

June 20, 2021 by Steve Brandon



# Gentile Day

## Acts 10:1-33

1. Cornelius Sees an Angel (verses 1-8).
2. Peter Sees a Vision (verses 9-16).
3. Peter Ponders the Vision (verses 17-20).
4. Peter Goes to Caesarea (verses 21-24).
5. Peter meets Cornelius (verses 25-33).

Yesterday was June 19th, which is often referred to as, "Juneteenth." This day on our calendar marks the day in 1865 "when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to take control of the state and ensure that all enslaved people be freed."<sup>[1]</sup>

Two and a half years before this day (September 22, 1862), Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, in which he declared that on January 1, 1863, slaves in the Confederacy "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." But the Emancipation Proclamation was merely a declaration of freedom. It was a declaration directed toward those states in rebellion against the Union, which was, of course, ignored as this was the battle of the Civil War. So no slaves experienced freedom on the day when Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

But on June 19, 1865, two months after the Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered, it actually happened. Slaves in Texas were freed when U. S. General Gordon Granger actually stood on Texas soil in Galveston and read General Orders No. 3, "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free."<sup>[2]</sup>

That was such a momentous occasion that The following year, in 1866, on June 19th, freedmen in Texas organized the first organized annual celebration. they called it, "Jubilee Day" the day when slaves are set free! And it has been an annual celebration across our country ever since. The celebration began in Texas, but as people migrated from Texas over the years, the celebration began taking place in other states as well. It has become so popular that this past week (on Thursday), President Biden signed into law, that Juneteenth, is an official federal holiday. The day now is official identified as "Juneteenth National Independence Day."

(So, I guess I have hope that someday the Longest Day of the Year celebration at Rock Valley Bible Church will spread across our nation and be so popular, that it will become a national holiday).<sup>[3]</sup>

Now, I say all of that about Juneteenth, not merely because it is in the news, but because of its striking parallel with the Scripture we will look at this morning: Acts 10. Our text this morning tells the story of a racially divided culture, whose unity was purchased at the cross of Christ. Yet, those who had been declared free in the gospel had not yet fully experienced their freedom in Christ. It took a prejudiced apostle to go to the Gentiles on their soil to tell them of their freedom in Christ Jesus. This is a similar story to Juneteenth. Though the slaves were free when the Union won the Civil War, it took a General with authority to come and tell them of their freedom.

Regarding Gentiles, it was often prophesied in the Old Testament of how the Gentiles would come among the people of God as genuine worshipers of him! There are far too many to quote. Here are a few:

### Isaiah 11:10

In that day [that is, "the day of the Messiah"] the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

This prophecy speaks of the nations inquiring of the LORD. That is, the Gentiles seeking God, and finding their rest in him! Consider another Old Testament prophecy of the Gentiles coming as worshipers of the LORD.

### Psalms 117:1

Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!

That's a command. That's a cry to all the nations to worship the LORD. that includes the Gentiles.

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These are but two of the many verses in the Old Testament that speak of God's heart to bring the Gentiles But they are all over the Old Testament. Moses addresses the circumstances when Gentiles want to join in worship at the Passover (Exodus 12:48-49) or by making sacrifices for their sin (Numbers 15:13-16). David prophesies of how all the earth will turn to the LORD (Psalm 22:27-28; Psalm 86:9). Solomon in his prayer of dedication of the temple mentions the Gentiles coming to worship with Israel (1 Kings 8:41-43). Isaiah (42:6; 49:6; 60:1-3) and Daniel (Daniel 7:14) and Hosea (Hosea 2:23) and Amos (Amos 9:11-12) all prophesy of the Gentiles coming to serve the LORD.

Even Jesus, himself, prophesied of the day when Matthew 8:11 many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

All of these promises come from the greatest promise of them all, Genesis 12:1-3 Speaking to Abraham, God says, Genesis 12:1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. Genesis 12:2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Now, when God made this promise, it was only that. It was just a promise. But as history unfolded, Jesus became the sacrifice to bring both Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom. that any who believe in him will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Now, it wasn't immediately that the gospel went to the gentiles. Rather, it was to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile (Romans 1:16).

As we have been working our way through Acts, and learning how God calls us to be his witness, we have seen salvation come to the Jews. In the first handful of chapters in Acts, we see the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Jews, and thousands come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah! They experienced the forgiveness of sins through faith alone. And the church was born.

With the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7), persecution arises, which scatters the message, to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8). we even see the gospel going way north to Damascus with Saul's conversion (Acts 9). We see many believing in Jesus! But it's mostly the Jews who were receiving the gospel. In some cases, Samaritans, who were half Jews. But not the Gentiles. Oh, there were some, like the Ethiopian Eunuch (in Acts 8). like Aeneas (in Acts 9). But there were only a few.

Acts 10 is the opening of the door to the Gentiles, which unleashes the floodgates of salvation to the Gentiles.

Now, it wasn't easy. In order to do so, the Lord had to overcome the racial tensions between Jews and Gentiles. the Lord had to overcome the prejudices of Peter and the rest of the Jews. He does so in a miraculous way, through angelic visits and visions. It had to be this way, because the racism in Peter was so ingrained, in him and in his culture. It took a miracle of God to change his way.

The story of how this took place is told in Acts 10. In many ways, Acts 10 is just like Juneteenth. It's the day when the message of freedom from sins comes to the Gentiles from Peter, a man with authority from Jerusalem. It's just like June 19, 1865, when freedom was proclaimed to the slaves from General Granger, a man with authority from the Union Army. This proclamation of blessing was established at the covenant with Abraham, just like Abraham Lincoln's emancipation proclamation. Freedom from sins was won at the cross, like the north's victory in the Civil War. But the freedom was not applied until Peter, comes onto Gentile soil, and declares the message of salvation to the Gentiles. Just like Juneteenth, when General Granger went to Texas soil, declaring freedom to the slaves.

Yet, when the slaves were freed, all was not solved. There was still much to be worked out. In the same way, everything with Jews and Gentiles weren't solved in this one chapter, Act 10. We will see the racial tensions arise in chapter 11 and chapter 15. We will see the Jews love the message of Jesus, the Messiah, but then revolt when it comes to extending grace the Gentiles. This issue, salvation to the Gentiles, was detested by the Jews. When they heard of Paul preaching this message in a neighboring city, the Jews would travel to that city, hunt him down and instigate a persecution against him.

Yet, through it all, Paul fought hard for the church to be racially reconciled. He pleads with churches to be united, dwelling together in unity, despite the racial differences. This is the issue of Ephesians. Jews and Gentiles are "one new man" (Ephesians 4:15). Living in unity with one another, in all humility and gentleness, is the main issue in the church. He calls this "walking worthy of the gospel" (Ephesians 4:1).

In Romans, Paul's great treatise on the faith, he spends two chapters (Romans 14 and 15) addressing this issue of Jews and Gentiles together in unity and harmony. Paul went to his grave without seeing racial unity in the church fully worked out. Paul fully understood that the gospel, alone, can reconcile Jew and Greek together.

Like America, Juneteenth didn't solve our racial problems. But that day in 1865 was a step in the right direction, as slaves were set free. It was a step that demonstrated how America, and its system of democracy and freedom. is not designed to suppress others. Rather, it is designed to overcome societal inequalities. Just like Acts 10 didn't solve all of the racial problems in the early church, so also Juneteenth didn't solve all the racial problems of our country. We have spent many years seeking to establish racial unity, just like the struggle of the Bible, to unite Jew and Gentile together. We have much to learn through the book of Acts in these areas.

My message this morning is entitled, "Gentile Day." It's the day when freedom from sin was proclaimed to the Gentiles. So, with that as a long introduction to our text this morning, let's read our text. Below is all of Acts 10.

#### Acts 10:1-48

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. 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."

And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

So 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."

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. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

For my message this morning, I simply want to walk through this story together. It's a great story. My first point is this:

## **1. Cornelius Sees an Angel (verses 1-8).**

In verse 1, we meet Cornelius. Verse 1 tells us where he lives and what he does.

Acts 10:1

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort,

Cornelius lived in Caesarea, the Roman city on the Mediterranean Sea. Cornelius is a centurion. that is, a Roman military leader, commander of a hundred men. And he was sent from the mother land, from Rome, being a part of the Italian Cohort. In verse 2, we get a glimpse of his spirituality. Cornelius was ...

Acts 10:2

a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.

Cornelius was a god-fearing man, who prayed to God, and was generous toward the Jewish people. He may have been like the centurion told about in Luke 7, who lived in Capernaum. This centurion loved the nation of Israel, and built a synagogue for the Jews (Luke 7:5).

But being a Gentile, he was excluded from much of the religious life of the synagogue. It would be like someone who loved Rock Valley Bible Church, who prayed for Rock Valley Bible Church, who gave substantial sums to Rock Valley Bible Church, to help us with our financial needs. And yet, because of his ethnic origin, we would not let him come into our building. Nevertheless, Cornelius loved the Jewish God and the Jewish people.

That's Cornelius. Then one day, he had an experience that changed his life. It all happened to him while he was praying at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1).

Acts 10:3

About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius."

It's not every day that you pray, and see an angel. Such a vision would instill fear in any of us. It did to Cornelius as well.

Acts 10:4

And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?"

Then, the angel responded, by commending him, and commanding him. He commended him for his worship.

Acts 10:4

And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God."

God heard his prayers to God. God saw his generosity to the Jews. That's a great commendation. In verse 5, he commanded him.

Acts 10:5

And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. Acts 10:6 He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."

These are real simple instructions, especially for military men, who are used to going on missions. In this case, the mission is simple. Go to Joppa. Find the man, Simon. aka "Peter." You will find him at the house of another Simon, who is a tanner, and who lives by the sea. and bring him back alive. Now, that's not as a prisoner, but as a willing spokesman.

So, Cornelius dispatched the men just as soon as the angel left.

Acts 10:7-8

When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

These men went out, not on a blind mission to bring back Peter, but on a mission in which they were fully informed. These men knew all about the angel that Cornelius saw and the message that he gave to Cornelius. This is significant, because, they will be able to relate this to Peter when they see him. Their words will be enough to convince Peter to join them. But I get ahead of myself.

Let's look at our second point.

## **2. Peter Sees a Vision (verses 9-16).**

Acts 10:9

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

Since the Jewish day began with sun-up at 6am, the sixth hour of the day is high-noon. Peter went to the housetop, because that was a private place for him to be alone with God. Then, he had an experience that changed his life.

Acts 10:10

And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance.

A trance is like an intense day-dream, when your circumstances suspend, and you are conscious only in your mind. And in this state, Peter ...

Acts 10:11

.. saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.

Peter is hungry, he's thinking about food. And in this vision, he sees a giant tablecloth come down from heaven.

Acts 10:12-13

In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

Being a hungry man, there was plenty of food for him to eat. Only, the animals upon this sheet were unclean to him. Being a kosher Jew for his entire life, Peter had never eaten pork, Peter had never eaten rabbit. Peter had never had bear or lobster or crow. And now, when he was being told to "kill and eat," Peter's response (in verse 14) is totally understandable.

Acts 10:14

But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean."

This is true. And it's not like these foods were ever a temptation for him. Growing up in the Hebrew culture, all he knew was how God had commanded the Jewish people what to eat and what not to eat, to live differently than the other nations surrounding them, to teach them about what it means to be clean and unclean (Leviticus 11:47).

Yet, in this vision, the voice didn't let up. It came a second time.

Acts 10:15

And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common."

It came again.

### Acts 10:16

This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Three times, Peter was told to “kill and eat.” Three times, Peter refused to “kill and eat.” What a contrast with Cornelius. When he saw the angel, he quickly obeyed. When Peter sees a vision, he refuses to obey.

It's totally understandable for a Jew to act this way. I'm not faulting Peter at all. Lifelong habits and worldviews are difficult to change. That's why racial harmony takes generations. Peter wasn't going to be changed in a moment. It took more time. It took more divine intervention.

Yet, the message would ring in Peter's ear: “What God has made clean, do not call common.” “What God has made clean, do not call common.” “What God has made clean, do not call common.” Yet, it was not at all clear to Peter what this meant. In verses 17-23, we see Peter trying to understand.

### **3. Peter Ponders the Vision (verses 17-20).**

#### Acts 10:17-18

Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.

At this point, we see the scenes of the story come together. The men that Cornelius sent have arrived at Peter's house. They have asked for him, at the very moment Peter is trying to understand these things. The timing couldn't have been better. But, then again, the timing was divine.

#### Acts 10:19-20

And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.”

This is the Lord guiding Peter into understanding the vision. Peter didn't understand the vision about the food. Peter isn't given an explanation, other than this: “Go with these men.” And Peter obeyed this command. That's my fourth point.

### **4. Peter Goes to Caesarea (verses 21-24).**

It was far easier for Peter to walk the road from Joppa to Caesarea, than it was for him eat the unclean food. It was far easier for him to take a few days and be with these men, than it was for him to take a few moments and put the unclean food in his mouth.

First of all, he received the men as his guests.

#### Acts 10:21-23a

And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?” And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” So he invited them in to be his guests.

I'm sure the evening was spent marveling at the wondrous working of God. That the angel's appearance to Cornelius, coincided perfectly with Peter's vision that he saw. The angelic visit took place two days before Peter's vision. Perfectly in time for the men to arrive at Peter's home, just as he had his vision. The timing of this was surely not lost on Peter and all of the men from Caesarea.

Well, they retired for the evening. And verse 23 tells us that ...

#### Acts 10:23b

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.

So, picture the scene, you have three Roman soldiers, Peter, a Jew, and a few of his Jewish believing friends, walking north, along the Sea. I'm sure that it's not every day that you see such a mixed group of men walking together. Three Romans and (three or four Jews). The Jews hated the Romans, especially the Roman soldiers, who were emblematic of the suppression of the Jewish people.

Verse 24 describes the scene back in Caesarea.

#### Acts 10:24

And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

Cornelius has been busy over the past few days, making preparation for the anticipation of meeting Peter, inviting his relatives inviting his friends to join with him in meeting Peter. Cornelius knew that there was a message that Peter would bring to them from the Lord. He wanted all of his close, social circle to hear what this Jewish man would tell them.

And so, we come to verse 25, which is my 5th point.

### **5. Peter meets Cornelius (verses 25-33).**

Acts 10:25-26

When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man."

On the one hand, this shows the devotion of Cornelius. He is so encouraged by the coming of Peter, that he can't help, but to worship the man! On the other hand, this shows the ignorance of Cornelius. Peter is just a man. He isn't worthy of worship like this. No man is worthy of worship like this. (The Popes of our day should learn a lesson from Peter, their supposed first Pope.)

Anyway, the story continues in verse 27.

Acts 10:27

And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered.

Now, we don't know how many people were gathered in the home of Cornelius. But when you consider how family in those days remained in their hometown. The kids didn't go away to college and move to another city far away. No, they stayed at home and supported each other in the family.

Also, when you consider the size of the social circle of Cornelius, a commander of a hundred men, it's easy to imagine that Cornelius gathered 50, 75, perhaps 100 people to hear Peter's words.

Then, the public conversation followed. Peter said to them all, ...

Acts 10:28-30

"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. Acts 10:29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

In other words, "My visit to you is far beyond my comfort zone. According to Jewish law, I'm not supposed to be here. I'm not supposed to fraternize with Gentile. However, I had an encounter with God that told me otherwise. God told me that "I should not call any person common or unclean." So, I have come. I'm here. I'm not sure what's going on. Will you tell me?"

And Cornelius responded with his story.

Acts 10:30-33

"Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

In other words, "I too had a vision from the Lord. An angel visited me. He commended my worship. He commanded me to send for you. I didn't know your name before this. I had never met the tanner, who lives by the sea. Yet, I send these men to you. And they found the tanner and they found you, just as the angel had said. Thank you for coming. I know that you have a message for us. We are all ears. Tell us what we need to know."

And with that, Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius and his household. For the first time in human history, he articulates that the Messiah is for every nation. Now, it's not that this was so new, as this is what the prophets proclaimed, "Everyone who believe in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name!" (Acts 10:43) But the emphasis here proclaimed directly to the Gentiles is new. It's bold and free forgiveness of sins proclaimed to the Gentiles. "Everyone who fears the Lord and believes in Christ is justified in his sight. "

This is a day that we all ought to celebrate. It's the day when freedom was proclaimed to the Gentiles. Oh, it was promised in the Abrahamic covenant. Oh, it was purchased at the cross of Christ. But here, on this day, when Peter visited the home of Cornelius, it was proclaimed by Peter.

We celebrate Christmas, with the birth of Jesus. We celebrate Easter, with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Churches across the world celebrate other events in the New Testament. like Ascension Sunday, looking back and remembering the day when Jesus ascended into heaven. Churches celebrate Pentecost Sunday, looking back and remembering the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the earth. But I don't know of any church that celebrates "Gentile Day." The day when it was clearly proclaimed that Gentiles are welcome into God's kingdom on the basis of faith, not race. That anyone, of any tribe or tongue or nation, is welcome in the kingdom of God.

I think we often forget how wonderful this day was. We often forget its significance for us.

Those in Galveston, Texas never forgot the day their freedom was proclaimed to them: June 19, 1865. And they have been celebrating it ever since. And now, with the new federal holiday, they will celebrate it with a nation for many years to come.

Would that the church remember "Gentile Day," the day when the Gentiles were proclaimed to be a part of God's kingdom! I recommend that we celebrate this every year during the summer solstice, during the longest day of the year. Such is the significance of this passage.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 20, 2021 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

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[1] <https://www.history.com/news/what-is-juneteenth>.

[2] Ibid.

[3] This sentence in parentheses was a funny joke for those of us at Rock Valley Bible Church. One of the unique events in the life of our church that we have celebrated is "The Longest Day of the Year." Our celebration takes place during the evening of the summer solstice. It's a time for us to go to a park for food and games and fellowship and fun. We stay out until the very last bit of light goes down and return home in the dark. It's a celebration that is unique to our church.