

Worship Material
Making all things new
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 18th May

Begin with an opening prayer

God, who makes all things new,
we gather together today to bring you praise.
We offer ourselves afresh in your service.
We're sorry for all the ways we have fallen short
of your ideal over the last week.
Make us new again.
Amen.

Read Acts 11.1-18

Bible notes

This passage is Peter's explanation of his meeting in Caesarea with Cornelius, a Roman centurion attracted to Jewish monotheism (Acts 10:1-2). Peter had baptized Cornelius, together with 'his relatives and close friends' (10:24), with water. These Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit as Peter was sharing with them 'the message God sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ' (10:36). Now speaking to his fellow Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, Peter does not impose his authority but shares what has happened 'step by step', moving from his vision of unclean creatures in Joppa to his understanding of its significance in Caesarea. In Acts, it is always 'the word of God' that moves the story forward 'step by step'. We hear that it 'continued to spread' (6:7) and 'gain adherents' (12:24), spreading 'throughout the region' (13:49) so that it 'grew mightily and prevailed' (19:20). This critical breakthrough from Jewish separateness is summarised as 'the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God', and we hear that 'the Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us'. Indeed, Cornelius himself had received a vision of an angel speaking about 'the message by which you and your entire household will be saved'. The Jewish Pentecost was interpreted as the fulfilment of God's word through the prophet Joel (Acts 2:14-21). And, as Peter remembers Jesus' words, he interprets this Gentile Pentecost as the fulfilment

of the word of the Lord, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit' (see Luke 3:16 and Acts 1:5). Peter's fellow Jewish Christians in Jerusalem initially criticised him for accepting Cornelius' invitation to eat with Gentiles. The climax of his explanation is his question, 'Who was I that I could hinder God?' Reconsidering their criticism they praise God anew: 'God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life'. Gentile and Jewish Christians are learning together not to hinder the God who moves 'step by step', making all things new.

Prayer

We thank you, Lord, for all we have heard today about making all things new.

We thank you for Peter, who was brave enough to go forward in faith and do your will, however scary that might have been.

We thank you that, in your strength, we can do that too.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Life-giving God, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, journey with us as we go from this place into our communities.

As we look forward to the time when you will make all things new, enable us, by your Spirit, to bring your kingdom here on earth.

Amen.