

Acts 10-11, The Conversion of Cornelius
11:1-18, Discussion in Jerusalem
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Overview

1. Overview of the entire story:
 - a) 10:1-8, Cornelius' Vision: God commands him to send for Peter, and he obeys.
 - b) 9-24, Peter sent: God commands him to go to Cornelius, and he obeys. Note the point of the vision: any food is OK now.
 - c) 24b-48, Meeting with Cornelius: Salvation.
 - d) 11:1-18, Discussion in Jerusalem. "You went in ... and did eat with them." The very issue the vision addressed. Each of these, and the story as a whole, holds particular lessons for us.
2. Today, the discussion in Jerusalem. Four instructive points.
 - a) 11:2, Who were "they that were of circumcision"?
 - b) 11:4-17, How did Peter answer them?
 - c) How does this episode compare with other problems in the early church?
 - d) Recap on 9:31, which headed off this section.

A. 11:2, Who were "they that were of circumcision"?

(NB: anarthrous)

This group is named before in 10:45, which refers (cf. 10:23) to the six believers who went with Peter from Joppa to Caesarea.

1. *Not in Sermon h peritomh* is a description of the Jews as a distinctive group.
 - a) Rom. 3:30, those whom God shall justify by faith; // to "the uncircumcision." // also in 4:9
 - b) Rom. 15:8, Christ as a "minister of the circumcision."
 - c) Gal. 2:7-9 establishes "the circumcision" and "the uncircumcision" as two groups of people.
 - d) Eph. 2:11 again makes this distinction
2. *ek peritomhs* (always anarthrous, even Tit. 1:10 in MT)
 - a) *Not in Sermon* Catalog of occurrences of the expression:
 - 1) 10:45, qualified by *pistoi* (*hoi ek peritomhs pistoi*)
 - 2) 11:2, no qualification; *ek peritomhs* has become substantivized. Robertson notes that this can hardly mean "converts from Judaism," for then it would be the entire group, and would include Peter as well! Suggests it is a smaller party within the church, cf. 15:5. But then how can Paul accept these people in Col. 4:11?
 - 3) Rom. 4:12 distinguishes those *ek peritomhs simpliciter* from those who also have faith: "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which [he had] being [yet] uncircumcised." (Strictly, the

Gk seems to make these two different groups of people, see S&H; but then the argument does not flow from v.11, which has already mentioned the uncircumcised believers--unless we understand the two groups in 4:12 to be a. those who have left Judaism for Christianity, and b. those who remained within the synagogue but still lived in faith.)

- 4) Gal. 2:12 tells how Peter withdrew from table fellowship from gentile believers in Antioch, "fearing them which were *ek peritomhs*."
- 5) Col. 4:11 identifies three of Paul's fellowworkers as being *ek peritomhs*, showing that the term is not entirely negative.
- 6) Tit. 1:10, identifies those *ek peritomhs* as being particularly liable to teach error.

b) Interpretation: who are *hoi ek peritomhs*?

- 1) Jews (Burton)? This would be partitive genitive, "those who belong to the circumcision." But then, given *h peritomh* for the group as a whole, wouldn't one then expect *ek ths peritomhs*? And how to account that these always appear in contexts within the church, which suggests they are believers?
- 2) Jewish converts to Christianity: ablative, or genitive of source, "those who have come out from the circumcision." See Lightfoot on Gal. 2:12; Robertson p. 515. Fits Col. 4:11, but not 11:2 (where it seems to be a smaller group) or Gal. 2:12.
- 3) Some party within the church. How defined?
 - a> Those who require Gentiles to be circumcised. Certainly fits 11:2, but not Col. 4:11, where three of this group are Paul's fellowworkers. Also, the term is not used in Acts 15 to describe the conservative group at the Jerusalem conference.
 - b> Gentiles who have accepted circumcision. These would be most offended by other Gentiles "getting in easy," cf. Matt. 20:12. *ek* then indicates source or efficient cause (BDB 3d, 3e), cf. *ek pistews* and John 1:13, those who became Jews by circumcision (rather than by birth). The present tense in Gal. 6:13 ("those who are being circumcised") confirms that this particular group was leading the charge to force all other gentiles to come in the same way they did.

Application: Beware the evil eye of petty jealousy, which would deny to our brother any blessing that God has not seen fit to bestow on us. How easy it is for us to fall into the trap that Peter did in John 21, and ask of one another, "Lord, what shall this man do?" The Lord's response to Peter fits us as well: "What is that

to thee? Follow thou me."

B. 11:4-17, How did Peter answer them?

1. He recalls how the series of events through which he has just come shows marks of divine intervention at every stage:
 - a) vision from heaven
 - b) timely arrival of the messengers
 - c) Spirit's assurance
 - d) angelic apparition to Cornelius
 - e) outpouring of the HS

This has not been his idea. "God made me do it."

Application: When I was a teen-ager, I found particular strength in some regulations my parents put on me. When I didn't have a mature enough understanding to be able to answer some criticisms of my godly life-style, I could always say, "My folks have a rule." God our Father provides the same protection for us. Only the worldling insists on withholding obedience if he doesn't understand and agree with the rule. For the child of God, the greatest defense we can offer for any action is that it was done in submission to God's clearly revealed will.

2. He recognizes the particular significance of the coming of the HS.
 - a) Note similarity to day of pentecost. This is NOT the usual mode of salvation: cf. 1 Cor. 12:30, "Do all speak with tongues?" (expecting a negative reply). Only on four occasions in Acts is the coming of the HS tangibly distinctive (3 times with tongues, perhaps the fourth also), and in each case a particular point is to be made:
 - 1) Pentecost (ch.2), fulfilling Joel
 - 2) Samaria (ch.8), to overcome the intra-jewish breach;
 - 3) Caesarea (ch.10), bringing Gentiles into the church;
 - 4) Ephesus (ch.19), confirming Paul's equal authority with Peter.
 - b) The condition: believing. Cf. 19:2. We believed and received the HS (NB: Peter dates his belief to that time); Cornelius has received the HS, so he must be recognized as a believer. In general, Rom. 8:9, salvation and the Spirit go together.

C. This episode and other problems in the early church

1. Peter does not assert his authority. Note v.1, "apostles and brethren." Peter does not "pull rank," but explains his position. See his own explanation of his leadership philosophy, in 1 Pet. 5:3, "neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

2. Architypical problems in the church:

- a) ch. 5, covetousness
- b) ch. 6, murmuring
- c) ch. 8, simony
- d) ch. 11, contention

Covetousness and simony are met with direct judgment.

Murmuring and contention receive more gentle attention with emphasis on consensus.

Application: There is no one answer for every problem. Jude 22,23. It would have been an error to avoid confrontation with Ananias and Sapphira, or with Simon; equally an error to smite someone dead in ch. 6 or 11. Cf. how Moses dealt with conflict: When he saw an Egyptian fighting an Israelite, he killed the Egyptian (Exod. 2:11), but when he saw two Israelites striving, he tried to reconcile them (Exod. 2:13). May God give us grace to know the difference between Egyptians and fellow Israelites in the church.

D. Recap on 9:31

- 1. internal peace leading to spiritual edification--resolution of potentially partisan discussion over gentiles.
- 2. fear of Lord and exhortation of HS leading to numerical multiplication--Peter's willingness to obey the Lord and following the leading of the HS opens the door to the salvation of the gentiles.

Psalm: 133

Analysis

A. 10:1-8, Cornelius' Vision: Execution p <previous>

B. 9-24, Peter sent: execution p <previous>

C. 24b-48, Meeting with Cornelius: <last message>

D. 11:1-18, Discussion in Jerusalem
Interchange p

1. Setting: 11:1)/Hkousan de\ oi(a)po/stoloi kai\ oi(a)delfoi\
oi(o)/ntes kata\ th\n)Ioudai/an o(/ti kai\ ta\ e)/qnh
e)de/canto to\n lo/gon tou^ qeou^.

2. IU: time p

a) time: 2 o(/te de\ a)ne/bh Pe/tros ei)s)Ierousalh/m,

b) text: quote p

diekri/nonto pro\s au)to\n oi(e)k peritomh^s 3 le/gontes
o(/ti

1) Ei)sh^lqes pro\s a)/ndras a)krobusti/an e)/xontas

2) kai\ sune/fages au)toi^s.

3. CU: 4 a) rca/menos de\ Pe/tros e)ceti/qeto au)toi^s kagech^s le/gwn,
a) 5)Egw\ h)/mhn e)n po/lei)Io/pph| proseuxo/menos
b) kai\ ei)^don e)n e)ksta/sei o(/rama, katabai^non skeu^o/s ti w(s o)qo/nhn mega/lhn te/ssarsin a)rxai^s kaqieme/nhn e)k tou^ ou)ranou^,
c) kai\ h)^lqen a)/xri e)mou^:
d) 6 ei)s h(\n a)teni/sas kateno/oun
e) kai\ ei)^don ta\ tetra/poda th^s gh^s kai\ ta\ qhri/a kai\ ta\ e(rpeta\ kai\ ta\ peteina\ tou^ ou)ranou^.
f) interchange p
1) IU: 7 h)/kousa de\ kai\ fwnh^s legou/shs moi,
a>)Anasta/s, Pe/tre,
b> qu^son
c> kai\ fa/ge.
2) CU: 8 ei)^pon de/,
a> Mhdamw^s, ku/rie,
b> o(/ti koino\n h)\ a)ka/qarton ou)de/pote ei)sh^lqen ei)s to\ sto/ma mou.
3) RU: 9 a)pekri/qh de\ fwnh\ e)k deute/rou e)k tou^ ou)ranou^,
a> (\A o(qeo\s e)kaqa/risen su\ mh\ koi/nou.
g) 10 tou^to de\ e)ge/neto e)pi\ tri/s,
h) kai\ a)nespa/sqh pa/lin a(/panta ei)s to\n ou)rano/n.
i) 11 kai\ i)dou\ e)cauth^s trei^s a)/ndres e)pe/sthsan e)pi\ th\n oi)ki/an e)n h(^| h)^men, a)pestalme/noi a)po\ Kaisarei/as pro/s me.
j) 12 ei)^pen de\ to\ pneu^ma/ moi
1) sunelqei^n au)toi^s mhde\n diakri/nanta.
k) h)^lqon de\ su\n e)moi\ kai\ oi(e(\c a)delfoi\ ou(^toi,
l) kai\ ei)sh/lqomen ei)s to\n oi)^kon tou^ a)ndro/s:
m) 13 a)ph/ggeilen de\ h(mi^
1) pw^s ei)^den [to\n] a)/ggelon e)n tw^| oi)/kw| au)tou^ stage/nta kai\ ei)po/nta,
a>)Apo/steilon ei)s)Io/pphn
b> kai\ meta/pemyai Si/mwna to\n e)pikalou/menon Pe/tron,
c> 14 o(\s lalh/sei r(h/mata pro\s se\ e)n oi(^s swqh/sh| su\ kai\ pa^s o(oi)^ko/s sou.
n) 15 e)n de\ tw^| a)/rcasqai/ me lalei^n e)pe/pesen to\ pneu^ma to\ a(/gion e)p' au)tou\s w(/sper kai\ e)f' h(ma^s e)n a)rxh^|.
o) 16 e)mh/sqhn de\ tou^ r(h/matos tou^ kuri/ou w(s e)/legen,
1))Iwa/nnhs me\n e)ba/ptisen u(/dati,
2) u(meis de\ baptisqh/sesqe e)n pneu/mati a(gi/w|.
p) 17 ei) ou)^n th\n i)/shn dwrea\n e)/dwken au)toi^s o(qeo\s w(s kai\ h(mi^
n pisteu/sasin e)pi\ to\n ku/rion)Ihsou^n Xristo/n,
q) e)gw\ ti/s h)/mhn dunato\s kwlu^sai to\n qeo/n;
4. RU: 18 a)kou/santes de\ tau^ta h(su/xasan kai\ e)do/casan to\n qeo\n le/gontes,
a))/Ara kai\ toi^s e)/qnesin o(qeo\s th\n meta/noian ei)s zwh\n e)/dwken.