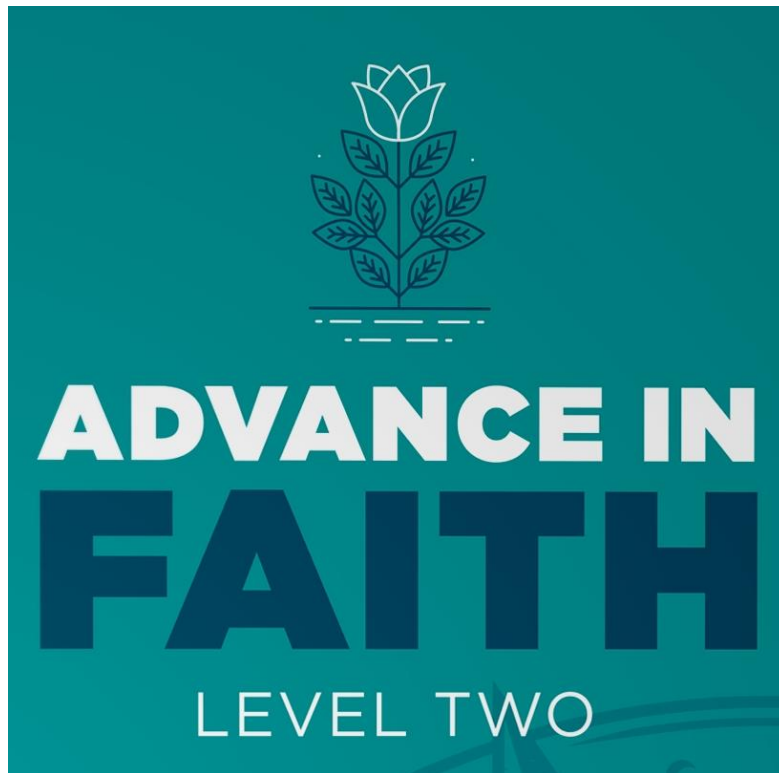


To the Gentiles!

Book of Acts – Week 3



The Good News Spreads to the Gentiles

Acts 9:32 – 12:24

Peter knew that Jews who wanted to belong to the new movement had had to repent of sin (Acts 2:38). Up to now, he would have said that Gentiles, if they wanted to belong, would have had to become Jews as well. But the point which is being made in this graphic and deeply human story (complete with Cornelius’ understandable and over-enthusiastic *faux pas* of falling down and worshipping Peter, and Peter telling him quickly to get up) is that, though Gentiles too had to repent and believe in Jesus just as Jews did, they did not have to become Jews before or after that process.¹

Just as Stephen’s retelling of Israel’s story revolved around the temple, so now this invitation from Cornelius revolves around the Jewish food laws as examples of how Jews were to be separate from the nations around them.

Peter’s Sermon to Cornelius

Acts 10:34-48

What aspects of this message are very Jewish centred?

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What aspects of this message show that it is a message for the Gentiles as well?

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In Peter’s message what were the things that ‘God did’? After all this is a story about the acts of God.

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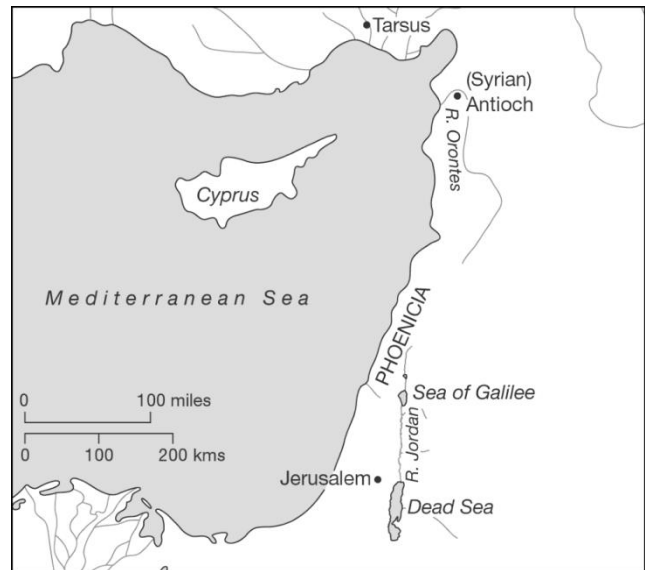
¹ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 164-65.

Not Just a Family but a Multitude

Acts 11:19-30

Three important points come out in this part of the story;

- 1. The people of Antioch responded to the good news about Jesus
- 2. The good news brought God’s grace to work on the people
- 3. Barnabas recognised the need for deeper teaching for the people



Paul begins to Preach

Acts 13:13-42

Read through this message of Paul’s and summaries the main points Paul uses.

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Paul’s strategy is a challenge to us all, to understand our audience well enough to know how to tell them the story in a way they will find compelling, how to set up signposts in a language they can read.

What was Paul’s response to the trouble the Jewish leadership brought on he and Barnabas?

When you hear the term ‘eternal life’ what ideas come to mind?

But the phrase which has so often been translated ‘eternal life’ actually means ‘the life of the age’. No wonder, you may think, we don’t put it like that; nobody would have a

clue what we were talking about. But Jews of Paul's day and many other times would know exactly what was meant. For them, there were two 'ages', or 'periods of world history': the **present age** and the **age to come**. And the '**life**' of the 'age to come' is the state to which all devout Jews would aspire. Indeed, we know of debates among Jews of Paul's day and thereafter as to precisely who will inherit this life, the life of 'the age to come'. But the point is: nobody, thinking within the framework of thought which this phrase reflects, imagined that this 'age' would be 'eternal' in our sense—timeless, spaceless, matterless. It will be a whole new period of history, when everything will be put right at last. It will be the 'great restoration' we met in Acts 3:21. Everything will be different; but it will still be a world like ours, only much, much more so, more solid, more throbbing with life and energy, because the curse of corruption and death itself will have been banished, making it 'eternal' in that sense but not in our usual ones. It is our inability, in the Western thought of recent centuries, to conceive of such a world (is it actually inability? or is it unwillingness?) that has made it so hard to speak of some of the foundational beliefs of the early Christians.²

² Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 19-20.