

Acts 10. 1 to 11. 18. Tredegar. 18 February 2012.

I want to consider with you this evening the conversion of Cornelius, as recorded in Acts 10 and 11. But, before we read the section, we need to get our bearings. And, so, first, the story so far.

In chapters 1 to 8 of his second volume, Luke has traced the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem, through Judea, to Samaria. And the time has now come for him to tell how that gospel reached beyond Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, 'to the end of the earth' (which, as far as Luke's narrative is concerned, was represented by Rome, the capital city of the empire) ... how, that is, the gospel reached out into the Gentile world.

In accordance with this purpose, Luke devotes the greater part of chapters 9 to 11 to recording the conversion of two men, whose experiences, under God, proved crucial to the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles – namely, that of Saul of Tarsus, a devout Pharisee, one time arch-persecutor of the church, who was God's chosen vessel to bear the name of the Lord Jesus 'before the Gentiles'¹ – the 'apostle of the Gentiles'² – the 'minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles'³, and that of Cornelius of Caesarea, a devout centurion, who, together with his household, was chosen by God to be, in effect, the first-fruits of the gospel harvest among the Gentiles.⁴

And the importance which Luke attached to these two conversions can be gauged from the fact that he records both of them no less than three times: that of Saul, once as part of his – Luke's – own narrative in chapter 9, and twice as told by Saul (then Paul) himself – before a hostile Jewish crowd in chapter 22, and before King Agrippa in chapter 26 ... and that of Cornelius, once as part of his – Luke's – own narrative in chapter 10, and twice as told by the apostle Peter – to 'those of the circumcision' in chapter 11, and at the so-called 'Council of Jerusalem' in chapter 15.⁵

You will remember, I am sure, that it was Luke who recorded for us our Lord's words to Peter before they entered the Garden of Gethsemane, 'I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. When you are restored, strengthen your brethren'.

By the time we reach the closing section of Acts 9, the great persecution (which for some time had persuaded the apostles to remain at Jerusalem) had ceased ... and this for various reasons which I have no time to explain – but no doubt including the fact that the Jews now had troubles enough of their own in connection with the decision of the 'mad' emperor to place his statue in the Holy of Holies.⁶

And now that the persecution had ceased, the apostle Peter clearly felt that the opportunity presented itself for him to travel around the western seacoast area of the land, to strengthen the believers who had earlier fled there from Jerusalem.

In the good providence of God, Peter had ended up at Joppa, lodging in the home of another Simon ... whose house was, as we shall see, 'by the sea side'.⁷ No, Peter no longer had any ambition to go back to fishing – he was now very much 'a fisher of men' – but perhaps he welcomed the opportunity to sit on the flat rooftop,⁸ and, while praying,⁹ to hear the splashing of water again.

It is there that this evening we take up the story at Acts chapter 10 verse 1.

[Acts 10. 1 to 11. 18]

In the opening verses of chapter 10,¹⁰ Luke provides us with a quick snapshot of Cornelius, telling us briefly (i) what he *was*, (ii) what he *did*, (iii) what he *saw*, and (iv) what he *heard*.

First, *what he was*. He was, Luke says, 'a centurion'.¹¹ It is interesting that the first Gentile with whom our Lord came into contact (as far as we know) was also a centurion, with reference to whose faith our Lord said, 'many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven'.¹² I guess that in Cornelius and his household we meet some of those!

But Cornelius was not only a centurion; he was 'a devout man who feared God'¹³ – this latter description probably marking him off as a Gentile who, though not a Jewish proselyte, believed and practised much of the Jewish religion, attending the local synagogue, and observing both the Sabbath and the ethical teachings of God's law. As such, he would have been familiar with the writings of the Old Testament prophets – which Peter assumes in verse 43.

Second, Luke tells us *what Cornelius did*. He demonstrated his faith in God by his liberal *giving* and his regular *praying* ... and we cannot but be impressed by the way in which the servants of Cornelius bore testimony to his character in very similar terms – adding that he was highly respected by the Jewish people as a whole.¹⁴

Third, we are told *what Cornelius saw*; namely, 'in a vision an angel of God' – which vision Cornelius received four days to the hour before he first met the apostle Peter.¹⁵ Fixing his eyes intently on his celestial visitor – who stood

before him dressed 'in bright clothing'¹⁶ – he was terrified ... exactly how the women at our Lord's tomb reacted when they saw two celestial figures standing by them 'in shining clothing'.¹⁷

Fourth, we are told *what Cornelius heard*. Firstly that his prayers and his alms had gone up 'as a memorial before God'. But the angel immediately made it clear that this did not mean that Cornelius was a saved man. It was rather that his noble character and conduct commended him to God as one who should be given the opportunity of hearing (and believing) the gospel – by which he *could* be saved.¹⁸ And the same held true for his household.¹⁹

Indeed, if we read all three accounts of the conversion of Cornelius, we find that Luke is most careful to stress that this devout, God-fearing, upright and generous man – who until then had lived according to the light he had – still needed to repent²⁰ and to believe in Jesus²¹ if he was, by the Lord's grace,²² to be saved, to receive the forgiveness of sins,²³ the cleansing of his heart,²⁴ the gift of the Holy Spirit,²⁵ and eternal life.²⁶

It was in response to his earlier prayers²⁷ that Cornelius was directed by God through His angel to the man – Simon Peter – who would be able to speak to him words by which he and his household could be saved.²⁸

And I note that, although, according to verse 30 of the previous chapter, the newly-converted 'apostle of the Gentiles' had earlier passed through Caesarea, and although 'Philip the evangelist' had earlier settled there, it was not for either Philip or Paul to declare the gospel to Cornelius and his household. We recall Peter's own words, spoken at the so-called Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 ... 'Men and brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe'.

And it is on Peter that the spotlight now falls.²⁹ Consistent with the practice of godly saints of old – such as David³⁰ and Daniel³¹ – the apostle is found praying at noon.³²

What Peter saw in his vision-trance³³ is self-explanatory – as is the Lord's command which Peter heard.³⁴

But I do note, in passing, that this is the last of three occasions on which we read that Peter used the word 'never' when addressing the Lord. First in the Upper Room, 'You shall *never* wash my feet'. Then on the way to Gethsemane, 'I will *never* fall away'. And finally here at the house of Simon the tanner, 'I have *never* eaten anything that is common or unclean'.³⁵ And on each occasion Peter needed – and received – a correction from our Lord.

And it is worth noting that heaven's command, Peter's objection, and heaven's correction were repeated – occurring three times.³⁶ I suppose that Peter must have become used by now to things happening in threes. For, not only had he accompanied James and John on three special occasions during our Lord's public ministry (I refer, of course, to their presence at the house of Jairus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane), but, alongside a fire of coals³⁷ at our Lord's so-called trial before the Sanhedrin, he (Peter) had been challenged three times about his association with 'Jesus of Nazareth', and had denied Him three times³⁸ ... and, alongside another 'fire of coals', had been required to reaffirm his love for the Saviour.³⁹

But although, as I said, both Peter's vision-trance⁴⁰ and the Lord's command to him⁴¹ were self-explanatory, it is important that we understand why *Peter* responded as he did, and why *the Lord* responded as *He* did.

First then, why did Peter react so passionately, refusing to kill and eat the creatures lowered down before him even though he was hungry,⁴² and in spite of having been instructed to do so by a voice from heaven?⁴³

To answer this question properly we need to go back right to the opening chapters of our Bible. At the beginning, man was given permission by the Lord God to eat only herbs and fruit – yet He (the Lord God) stressed at the outset that, with one notable exception, man was at liberty to eat freely of every herb and tree.

But as yet man had no permission to eat animal flesh – of any kind. But all that changed after the Great Flood – immediately following which God told Noah that 'every moving thing that lives' - every beast of the earth, every bird of the heavens, everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea - 'shall be food for you. As I gave you the green plants', God said, 'I give you everything'.⁴⁴ From that time on, man had God's express authority to eat whatever animal flesh he wished.

Already a distinction existed between animals which were 'clean' and animals which were 'unclean' – which distinction governed, of course, the number of each 'kind' which were taken into the ark – either *seven pairs* or just *one pair* respectively.⁴⁵ But the distinction between 'clean' and 'unclean' wasn't linked in any way with man's diet. The distinction seems rather to have determined which animals were acceptable by way of sacrifice to God – and possibly which were suitable for domestic use.

But the law which God gave to Israel through Moses affected radically His people's eating habits. For at Sinai the Lord forbade His nation to eat many of the creatures which mankind had eaten freely up until that time.

And this He did to teach them a very important lesson. They (Israel) had been separated from the other nations to enjoy a special relationship with God and to carry out a special role among the nations.⁴⁶ It was essential therefore that they kept themselves pure from the moral and spiritual pollution of the Gentile nations around them – from the sexual immorality, religious idolatry, injustice, incest and demonism which were rife throughout the heathen world.⁴⁷

With this in view, God's people were forbidden to intermingle with the pagan nations around – and it was here that the food laws came in. These laws were there, not so much to make social mixing with the Gentiles difficult – although, since Israel were not permitted to eat the same food as their Gentile neighbours (whether or not that food had been offered to idols) – these laws certainly did this ... but these laws acted mainly as a constant reminder to God's people that they were separated to the Lord, and that they were, at all times and at all costs, to avoid the moral and spiritual uncleanness of the Gentiles. The Lord therefore backed up the food laws by an appeal to Israel's calling, to be holy ... just as the Lord their God, who had brought them out of Egypt, was holy.⁴⁸

As you can imagine, in future centuries godly Israelites therefore took the observance of these laws very seriously indeed.

Take the example of the prophet Ezekiel. Over half a millennium before Peter's vision, God had called the prophet to eat food which was unclean ... as an acted parable of the way in which Israel would be compelled to eat unclean food during their forthcoming exile among the Gentile nations.⁴⁹

You will not be surprised to read that Ezekiel registered the same protest and objection as Peter did almost 600 years later. Indeed, in the Greek Old Testament, the prophet's opening words are identical to those of the apostle ... 'By no means, Lord'. Peter was therefore in good company when he insisted that he had '*never* eaten anything that is common or unclean'.⁵⁰

As another example of the care which the devout Jew took over what he ate, we recall Daniel's resolve that he would 'not defile himself' with food which came from Nebuchadnezzar's table.⁵¹

The same loyalty to God and His food laws can be illustrated from the period between the Old and New Testaments, from the days of the Maccabees, during when many godly Jews preferred martyrdom to eating ceremonially unclean food when the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, required that they eat swine's flesh.⁵²

With such examples in mind, we can, to some extent, understand why Peter objected so passionately to the demand that he kill and eat meat which God's law classed as unclean.

I say 'to some extent' because, as we read, heaven had its answer ready ... 'What God has made clean, do not regard as common'.

But when, we ask, had God 'made clean' that which He had once declared to be unclean?

I believe that He did it about two year's into our Lord's public ministry, when – as recorded in Mark 7 – following His (our Lord's) controversy with the Pharisees and scribes on the subject of defilement,⁵³ He (our Lord) emphasised to His disciples that nothing which enters into a man – that no food, that is – can 'defile him'.⁵⁴

'In saying this',⁵⁵ Mark adds – as, in line with the Revised Version and the English Standard Version, I believe Mark 7 verse 19 should be translated – 'He made all foods clean',⁵⁶ ... the word translated 'made clean' being the same as that used by the voice from heaven in Acts 10 verse 15.

As Mark points out, by implication our Lord was setting aside the food laws which He had laid down at the giving of the law, and for which, over the centuries, His people had been prepared to suffer and if necessary to die.

One commentator goes so far as to describe this passage 'when it was first spoken' as 'well-nigh the most revolutionary passage in the New Testament'.⁵⁷

Our Lord was concerned with the uncleanness of man's heart, and made the point forcibly that food entering the body cannot defile a man morally or spiritually – for it reaches his stomach, not his heart. In doing so, He made it clear to His disciples that it was God's earlier *prohibition* – that it was *His* earlier prohibition – on eating certain kinds of food which caused eating those foods to defile a man ... not the food itself.

But it is obvious from Acts 10 that Peter had not until then grasped the significance of what Jesus had said, and it is equally obvious from Acts 11 that neither had the other disciples.⁵⁸

As we noted a little earlier, in one sense, Peter's life-long refusal to eat food once declared by God to be unclean was most commendable ... but, in another sense, Peter of all men should now have known better. For we know from Matthew's account that it had been *Peter* whose request for clarification⁵⁹ had prompted the Lord to expand on His

declaration that nothing which goes into a man can possibly defile him⁶⁰ – which clarification carried with it the implication that all foods were effectively ‘clean’⁶¹ and therefore available to be eaten.

It seems likely that Peter was very much the guiding influence behind the gospel according to Mark. Apart from evidence in the New Testament itself of a close personal relationship between the two men,⁶² many early Christian writings bear witness to Peter’s influence.⁶³

It seems to me that Peter not only pondered here in Acts 10⁶⁴ the significance – and meaning – of his vision at Joppa, but that, in the light of what that vision taught him, he later thought back on what our Lord had said about food not defiling a man – and came to the conclusion that the implication of our Lord’s teaching was not only that so-called ‘unclean’ food could not defile a man personally, but that it could no longer do so ceremonially – and that therefore the distinction between so-called ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ food no longer applied ... leading to the explanatory comment which Mark added, ‘In saying this, He made all foods clean’.⁶⁵

As Peter’s fellow apostle, Paul, wrote some time after,⁶⁶ ‘... in later times some will depart from the faith ... commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Because every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified (set apart to sacred use) by the word of God (to no small extent, as I see it, by the teaching of our Lord as recorded in Mark 7 and by the heavenly voice addressed to Peter in Acts 10) and prayer (by the giving of thanks, that is).

But here in Acts 10 Peter’s only concern was with the meaning of the vision and its relevance to his present situation. His perplexity⁶⁷ was immediately removed by the timely arrival of the three men from Cornelius, together with the Spirit’s command that he should not hesitate to go with them, because, as the Spirit said, ‘I have sent them’.⁶⁸ For it’s clear that it was then – when the Spirit commanded him to accompany the three men – that Peter grasped the significance of his vision. Note carefully the sequence of events which the apostle outlined to Cornelius later, ‘God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection’.⁶⁹ For, given the announcement by the Spirit of the ‘timely arrival of the three men’, it was a short step from Peter realizing that, as had been made clear by his vision, *food eaten by Gentiles* was now to be regarded as clean, to him realizing that *Gentiles themselves* were now to be regarded as clean also.

I deliberately used the expression ‘timely arrival of the three men’ twice, for we can’t fail to observe the wonderful working of the sovereign Lord who, in His good providence, co-ordinated everything to perfection – dovetailing perfectly His revelations to Cornelius and Peter so that while Peter was praying and seeing his vision, the men from Cornelius were approaching the city,⁷⁰ and while Peter was puzzling over the meaning of what he had seen, the men arrived at the house where he was staying.⁷¹

I note that *Cornelius* prays and has a vision – which prepares him to *receive* God’s message *from* Peter ... and that *Peter* prays and has a vision – which prepares him to *give* God’s message *to* Cornelius.

God had been working at both ends – as He did in the previous chapter with Saul and Ananias, but we note that, in our chapter, Peter’s vision comes 21 hours after that of Cornelius. For, had it come earlier, and Cornelius’s servants not arrived on cue, in all likelihood Peter would not have understood its significance.

And so Peter, with nine companions in all, leaves Joppa – the same location from which many centuries before the prophet Jonah had taken what proved to be a rather eventful Mediterranean cruise in his foolish attempt to run away from the mission which God had given him. And I guess that, if it had not been for his vision and the ‘timely arrival’ of the men from Cornelius, Peter would have been as reluctant to preach to the Gentiles at Caesarea as ever Jonah had been to preach to the Gentiles at Nineveh. But, in the event, the preaching of both men resulted in dramatic cases of Gentile repentance and salvation.

And, as we read, in Peter’s case, it was a marvellously comprehensive message. Indeed, given what we noted just now about Peter’s influence on Mark’s gospel, we are not surprised to find that the second gospel follows exactly the same structure – taking up the story at our Lord’s baptism by John and continuing through to His (our Lord’s) resurrection.

Nor can we miss Peter’s insistence that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses of all the key events. He could well have said of the whole of our Lord’s ministry and of His bodily resurrection – as he wrote later concerning our Lord’s transfiguration, ‘we did not follow cleverly devised myths ... but we were eyewitnesses ...’.⁷²

But here I must fast forward the video. And it was when Peter appealed to the witness of others – namely, to that of the Old Testament prophets – for the fact that, through the Lord Jesus, ‘everyone’ (Gentile as well as Jew) who believes will receive the forgiveness of sins – it was when Peter said this that his Gentile audience ‘believed’ and that ‘God bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit’ as Peter later reported, ‘just as he did to us, putting no

difference between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith'.⁷³ Indeed, 'no difference' was very much the watchword of a gospel which addressed the needs of both Jew and Gentile.⁷⁴

What a great way to end a sermon! – Peter's I mean, not mine!

For I want to note the two questions⁷⁵ which Peter asked following the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Spirit on *Gentile* believers in an identical manner (and accompanied by exactly the same evidence) as the Holy Spirit had been poured out on *Jewish* believers at Pentecost.

First, to 'those of the circumcision' from Joppa – who reacted to new Gentile converts speaking in tongues⁷⁶ in the very same way as the multitude at Jerusalem had when they witnessed new Jewish converts speaking in tongues ... with 'amazement'.⁷⁷

To these six brethren, Peter posed the first question, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' In effect, 'Can anyone refuse baptism *in water* to those on whom God has bestowed baptism *in the Spirit*?' – which latter experience, I note, coincided with their conversion.

And second to 'those of the circumcision' at Jerusalem – who remonstrated with Peter because, following the conversion of the household of Cornelius, he had accepted their invitation to spend a few days with them and therefore 'ate with them'.⁷⁸

To these brethren, Peter posed the second question, 'If therefore God gave the same gift to them as He gave to us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?'

In the case of this, the second group, I enjoy the paraphrase of verses 17 and 18 in the Good News Bible, "'Who was I, then, to try to *stop God!*" When they heard this, they *stopped* their criticism and praised *God*'. F. F. Bruce conveyed that last expression well, 'their criticism ceased; their worship began'. What a great example for us all to follow.

Luke records the mission programme set out by the Risen Lord; 'that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name *to all nations*'.⁷⁹ Those words 'all nations' remind me of the closing verse of Genesis 10, 'These are the families of *the sons of Noah* ... in their nations, and *from these* the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood'.⁸⁰ As you know well, Noah had just three sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth.⁸¹

And it is interesting to note that, if Luke records in chapter 8 the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch – in all likelihood a descendant of *Ham* – and if he records in chapter 9 the conversion of Saul of Tarsus – most definitely a descendant of *Shem* – here in chapters 10 and 11 Luke records the conversion of Cornelius – a descendant of *Japheth*.

In closing, we note that the salvation and baptism of the household of Cornelius marks an extremely important milestone in the Book of Acts. For, as we note from the very next verse following our reading for this evening, those who had earlier been scattered from Jerusalem by the great persecution there had been preaching the gospel mainly to Jews only.

And it was God's own undisguised and undeniable activity in the conversion of this Gentile household which prepared the church at Jerusalem for the *next* stage in God's great gospel programme – that of the Gentile mission, for which, to a great extent, the city of Antioch was to provide the springboard.

And which mission would, probably some ten years later, bring the gospel into Europe.⁸²

In closing, let us remember that although, as 'Gentiles in the flesh', we once suffered a dreadful seven-fold disadvantage,⁸³ 'now in Christ Jesus' we have both been brought near by the blood of Christ,⁸⁴ and have been reconciled to God by the cross⁸⁵ ... sharing with those of Israel who believe equal 'access by one Spirit to the Father',⁸⁶ being 'no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with them'.⁸⁷

Let us remember that through the gospel we are 'fellow-heirs' of God's riches, 'fellow-members' of Christ's body, and 'fellow-partakers' of God's promise'.⁸⁸

Well then did the apostle Paul quote in Romans 15 the opening words of Psalm 117, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles!'⁸⁹ And well might we this evening, as saved Gentiles, 'glorify God for His mercy' towards us!

Footnotes

¹ Acts 9. 15.

² Rom. 11. 13.

³ Rom. 15. 16.

⁴ "Even though Peter does not convert the first Gentile [the Ethiopian eunuch], the Cornelius episode is a breakthrough for the Gentile mission. The conversion of the Ethiopian was a private and isolated event that had no effect' apart from which it is at least possible that the Eunuch was a full proselyte (note 'to worship God'). The conversion of Cornelius has consequences in the following narrative, as the reference back to it in Acts 15 makes clear.

⁵ Acts 15. 7-11.

⁶ The 'peace' was likely due to two factors : (i) The Jews had at this time troubles enough of their own in connection with the decision of Caligula (the 'mad' emperor) to place his statue in the Holy of Holies. Cf. Tacitus, Histories. Book 5, Paragraph 9. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Tacitus/Histories/5A*.html ... 'Under Tiberius all was quiet. Then, when Caligula ordered the Jews to set up his statue in their temple, they (the Jews) chose rather to resort to arms, but the emperor's death put an end to their uprising'. See Josephus, Antiquities', Book 18, Chapter 8, Paragraphs 1-9; and (ii) the conversion of the church's arch-persecutor.

⁷ Acts 10. 6.

⁸ Acts 10. 9.

⁹ Acts 10. 9.

¹⁰ Acts 10. 1-6.

¹¹ Acts 10. 1.

¹² Matt. 8. 11.

¹³ Acts 10. 2.

¹⁴ Acts 10. 22.

¹⁵ Acts 10. 30.

¹⁶ Acts 10. 30.

¹⁷ Luke 24. 5.

¹⁸ Acts 11. 14.

¹⁹ Acts 10. 2; 11. 14.

²⁰ Acts 11. 18.

²¹ Acts 15. 7, 9.

²² Acts 15. 11.

²³ Acts 10. 43.

²⁴ Acts 15. 9.

²⁵ Acts 10. 45; 15. 8.

²⁶ Acts 11. 18.

²⁷ Acts 10. 31.

²⁸ Acts 11. 14.

²⁹ Acts 10. 9-23.

³⁰ Psa. 55. 17.

³¹ Dan 6. 10.

³² Acts 10. 9.

³³ Acts 10. 11-12.

³⁴ Acts 10. 13.

³⁵ 'Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet"', John 13. 8; 'Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away"', Matt. 26. 33; 'Peter said, "... I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean"', Acts 10. 14.

³⁶ Acts 10. 16.

³⁷ John 18. 18.

³⁸ John 13. 38, with Mark 14. 72.

³⁹ John 21. 9, 15-17.

⁴⁰ Acts 10. 11-12.

⁴¹ Acts 10. 13.

⁴² Acts 10. 10.

⁴³ Acts 10. 11-13 with Acts 11. 9.

⁴⁴ Gen. 9. 2-3.

⁴⁵ Gen. 7. 2.

⁴⁶ Num. 23. 9; Exod. 19. 5-6.

⁴⁷ Lev. 18. 24-28.

⁴⁸ Lev. 11. 44-47; 20. 25-26.

⁴⁹ Ezek 4. 9-13.

⁵⁰ Acts 10. 14 with Ezek. 4. 14 – where Ezekiel says he has never in his life polluted himself by eating food forbidden in the law..

⁵¹ Dan. 1. 8.

⁵² 1 Macc. 1. 41-63.

⁵³ Mark 7. 1-16. . 'Galilee was very Jewish in religious outlook and practice, and that it is dubious to make strong distinctions in these matters between Galilee and Judea ... The discovery of ritual washing pools ... and other evidence of observance of clean/unclean food practice are key evidence'.

<http://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2011/09/23/jesus-of-galilee/> ...

with

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http://www.mohr.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Zeitschriften/PDF-Probehefte/2011/EC_1_3.pdf

⁵⁴ Mark 7. 17-18.

⁵⁵ Or, possibly, 'The effect of this saying was ...'.

⁵⁶ As I see it there can be little doubt that the masculine (καθαριζων), and not the neuter (καθαριζον), is the correct reading. See the apparatus in the UBS Greek New Testament. [Καθαριζων ... κ. A, B, L, W, X, D, θ, 0274, f1, f13, 28, 565, 579, 892, 1071, 1216, 1241, 1342, 1424, Maj-part (E, F, G, H, S), Co, Or, Chr, GrNy etc.]. Against Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, the Western Text etc, etc, the oldest manuscripts which give the neuter reading date no earlier than the 9th century!

"Purging all meats". The most approved reading here is undoubtedly the masculine (καθαριζων), and not the neuter (καθαριζον) ... Accepting, therefore, the masculine as the true reading, the only possible rendering is that which makes this last clause a comment by the evangelist upon our Lord's previous words, in which he indicates to the reader that our Lord intended by this illustration to show that no food, of whatever kind, when received with thanksgiving, can make a man unclean. The clause must, therefore, be connected with the preceding words, by the introduction of the words, in italics, "*This he said, making all meats clean.*" The passage, thus rendered, becomes a very significant exposition of what has gone before", The Pulpit Commentary on Mark 7. 19 (E. Bickersteth).

'But Mark declares, that "cleansing the meats", He spoke this. He did not however express it, nor at all say, "but to eat such and such meats defiles not the man", for neither could they endure to be told it by Him thus distinctly'. (John Chrysostom, Homily 51 on the Gospel of Matthew.)

'For if "not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which proceedeth out of the mouth," and especially when, according to Mark, the Saviour said these things "making all meats clean," manifestly we are not defiled when we eat those things which the Jews who desire to be in bondage to the letter of the law declare to be unclean', (Origen, Commentary on Matthew, Book XI, Section 12.)

[For the Origen quote, see http://jonathanhayward.com/ccel/fathers2/anf10/anf1047.htm#P7530_1557579]

In terms of English translations, the KJV, NKJV and JND stick with the καθαριζον of the Received Text. Adopting the καθαριζων are RV, ASV, RSV, NRSV, ISV, ESV, NIV.

⁵⁷ ; William Barclay on Mark 7. 14-23.

⁵⁸ 'Many have asked how Peter could be so dense, considering the fact that, according to Mark 7:19, Jesus had already uttered a saying declaring all foods clean. But it is far from clear that his disciples understood the ramifications of Jesus' utterance at the time. Mark is writing later, about A. D. 60, long after the Cornelius episode; and, reflecting on what Jesus said, Mark perceives the implications in Jesus' words that were not grasped at the time', D A Carson ... <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/loveofgod/2013/07/23/judges-6-acts-10-jeremiah-19-mark-5/>

⁵⁹ In Matt. 15. 15; cf. Mark 7. 17.

⁶⁰ Matt. 15. 17-18; Mark 7. 18-19a.

⁶¹ Mark 7. 19b.

⁶² Acts 12. 11-12; 1 Pet. 5. 13.

⁶³ **Justin Martyr** (A.D. 103-165)

The Apostles in their memoirs, which are called Gospels, have handed down what Jesus enjoined them to do ... He changed the name of one of the apostles to **Peter**, and ... it is written in **his memoirs** that this so happened ...that he changed the names of two other brothers, the sons of Zebedee, to Boanerges, which means sons of thunder (a reference to **Mark** 3. 17).

(*Apology* 1. 67; *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 106.3.)

The Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark (A.D. 160-180)

He (**Mark**) was **Peter's** interpreter. After the departure of Peter himself, he wrote down this same gospel in the regions of Italy.

Papias (writing in the first third of the 2nd century)

And the presbyter said this: **Mark** having become the interpreter of **Peter**, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered.

(*Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. iii. 39.*)

Irenaeus (writing in the late 2nd century)

Mark, the disciple and interpreter of **Peter**, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.

(*Against Heresies* 3.1.1)

Irenaeus (wrote late 2nd century)

Mark, the disciple and interpreter of **Peter**, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.

(*Against Heresies* 3.1.1)

Tertullian (A.D. 160-220)

That which **Mark** published may be affirmed to be **Peter's** whose interpreter Mark was.

(Against

Marcion, 4. 5)

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215)

The Gospel according to **Mark** had this occasion. As **Peter** had preached the word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that **Mark**, who had followed him for a long time and remembered his sayings, should write them out. And having composed the Gospel he gave it to those who had requested it.

(Eusebius, *Church History*, VI. 14. 6)

Origen (A.D. 185-254)

The second (Gospel) is by **Mark**, who composed it according to the instructions of **Peter**, who in his Catholic epistle acknowledges him as a son ...

(Eusebius, *Church History*, VI. 25. 5)

⁶⁴ Acts 10. 17, 19.

⁶⁵ As Peter's fellow apostle, Paul, wrote later, '... in later times some will depart from the faith ... commanding to abstain from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God (by the passages we have just been looking at) and prayer (by the giving of thanks)', 1 Tim. 4. 1-5.

⁶⁶ 1 Tim. 4. 1-5.

⁶⁷ Acts 10. 17, 19.

⁶⁸ Acts 10. 17-20.

⁶⁹ Acts 10. 28-29.

⁷⁰ Acts 10. 9-16.

⁷¹ Acts 10. 17-20.

⁷² 2 Pet. 1. 16.

⁷³ Acts 15. 8-9.

⁷⁴ Compare Rom. 3. 22 (with verse 9) and Rom. 10. 12.

⁷⁵ Both questions were unanswerable, and both questions contain an almost identical Greek expression, namely 'able to forbid, refuse or prevent'.

⁷⁶ It was a type of the reconciliation between Jew and Gentile, whose alienation had for ages been symbolized by differences of language, Gen. 11. 6-9.

⁷⁷ Acts 2. 12; 10. 45.

⁷⁸ Acts 10. 48; 11. 3.

⁷⁹ 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations', Luke 24. 46-47.

⁸⁰ 'These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood', Gen. 10. 32.

⁸¹ Gen. 5. 32; 6. 10; 10. 1.

⁸² Acts 16. 9-12. 'Philippi is a city that was formerly called Datus, and before that Crenides, because there are many springs bubbling around a hill there. Philip fortified it because he considered it an excellent stronghold against the Thracians, and named it from himself, Philippi. It is situated on a precipitous hill There is another hill not far from Philippi which is called the Hill of Dionysus ... between these hills ... lay the main pass from Europe to Asia'. Appian of Alexandria, *Civil Wars*, IV.105-106). http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/4*.html. See <http://www.dovhost.com/grace-books/BakerI03.pdf> ... Pages 18-20.

⁸³ Eph. 2. 11-13.

⁸⁴ Eph. 2. 13.

⁸⁵ Eph. 2. 16.

⁸⁶ Eph. 2. 18.

⁸⁷ Eph. 2. 19.

⁸⁸ Eph. 3. 6.

⁸⁹ Rom. 15. 11; Psa. 117. 1.