the afternoon.

Suddenly, a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon, who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the Tanner, who lives by the sea.

So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us. Then Peter began to speak.

[4 : 18] I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God has anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree. But God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen, by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God anointed as judge of the living and the dead.

All the prophets testify about him, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

[5 : 44] 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.

Then Peter said, 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. The date was July 21st, 1969.

The Apollo 11 spacecraft had landed safely on the moon, and as people from all over the world were watching, astronaut Neil Armstrong paused for a few moments on the last rung of the ladder and then took the first step onto the surface of the moon, saying in those words that have become famous, that that's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.

Now the importance of that one step for all mankind may be debated, but Acts chapter 10 tells us of one small step that Peter took as he stepped across the threshold and entered the house of a Gentile, Cornelius.

[7 : 14] And that one small step truly was a giant leap for all mankind, with consequences for all nations, and with results that literally stretched around the whole earth, stretching all the way from Caesarea to Indiana, and on out to every nation and people and tribe and language on the earth.

Because with that one step into Cornelius' house, the church of Jesus Christ had crossed a divide that was keeping them and their gospel from the Gentile sinner, keeping them from fulfilling the great commission of the head of the church, Jesus Christ.

He told us that by the power of the Spirit, we were to take the gospel where? To Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth. Well, by the power of the Spirit, they had taken the gospel to Jerusalem and filled it with their teaching and saw many added to the church.

Then they were scattered on out into all Judea and even into Samaria. But that's as far as the gospel had extended. They'd not yet taken the gospel to the ends of the earth and made disciples of all the nations.

Now, it's perhaps hard for us to understand this, but there was a huge barrier that was hindering them from throwing the door of the church wide open to Gentiles who would believe in Jesus.

[8 : 52] And it was the special status, the barrier was the special status that the Jews had enjoyed in the Old Covenant, the Old Testament. They were the one nation out of all the nations that God chose to be his people.

And of them he said, you will be my people and I will be your God. He had said that of no other people. That was a special privilege and status of Israel alone.

And in the Old Testament, if a Gentile wanted to belong to the people of God, he had to join himself and become a Jew. So you became part of the people of God by becoming a Jew, and that meant circumcision and all the other food laws and purity laws and so on.

But that special status of Israel had fulfilled its purpose in preserving the scriptures, in preserving the one true religion, in bringing forth the Messiah as to his human nature, in gathering his infant church, which so far was made up of Jewish believers to this point.

Yes, all of that was part of the reason why they were a separated people apart from the nations. But that purpose is now fulfilled.

[10 : 18] And all of this was to change because in the New Covenant, Gentiles who repent and believe in Jesus are to be received into the church as Gentiles.

They don't have to become Jews. They don't have to be circumcised. They don't have to keep all of the mosaic regulations of purity laws and ceremonial laws.

And so that meant Jews letting go of their special status and receiving Gentiles as equals, as equals in the family of God, the church of Messiah Jesus.

That was a hard pill for the Jews to swallow. And further complicating the matter was the whole ceremonial law was circumcision. And the purity laws about clean and unclean food and clean and unclean people, those laws had the effect of causing the Jews to keep their distance from Gentiles.

Since the Gentiles were careless about those purity laws, there was a very high chance that a Gentile would be unclean.

[11 : 32] He didn't concern himself with those laws, and so he was probably unclean. And therefore, any contact with them or anything that they had touched would make the Jew ceremonially unclean.

And so these ceremonial laws effectively created a barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles. They were boundary markers around Israel.

that put distance between Jew and non-Jew. And those ceremonial laws had been inbred in them since their youth. So you can just think, the little child growing up and walking along with mom, and there's a dead rabbit on the road, and Junior's going to go over and touch it.

Oh, no, no, don't touch it. You can't touch a dead animal, or you will become unclean and unfit to go into the temple and worship. From childhood, all these laws, you see, were instilled in them.

And it's not something that had just happened in the last generation. Centuries of Israel's history, they were keeping these ceremonial laws.

[12 : 44] And by the way, they are recorded in God's scripture that he had given to them. These were not the commands of men. These were the commands of God that they were to keep.

So how can they just ignore them now? You see the difficulty. The barrier that was there between them going to the Gentiles. But the new reality of the new covenant was that since these ceremonial laws had fulfilled the purpose for which God gave them, they were now abolished in the new covenant.

As Paul says in Ephesians 2, speaking of Jews and Gentiles, Christ has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

How did he do that? By abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. And his purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.

And as a consequence, Gentiles are no longer foreigners, aliens on the outside of the wall, you see, but are now fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household built on the apostles and the prophets with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone.

[14 : 03] So no more unique status of Israel as being the exclusive people of God. That is now something to be shared with all people who trust in Jesus, whatever they are, by way of nationality.

Oh, but privilege, status enjoyed, is hard to let go of. Once you've enjoyed a privilege, it's hard to let go of it. You see that in nations and handouts that have been given.

Just let the government try to take back something that it has handed out. You'll see this, and it operates in every sphere. This transformation from old covenant to new covenant was not an easy one for the Jews.

It offended their national pride and their prejudice and their self-righteous superiority that looked down on non-Jews and even referred to them as dogs.

And even within the church, the church that was now comprised of Jewish believers, they were slow to learn and slow to accept Gentile believers as equals.

[15 : 11] They'd been accustomed to accepting them as long as they become Jews, then they're fine. No problem with that. But they've got to be circumcised and keep all the regulations with us. But now they're being told, no, as Gentiles, they are equal with you, as uncircumcised, as not keeping the purity ceremonial laws.

Well, that's tough. And just as it took a lot just to get Neil Armstrong to the place where he could then take that step onto the moon, so it took a whole lot to get Peter to the place where he could take that step into Cornelius' house.

It was not a step that he would take as a faithful Jew. No, Lord.

No. Surely not, Lord. God forbid that I should do something like that. So it would take the ascended Lord himself breaking into Peter's life with a supernatural axe to teach and prepare him and the church for this step of throwing the door of the church wide open to Gentiles as Gentiles.

So that's our first point today. The Lord Jesus remains actively involved in building his church. He remains actively involved in building his church.

[16 : 37] When Jesus ascended into heaven, he did not just leave his church with the assignment of the Great Commission and say, well, see ya, I'll be back when you get the job done. And then leave them to themselves to fulfill it.

No, he promised, I will be with you always to the very end of the age in this business of making disciples of the nations and baptizing them and teaching them to obey all my commands.

He was very involved. He's the one who poured out the Holy Spirit to equip them and to help them. And that spirit would mediate the presence of Christ with his church to the end of the age.

So let's notice how Christ had a hands-on involvement guiding his church and its leaders through this important step. First of all, Peter was given a vision, a supernatural revelation of God's will as we saw last week that the Lord's own voice spoke and said, rise, Peter, kill and eat.

And when Peter refused, saying he'd never eaten anything impure or unclean, the Lord spoke again, this time rebuking him and saying, do not call impure what God has made clean.

[17 : 54] And three times the Lord spoke to him. Three times Peter refused and three times the Lord again spoke, rebuking him for calling unclean what God had made clean.

Do you see the involvement of Jesus in that? He's teaching his man and preparing him to take that step. Then there was the whole supernatural timing of the vision itself with the arrival of the three Gentiles from Cornelius.

We say timing is everything. It was that way here. He's had this vision of unclean food and God making it clean. And just then, three Gentiles show up looking for him, saying you're to come home with us to the Italian Gentiles house, Cornelius.

You see the timing? God, Christ, working together to show and prepare Peter for this step. And then, thirdly, there was the Holy Spirit's further supernatural instruction.

Christ, through his Spirit, speaks to Peter again and says, do not hesitate to go with these three guys because I've sent them. He's involved, you see.

[19 : 07] And then, Peter hears about Cornelius' supernatural vision and of an angel sending him to send to Joppa for Simon and even telling him his nickname, Peter, and where he's staying as a guest in the home of a man named Simon who had the occupation of being a tanner and lives by the sea.

Kids, it doesn't mean that he had a tanning salon. He tanned hides. He took the carcasses of animals and stretched out their skins and dried them and so on.

And all of this intimate detail is given to Cornelius, a man, a Gentile who lives 30 miles away in Caesarea. And Peter hears this and he recognizes the Lord is doing something unusual here.

He's bringing us together. Both their visions together demonstrate that the Lord himself had arranged this meeting and that he himself as head of the church is the one who is opening the doors to the Gentiles.

And that point will be confirmed even clearer by a further supernatural sign that the Lord Jesus gives to confirm Peter. Indeed, it is I who is doing this.

[20 : 23] So, Church of Jesus Christ, be encouraged. Encouraged. Our captain has not left us to ourself with this mammoth assignment, go make disciples of all the nations, of all the Gentiles, of those of every nation, Jew or Gentile, whatever they be.

No, he's with us today and with us to enable us to accomplish this task. He's actively involved in building his church, guiding and teaching us until we finish this unfinished business of bringing God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Well, did Peter get it? That's our next question. Because it's one thing for the Lord to have made his will sufficiently clean or clear. But we can be awfully dull, can't we?

So the question is, did Peter get it? Did he understand it? And yes, we say he did get it. Notice the evidence.

First of all, he invited the three men from Cornelius into the house to be his guest. Now, he's a guest himself at Simon the Tanner's house. But as a guest, he invites them to join him for dinner and spend the night with him.

[21 : 38] And already, he's putting the word into practice. He's no hearer of the word only. He's a doer. And he's no longer treating these Gentiles as if they were unclean.

And the next day, he's off with them to Cornelius, their master's house, 30 miles north in Caesarea. When they arrived, Peter took that step, that one small step, that giant leap for mankind.

He stepped and entered into the Gentiles' house. He'd never done that had he not understood what Jesus was saying to him. He's getting it.

He got it, you see. And then he flat out tells the large group of Gentiles who were gathered, you are well aware that it's against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or to visit him.

But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. Isn't that interesting? The vision was about not calling food unclean that God had made clean.

[22 : 45] And Peter says, no, God has shown me that I'm not to call any man unclean. You see, the whole timing of the vision with the arrival of the three unclean Gentiles and all of that, the Holy Spirit's further word, go with them, don't hesitate.

All of it, you see, was enough for Peter to connect the dots. And so he sees that the vision had not only to do with food but with men.

That it was God's decision to no longer count food or men ceremonially clean or unclean. Not in the new covenant. So he says to these gathered Gentiles, when I was sent for, I came without raising any objections.

Now Peter had some good objections earlier, didn't he? Three times he said, not so, Lord. When the Lord said, rise, kill, and eat, not so.

He had objections aplenty. I've never done it, Lord, and I won't. But now, he's able to say, but through the vision, through the arrival, all the Spirit's work, I've come without raising any objections.

[24 : 00] In other words, all my objections have been answered. The Lord has so demonstrated his will to throw the gate wide open to Gentiles that I am now come without any objections because the Spirit of Jesus told me that he sent you to get me.

And so, he realizes God himself wants him to enter Cornelius' house and has abolished his own ceremonial purity laws. And when he hears Cornelius tell his side of the story and the vision that he had of the angel that came, it all confirmed to Peter as he listens to it coming right out of the horse's mouth.

It confirmed to him that all of this is indeed of God. And so, he's able to say to them in verse 34 and 35, I now realize, I hadn't realized it before, but I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

And by the way, doing what is right includes trusting in Jesus as your only way of salvation. It's not like they can earn their way into God's favor by doing some good deeds.

Not at all. He is saying God has no favorites. He accepts any who come to him through Jesus Christ. And they show that by a life that's changed, fearing God, doing his will.

[25 : 24] I now realize this is our God. He excludes none but those who exclude themselves, refusing to repent and believe. And so, the Lord, you see, was actively involved in building his church and that changes everything.

He's able to lead his church and its leaders to do his will. There's our encouragement. And he equipped his Jewish church to reach out to people who are very different from them.

And there's the lesson for us, Grace Fellowship Church. The Lord Jesus equips his people to reach out to people with the gospel who are very different from us.

Because people who need the Lord may be vastly different from us. They may look different. They may dress different. They may sound different. They may smell different.

But none of these things are to stop us and to make us stand aloof from them. No. Christ died to have a diverse church made up of people who otherwise would never hang out together.

[26 : 40] What is it that brings these people together? Old, young, different in every way? It's Jesus. He is the uniting factor.

They are all one in Christ Jesus and he is glorified. It's much to his praise to bring these diverse people together. I think of the Hispanic people around us speaking a different language with a different culture of other people of different economic or educational levels with different interests where pride and prejudice and self-righteous superiority tends to put up barriers to keep us from going to them.

I think of the Muslims not only overseas but here in our own country who are increasingly hated but they too are a part of this unfinished business of Jesus Christ and his church and I wonder if our hearts are as wide open as Jesus Christ's heart is.

Are we throwing the door of the church wide open to any? Are we going to all with all their differences? Let's not forget brothers and sisters that you and I were once the Gentile dogs that Jesus opened the door to.

Now how can we go to other Gentile dogs and think that we're better than them and keep our distance? Oh the Lord Jesus was involved then and he is still involved today and he can fill us with his own open hearted and open handed love to move us towards these different people with the love and gospel of Christ.

[28 : 25] it's genuine practical love from us that could be an attractive difference from the hatred of the world. What makes these people so warm and welcoming when the vast majority of the nation hate us?

Oh they have a savior who saved them and they see what dirty dogs they were and they cannot look down their noses at anyone.

Jesus invites them. How can we not invite them? So grace fellowship is our heart in line with our savior's heart here or have we shriveled up with the world into ourselves?

The Lord Jesus lives to help us to prepare his people to take the gospel to all creatures. Let's find someone this week to love and tell about our savior.

savior. And so with his new understanding Peter starts to preach. And what does he preach? Well verse 36 tells us he preached the same message that God sent to the people of Israel.

[29 : 36] The good news of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all. Not just Lord of Jews but Lord of all. The same message. And that brings us to our second lesson today.

That the gospel is exactly the same for Jews and for Gentiles. Exactly the same. Now earlier in the book we were allowed to hear Peter preaching to Jews in Jerusalem.

And we heard his sermons and we read them and we studied them. And here we're enabled to hear his preaching to Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. And when we compare the two what do we find?

We find as they say there's not a nickel of difference between them. There's not even a penny difference between. It's the same message. For Jew and for Gentile.

There's only one gospel that is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. For the Jew first and then for the Gentile. But the same saving gospel.

[30 : 40] And so Peter insists that it's a gospel that's based on well-attested historical facts about Jesus of Nazareth. We don't have a mystery religion that just exists in ideas.

No. Our religion is rooted in historical facts. Things that happened. And so he speaks of Jesus' baptism. And his anointing by God with the Holy Spirit and power.

He talks about Jesus' life on this earth. And his good deeds and his miracles. His death and resurrection on the third day. And all of it attested by Peter himself and other eyewitnesses who were chosen by Christ.

And they saw what he did before his death and resurrection and they saw him after his resurrection. But being eyewitnesses who saw Christ do all of this carried responsibilities.

And so Peter says we were commanded by him to preach to the people what we saw. Yes, we were eyewitnesses of all this. And now he, Jesus, commanded us to preach to you what we saw.

[31 : 51] Having been eyewitnesses, Jesus made us verbal witnesses! To testify that Jesus is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

And so he says to Cornelius and his household, Jesus wants me to tell you that he's the one God appointed to judge you one day. And when he returns, whether you're alive or dead, he will judge you.

He wants me to tell you that. What a kindness in Jesus to send messengers into the world to prepare people, to warn them that a day of judgment is coming, and then to tell them how to be ready for it.

For verse 43, he says everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. Everyone, you see not just Jews, but Gentiles also.

You, you Cornelius, your household, everyone who believes receives forgiveness. You see, for all the differences between Jew and Gentile, we really have more the same than we have different.

[33 : 00] For all the differences between nations and peoples and tribes and languages, in the things that really matter, all of us are really the same, aren't we? Number one, we all have the same sin problem.

A sinful heart that does not believe in him, but believes in ourselves, that goes our own way instead of his way, the way that seems right to us, but the way that breaks his commands.

And this sin problem is not a Jewish thing. It's not a Gentile thing. It's a fallen human race thing. We all share in it together. And that's what Paul says in the book of Romans.

There's no difference, you see. No difference between Jew and Gentile. For we all have sinned and come short of God's glory. And therefore we're under his wrath and we're heading for that judgment and eternal torments in hell afterwards because we are not at peace with God.

The two of us are at war and he does not take our sins lightly. We've offended his infinite holiness. He's coming to judge us for our sins and just one sin left unforgiven will damn us for eternity.

[34 : 15] With all of our differences, we all have the same sin problem with its consequences of judgment. Secondly, we all need the same Savior.

Jesus Christ is the only Savior God has provided. Salvation is found in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

God gave him, but no one else. God gave him as the only one who lived a perfect life and so has a righteousness, a perfect righteousness to give to every believing sinner.

He's the only perfect lamb qualified to die in the place of other sinners, in the place of those who have violated God's law. He's the only one who could bear our sins and then bear the infinite wrath of God that those sins deserved.

He's the only payment for sin that God has accepted. The only way our sin debt can be forgiven. So as different as we are and as different as our particular sins may be between Jew and Gentile and Gentile and Gentile and tribe and language and people, we all need the very same Savior.

[35 : 28] He's Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of Jews and Gentiles alike. And then thirdly, we all must obey the same gospel. We must all obey the same gospel.

We have the same sin problem. We have the need for the same Savior and we must all obey the same gospel to repent of our sins and to trust in Jesus Christ alone to save us.

You see, not everyone is saved and forgiven by this great Savior. That's the great, one of the great lies of the age in which we live. Jesus is a wonderful Savior.

He came to die for sinners of every stripe. And so everybody just kind of thinks it's automatic that, well, I guess we're saved then. No, no. We must obey the gospel.

Everyone who believes in him. That's what the gospel tells you. Come to me. Believe in me. Trust in me. And it's everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.

[36 : 28] Who has all their sins forgiven, blotted out, taken away, remembered no more. Not everyone, but everyone that believes in him. Not everyone who's religious.

Not everyone who goes to church or reads their Bible or tries to keep the golden rule. Who's better than others. No, it's everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. Who sees that they have nothing to contribute to salvation, but their sins.

And so turning from self and sin, they turn entirely to Jesus and put all their weight upon him to save them.

To everyone who believes on him, they receive forgiveness of sins through his name. You see, the gospel is exactly the same for Jew and for Gentiles.

Well, Peter's just getting started. We'll see that next week. He was just warming up in his preaching. By no means was he done. But right then, the Holy Spirit interrupted.

[37 : 36] He hijacked the whole service. And this was the next supernatural sign that the Lord was using to confirm to his church that indeed the door of the church is wide open to Gentiles as Gentiles.

verse 44. For while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. And here we see an amazing spiritual harvest.

They all received the Holy Spirit. They all, the entire audience, believed on the Lord Jesus and received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to live in them.

And here's our third point. All who believe on Jesus receive the gift of the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit of God comes to live inside of them. So if you do not have the Spirit of Jesus, you do not belong to him.

But the Holy Spirit is invisible. So how do you know when he comes and lives in a person?

[38 : 42] How did they know? Well, usually it takes some time to see the change of the Spirit's presence because he doesn't come without changing the home in which he dwells.

And some of the earliest signs are a different view of themselves and their sin and a different view of Jesus that causes them to turn away from themselves and trust in Jesus and repent of their sins.

And then the fruit of the Spirit of love and joy and peace and patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, those things more and more become evidence that the Spirit has come and is indwelling that person.

But you see, he is invisible though his work is not. But it usually takes time so that by their fruits you will know them.

But here God did something utterly unique, unusual, immediate, right on the spot so that all could see right away without question that these Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit to live in them.

[39 : 48] And what was it? They all praised God in other languages, in other tongues, tongues that they had never learned before, other languages they'd never studied and spoken.

They suddenly began to speak the praises of God in other languages. That's what it means when it says they were speaking in tongues, verse 46. So the Holy Spirit's coming and indwelling them was manifested in this supernatural way, the same way that he came upon the 120 Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost.

Enabling them to supernaturally speak the praises of God in all sorts of different languages. Such outward manifestations of the Spirit's baptism were rare.

Indeed, in all the conversions of the Jews that we've read of in the book of Acts so far, we've never seen these Jews speaking in other languages.

Now, we've seen it with the Samaritans, the half-breed Jews, and I'll mention that in a moment. But here, with this historic step of including the Gentiles into the church, a special sign from the Lord Jesus is given as his own confirmation that these Gentiles have indeed received his salvation.

[41 : 11] The same sign was given to them as was given to the Jews when the Spirit came upon them, and on that historic occasion when that whole city of Samaria, the Samaritans believed, and the Spirit came to them, and they spoke in other languages.

You see, it's a special sign for special situation. And not only, and so we see the inclusion of the Gentiles is a huge step for mankind, and so we see these undeniable evidences given showing that Jesus is treating Gentile believers as equal with Jewish believers.

No favorites indeed. The borders of the church are wide open now. The wall has been torn down. Gentiles are welcome to come as Gentiles.

And not only did Peter get it, so did those men, those Jewish believers who had come with him from Joppa. They got it too. Verse 45 says, they were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.

They couldn't deny it. How can you deny it? With this supernatural sign of speaking in other languages. And so Peter, as apostle and leader of the church, asked his fellow Jewish believers, can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?

[42 : 43] They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. You see the equality? They've received it just as we have. Can anybody withhold baptism? If they've received the greater baptism of the Spirit, can anyone withhold the sign, the lesser gift of water baptism?

And so the fourth lesson is just some truths about water baptism. And very quickly, and we're done. First of all, water baptism is the outer sign of the inner Spirit baptism.

They had received the Spirit, the Spirit baptism that put them into the Spirit, and the Spirit in them, they now are to be baptized in water.

The outward water baptism is the sign of the inner Spirit baptism. And so Peter says, if they've got the Spirit, then they need the water baptism as well.

Secondly, water baptism is the ordinance for entrance into Christ's church. It's to be given to disciples of all nations, according to Jesus' great commission to go and make disciples, baptize, and teach.

[43 : 50] And if God has shown that he has accepted them by baptizing them with the Spirit, how can we do anything less than baptize them with water and receive them into this church? There's no option.

Since he's accepted, we too must. To withhold water baptism and church membership would be to resist God, chapter 11 and verse 17 will say. And so with that, Peter ordered that these new believers be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

The last lesson is that water baptism is not optional for believers. Peter gave an order as the apostle of the church of Christ, an order coming directly from the orders from Jesus, go, baptize, and teach.

So they received the outward sign of discipleship to Christ, were added to the church on equal footing with circumcised Jewish believers. You see, they had the same sin problem.

They had the same Savior. And once they believed on him and were brought into the church, they had the same status and privilege as the Jewish believers. They were not secondhand citizens.

[45 : 01] They were equal. Well, Jesus was making a clear statement to his church that he saves whomever comes to him.

Jew or Gentile. It's a giant step for the church to make. And hence the supernatural fireworks that were included in it. Jesus instructing, guiding his church in this most important step.

I wonder if you're a lost Gentile here today. You've sinned against God. You need to be forgiven. You need to just have all your sins erased. Never to be mentioned against you in judgment again.

Here it is. Jesus has sent us into the world to tell you a day of judgment's coming. But if you believe in Jesus, your sins will all be forgiven.

Don't miss the reason this is in our Bibles this morning. It's there for you, my friend. Take him. Take Christ in his full salvation. Brothers and sisters, can you see that we've got one message for all the nations, for all mankind in sin.

[46 : 11] This is the one size fits all. We can say to everyone we meet, I have good news for you. And as we say it, we can know that what we have to tell them is the most relevant thing they will ever hear in their entire life.

That the forgiveness of sins and peace with God is available to you in Jesus' name. Trust in him. Receive him. Let's go find a sinner to love on and to speak this wonderful saving message to this week.

I've entitled my sermon this morning after our closing song written by Margaret Clarkson, One Race. And that's what we've seen today.

One race all in sin. One gospel. One task. And as great as the differences are between Jew and Gentile and Gentile and Gentile, there's only one race of mankind and we're all under sin's condemnation.

And there's only one gospel of salvation in Jesus alone to free us from sin's domination. And there's this one great task given to us, the church, this great unfinished business to tell the whole world of God's salvation.

[47 : 26] One race. One gospel. One task. Let's stand and sing from the overhead and sing it and exhort one another even as we do sing it.