

# **BIB204 NT2 Early Church**

Unit 3b

Peter's Message

Presented by the



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So in this segment, as I stated in the last segment, we're going to look at what Peter does. What's his message? It's worth reading. So we begin in verse 34. "Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'"

Very interesting. Peter preaches. He says, "God shows no partiality. I understand this now that in every nation there are those who fear him and do what is right." And then he talks about the word that God sent to Israel, preaching good news through Jesus Christ. He is careful to name Jesus as Lord of all. And he reminds them of what they know. This is the home of a man who is a soldier and he's a Gentile. He would have known what happened under Pontius Pilate. He would have understood that there was a so-called labeled insurrectionist by the name of Jesus who hailed from Nazareth in the province of Galilee, who was executed for crimes against the state, for proclaiming his kingship. But in point of fact, what really happened was he was betrayed and basically the Jewish rulers and authorities wanted to get rid of him, so they used Rome to do it. They would understand all of that. What's the word that I would use here? Scuttlebutt.

And so they know. That's why Peter says that to them in verse 37. "You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea. You know about John the Baptist. You know about Jesus of Nazareth. You know that he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil because God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem." That statement, "We are witnesses," finds an odd echo in 1 John. "That which our eyes have seen, that which we have handled, of the word of life," the letter begins. When Peter says "we," according to the reconstruction here, the history given to us by Luke, "we" refers to the apostles. "We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem." Peter is saying, "I don't just stand here by myself. I am standing in solidarity with the other apostles who are also witnesses of these things, beginning from the baptism of John that John proclaimed, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed."

And God raised him on the third day. "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree (verse 39)." Verse 40, "But God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, 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 appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." "He commanded us (verse 42) to preach." Us being the apostles. "To testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. The

prophets bear witness of him, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” For Cornelius.

Certainly we may suggest that Cornelius is an instructed man. He’s an educated man. He’s a centurion. He’s seen the world. He’s probably seen combat. He is a commander and he knows what is going on around him. And in the matter of his religious devotion, he adheres to the Hebrew God as he understands it. He’s not an idolater. For him to hear that simply believing in him, one receives forgiveness of sins through his name probably has the impact of a lightning bolt, not just for him but for everyone because they’ve been going to synagogue. They’ve been searching the Scriptures. The mention of the prophets, that wasn’t value-free. That wasn’t cognition-free for Peter’s audience. They would know about that because they looked at the Scriptures. They’ve sought to understand those Scriptures at the level at which they could understand it. So Peter is not speaking into a vacuum. He’s speaking to people who have received some instruction, have gone to a certain degree. They’ve gone as far as they wanted to go in Judaism, but no further. They didn’t become proselytes, but that didn’t make them ignorant. So that last part there has an impact.

It says in verse 44, “While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.” That’s a very important statement. So Peter is speaking. And while this happens, all of a sudden, seeing this audience, all of these people that are there, all of a sudden, they suddenly respond to an inwardly intuitive presence: that of the Holy Spirit. And all of a sudden, they are moved to do something that they’ve never done before. They speak with other tongues. “And the believers from among the circumcised (verse 45) who had come with Peter were amazed,” because up to this point, the significance of this is that, up to this point, evangelization has taken place solely in a Jewish context. The gospel message of Messiah has been proclaimed to Jews, to diaspora Jews, Hellenized Jews, in other words, and to Palestinian Jews. So the gospel has remained effectively closed to outsiders, closed to Gentiles. And so when this event happens, Peter and those who are with him of Jewish descent are watching this, and those who are with Peter are astonished because it was not a conception for them prior to that moment that Gentiles could also receive the Holy Spirit. It is a paradigm shift for them. And I know the phrase paradigm shift is overused, but in this case, it’s a real shift for them. They have to accommodate this new event. They had never seen anything like that before, and it will take them some time to work out the implications. They were amazed.

“The gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.” See how Luke words that? “For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.” So basically, the Gentiles had their own (and I say this for effect only) they had their own Pentecost. Of course, they’re not Jewish. They don’t have festivals and whatnot, but the event that occurs on the day of Pentecost effectively occurs to them, with the exception of the visible tongues of fire that we see in Acts 2. But these Gentiles, they speak in tongues and they are glorifying God. Peter is watching this, and it’s a confirmation of what he’s learned from the vision that he had on that rooftop. And for him, he’s coming around full circle. He is now the recipient, the direct recipient of God’s judgment about Gentiles who are ready to receive and believe the gospel. He has a front row seat to these events.

So he declares in light of that, verse 46, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people (verse 47), who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Notice the direct discourse there. These are his

words as recorded by Luke. What this means is that Peter looks around at those of the circumcision who are with him, and he says, “Can we withhold water from these people? Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people? They just received the Holy Spirit like we did.” “There’s nothing stopping us from baptizing them (subtext).” “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” So all these Gentiles, uncircumcised, God-fearers, who have just received Jesus Christ by believing in his name and being indwelt at that moment by the Holy Spirit and manifesting that indwelling by speaking with other languages, they’re all baptized in the name of Christ. And it is such a joyful event, so momentous, so moving. And they asked Peter to remain for some time, which is kind of interesting because notice what he said earlier on again in... Excuse me. Let me turn the pages. I’ll orient you there.

Notice again what he said in verse 28. “And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.’” He’s in the house. He says, “This is unlawful for me to do this. This is highly unusual.” Well, after all this happens, they say to him, “Stay for a while.” And he does. He stays for a few days. One assumes he is not eating, he’s probably not eating food that only Jews can eat, that Jews would only eat. He is probably tasting Gentile food for these many days. Peter has to eat. So he is immersed in this new thing, this new series of events, this new development. Peter is immersed in it and those who are with him from Joppa and from Jerusalem, because Peter is not alone, even before he moves to Joppa. They are immersed in it too. They have not even begun to work out the implications. In the next segment, we’ll pick up in chapter 11 with respect to the aftermath of these events.