

The Holy Spirit Leads to New Works

International Bible Lesson

Acts 11:1-18

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“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15).

Cornelius feared God, prayed regularly, and helped the poor. But the more he learned about the true God, the more he realized that he needed to be saved from his sins. As a Gentile, he had not converted to Judaism, nor was he circumcised. He knew his human efforts would not lead to forgiveness, freedom from slavery to sin and the practice of sins, or peace with God. He continued to pray and during one of his regular times of prayer an angel from God appeared to him and told him to send for the Apostle Peter, because “He will bring you a message through which you and your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14). As Peter shared the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, God in His grace sent the Holy Spirit upon them. They believed Peter’s message and they spoke in tongues just as the believing Jews had done on the Day of Pentecost when the apostles had also received the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues. When the Day of Pentecost fell first on believers in Jerusalem, Jesus’ new work began in the Church. After the gospel had spread to Judea and Samaria, a new Pentecost fell upon the Gentiles who believed in Jesus, and a new mission work began among those who were not Jews. Jesus destined His work to spread around the world just as He told His disciples it would. When the Church in Jerusalem learned this good news from Peter, they rejoiced that the Lord had “granted repentance that leads to life” even to the Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

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Thinking Further

1. Give at least two possible reasons why the news about Peter and Cornelius traveled so fast to Jerusalem.
2. Why was Peter criticized for welcoming Cornelius and his household into the Church and baptizing them?
3. Why did God make previously unclean foods clean?
4. Why do you think Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote so much about Peter and his meeting with Cornelius?
5. What did the Spirit say to Peter and why was this message of the Spirit to Peter so important?