

## Study following Sunday May 9th 2021

**Prepare:** Think about amazing discoveries you've made through your life.

**Praise:** Spend time thanking God that the Gospel is open to all peoples and lands, that it is not restricted to a particular culture or race.

**Passage:** Read Acts 10.44-48

**Ponder:** This short passage created huge waves in the early community of Jesus' followers. Peter was called by the Holy Spirit to visit a Roman Centurion, a Gentile or non-Jew, named Cornelius. The build up to this passage involves an amazing vision that Peter saw which confused him because it seemed to say that the Gentiles should hear the good news of Jesus too - see Acts 10.9-16. Cornelius had also been told by the Holy Spirit that he needed to see a man called Peter - so he sent for him.

- It seems the Holy Spirit is enabling a Holy coincidence that will lead to a new understanding within the early church - think about a coincidence you have known that you suspect God was involved in.

Peter arrived (Acts 10.25) and was welcomed in. He then began to preach the Gospel message - first explaining his new understanding that it is for all. He proceeds to speak about the events of the first Easter and then we enter our passage for today. While Peter is still speaking about believing in Jesus and the forgiveness of sins - a message that inspired the Ethiopian to ask for baptism - the Holy Spirit came on all of them. All those present experienced a great power encounter. There was a time of spontaneous praise and speaking in tongues (or other languages) which left Peter, and his six circumcised companions, amazed and astonished. This event was seen as the Gentiles receiving what the Apostles had received at Pentecost (Acts 2.1-13), and so confirmed what Peter had stated at the start of his Sermon, a sermon he never actually finished!

- Have you ever witnessed people speaking or singing in tongues as an act of worship? It can create a powerful, joyful sound, but it can also feel exclusive to those who are unable to share in the singing or speaking.

For further study, Paul speaks about 'tongues' particularly in a somewhat puzzling passage about good order in worship in 1 Corinthians 14.

The result of this Holy Spirit outpouring was that Peter instigated a mass baptism - this would have probably been for Cornelius, his household, his servants and friends who were all present (see Acts 10.24). This account is the only biblical record of people receiving a baptism of the Holy Spirit before a Baptism of water, and so it adds to the mystery that surrounds the intertwining of the Holy Spirit and water baptism.

- Compare Baptism events that you have been to and consider how the Holy Spirit might be encountered in different ways by those baptised and their family.

Luke, the writer, shows us that the Holy Spirit has been behind the whole narrative, opening Cornelius' heart and opening Peter's mind to this breakthrough that would shock the early Church. When Peter gets back to Jerusalem to report this incredible new revelation the main bone of contention is that he ate in a Gentile's home (Acts 11.3). It seems amazing that the early Church leaders were behaving like the Pharisees that Jesus was regularly clashing with. Thank goodness that they did listen to Peter's testimony and, after some debate, the Gentiles were welcomed into the Church.

**Pray:** Pray for those who are seeking to speak the message of the Gospel into hard to reach places, pray for them to be tuned to the Holy Spirit's guiding. Pray too for us, that we are also led by the Holy Spirit to speak words of Good News to those who the Spirit is preparing to hear.