

Introduction: Today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles is in two parts. The first part begins with Peter at the Jerusalem Council which was a gathering of all the apostles and disciples to decide what to do about non-Jewish people (called Gentiles) who had converted to The Way (later called Christianity). The council occurred fifteen to twenty years after Jesus's ascension. The group was angry at the chief apostle, Peter, because he had baptized an entire Gentile household without them first converting to Judaism. Peter tells them the story of how his heart was converted first, by a direct vision from God, and then how the Holy Spirit has appeared on people of the Jewish faith and upon Gentiles too.

A reading from Acts

Acts 11:1-12

The apostles and the brothers and sisters throughout Judea heard that even the Gentiles had welcomed God's word. When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him. They accused him, "You went into the home of the uncircumcised and ate with them!"

Step-by-step, Peter explained what had happened.

"I was in the city of Joppa praying when I had a visionary experience. In my vision, I saw something like a large linen sheet being lowered from heaven by its four corners. It came all the way down to me. As I stared at it, wondering what it was, I saw four-legged animals—including wild beasts—as well as reptiles and wild birds. I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter! Kill and eat!'

I responded, 'Absolutely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

The voice from heaven spoke a second time, 'Never consider unclean what God has made pure.' This happened three times, then everything was pulled back into heaven.

At that moment three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. The Spirit told me to go with them even though they were Gentiles. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered that man's house.

The psalm reading for this morning is from Psalm 148 *Ps 148*

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights.
Praise him, all you angels of his; praise him, all his host.

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars.
Praise him, heaven of heavens, and you waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the Name of the Lord; for he commanded, and they were created.
**He made them stand fast for ever and ever;
he gave them a law which shall not pass away.**

Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea-monsters and all deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and fog, tempestuous wind, doing his will;

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars;
Wild beasts and all cattle, creeping things and winged birds;

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the world;
Young men and maidens, old and young together.

Let them praise the Name of the Lord, for his Name only is exalted,
his splendor is over earth and heaven.

He has raised up strength for his people and praise for all his loyal servants,
the children of Israel, a people who are near him. Hallelujah!

A reading from Acts

Acts 11:12-18

[After the vision of the linen sheet, three men from Caesarea arrived looking for Peter.]

Peter said: "The Spirit told me to go with them even though they were Gentiles. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered that man's house. The man reported to us how he had seen an angel standing in his house. He said, 'Send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is known as Peter. He will tell you how you and your entire household can be saved.'

When I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as the Spirit fell on us in the beginning. I remembered the Lord's words: '*John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*'

If God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then who am I? Could I stand in God's way?"

Once the apostles and other believers heard this, they calmed down. They praised God and concluded, "So then God has enabled Gentiles to change their hearts and lives so that they might have new life."

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you Lord Christ.

John 13:31-35

At the last supper, when Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the others, now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."