



Acts Chapter 10: The Gospel to the Gentiles



In Acts Chapter 9, we see the conversion of Saul, his evangelism to the Jews of Damascus and Jerusalem, and his escape from both cities, eventually returning to Tarsus, the city of his birth. Saul spends about 8-years there, these are known as the silent years. We will see him again in chapter 11, when Barabas seeks him out to help teach the disciples in Antioch. Also in Chapter 8, we see Peter who after dealing with Simon Magnus, returns to Jerusalem and continued his work of evangelism and discipleship.

Then Peter in Acts 9 goes to city of Lydda close to the Jaffa, there he heals Aeneas a man paralyzed for eight years. Hearing this, the friends of Dorcas or Tabitha, a widow who was full of good works died, they thought of reaching out to Peter. Now rather than bury her immediately as was the custom, they called to Peter who was in nearby Lydda, Peter came and God raised her back to life. Again confirming his Apostolic ministry, and the Gospel through signs and healings. Peter stayed at the house of Simon the tanner in the city of Joppa (Jaffa).

The Gentiles and the Jews

Since Saul was no longer a threat, the church had peace and began to grow and had peace (Acts 9:31). At this time, the Church was mainly Jewish believers and the idea of the Gentiles being on the same footing of the Jewish believers was not even part of the thinking. God promises in scripture were to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Gentiles were only seen in the periphery not as an equal, to Jews. After all the New Covenant promises were made to the descendants of Judah and Israel, not the Gentiles.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The promise this “New Covenant” is what Peter preached in Jerusalem (Acts 2:31), they really did not understand what Jesus taught about the Gentiles being part of the Kingdom of God and on equal footing with the Jews. Here in Acts 10-11, Jesus is going help Peter and the Church understand his plans, this will come to a head in Acts 15 at the *Jerusalem Council*, even though the promise of Acts 1:8, says you will be “*my witnesses to the end of the earth*” Did it mean Gentiles too?. Jesus taught this in parables “The Wedding Feast” (Matthew 22:1-14) and “The Great Banquet” (Luke 14:16-24). In those parables the ones who were invited rejected their invitation; this was symbolically Israel. So the invitation was offered to those not originally invited, the Gentiles, that is what is taking place. The Gentiles are now being brought into the “New Covenant”.

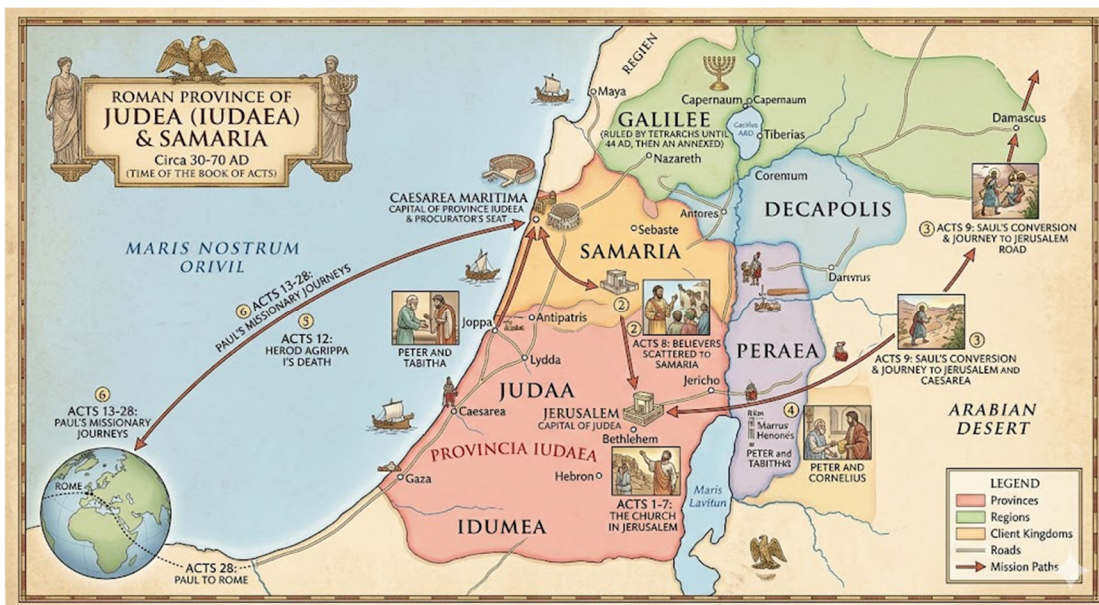
Matthew 22:1-10

- 1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying,
- 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,
- 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.
- 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’
- 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business,
- 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.
- 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.
- 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy.
- 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’
- 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Paul later writes that the inclusion of the Gentiles into the body of believers was a mystery not

fully revealed by the Old Testament prophets, but through the “Blood of Jesus” we are one in Christ both Jew and Gentile, this mystery was revealed to Paul (Ephesians 3:3).

Ephesians 2:11-22
11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which



is made in the flesh by hands—

- 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
- 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility
- 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,
- 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.
- 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.
- 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.
- 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
- 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,
- 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
- 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The Gentiles do not replace Israel, but are included into Israel, God's promise of the New Covenant has not been nullified, but expanded to include the Gentile nations. In the end times, Israel will become believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

Romans 11:25-26 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Peter's leadership

Peter has been given the leadership of the Church, and we see him preach to the group gathered after Pentecost, proclaiming in the power of the Holy Spirit, the work of Jesus to the Jews (Acts 2:14-41). Peter then boldly presents the Gospel to the Sanhedrin giving them an chance to repent the crucifixion of the Messiah/Christ (Acts 4:1-22). Peter, following Philip into Samaria, prays for the new believers, who then receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17). Peter healing of the lame man in the Temple (Acts 3:1-10), paralyzed Aeneas and raising the Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:32-43), were all signs confirming Peter leadership, apostolic position in the expanding church (Matthew 16:16).

Peter was leading the movement of the Church following Pentecost, bringing the Gospel to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, now the fourth part of the mission of the Church to *the end of the earth*, was about to begin.

Cornelius Calls for Peter

Acts 10:1-9

- 1 At Caesarea there was a man named **Cornelius**, a centurion of what was known as the **Italian Cohort**,
- 2 **a devout man** who feared God with all his household, **gave alms** generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.
- 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."
- 4 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.
- 5 And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter.
- 6 He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."
- 7 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,
- 8 and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.
- 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.

Vs. 1-9

Caesarea was north of Jaffa about 30 miles, from where Peter was staying. **Cornelius** was a centurion, meaning he oversaw about 100 men, the equivalent in today's military is closer to a captain. He also belongs to a specific Italian **Cohort** or regiment, which composed about 500 men. He was not Syrian conscript, but an **Italian**, meaning he was more elite in status being from Italy and having connections beyond Judea.

A legion was a tactical Roman unit of between 5000 to 6000 highly trained soldiers broken down into 10 Cohorts of 500 men each, with centurions over 100-man units. Caesarea was a Roman city built by Herod the Great in honor of the Emperor Augustus. There would have been 3000-4000 Roman troops stationed in the city.

Cornelius was unique, he was gentile officer, who had become a believer in the God of Israel, he saw the truth of the God of Israel, like a Rahab or a Ruth, maybe he even witnessed or heard about Jesus from the events earlier. He prayed and gave alms, praying even at the 9th hour about 3:00 PM which was the time of Jewish prayer. He wanted to know the God of Israel. So, an angel tells him what he must do.

Here we see the spiritual method God has chosen for revelation. The angel could have easily revealed to Cornelius what he needed to do but listen to what the angel's instructions are: "**bring one Simon who is called Peter**". God uses us, we are his ambassadors for the Gospel to the lost and dying world. God connects us to those who are seeking him, Cornelius was seeking God, like many are today. We must be sensitive to the Spirit, when he puts people in our path, people who are being led to us, like Cornelius was being led to Peter. Notice, the angel says your prayers and alms have ascended, nothing is hidden from God's sight.

Before this day, Peter had raised Dorcas from the dead, and he was staying at Simon the Tanners' house, thirty miles south of Cesaria. As soon as the angel left, he called another devout soldier, just like Cornelius, there must have been spiritual movement going on in the city, to have Roman soldiers turning to the God of Israel. Since this was taking place near the evening, they were going to set out the next day, probably on horseback since Cornelius was not your average individual he would have had access to horses to travel, so it would have been a one day trip, if they left in the morning, they would be nearing the city about 12 in the afternoon. Joppa would have had about 3000 to 5000 inhabitants during this period.

If the men left the city in the morning, at a moderate pace with stops they would be arriving at the city that afternoon since it was about 30 miles to the south. At this same time, Peter is on the rooftop praying, at about 12 PM.



Peters Vision

Peter as leader of the church it's now going to address revolutionary issue, the incorporation of the Gentiles into the church. He is on the roof praying and he becomes hungry, what are his options? Being a Jew, there are foods off limits for him to eat, such as pig, lobster and lizard meat (Leviticus 11). It's because of these laws, Jews looked on Gentiles as unclean, including their houses and their persons. So how was the Gospel to spread to the Gentiles, if there was this separation, if the Gentiles were viewed as off limits?

When Jesus died on the Cross, he fulfilled the Law, and we are saved because of his blood, not because of our ability to keep the Law. Dietary laws were all fulfilled in Jesus Christ, we are righteous through our faith in Christ.

Romans 5:8-9

8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Peter next mission was to go the house of a Roman Italian Centurian, who was going to have a gathering of his family and friends to hear the message from Peter, there was one problem. He was a gentile, his house was unclean and food were unclean for Peter, who followed Jewish law. Peter needed to understand, the "New Covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31, was

now in place, the rules have changed because Jesus fulfilled the Law.

Peter; kill and eat

Acts 10:10-16

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

Jesus wanted Peter to understand this change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, Peter was hungry, but from the Old Covenant his food was limited by the Mosaic Law. Now in the New Covenant, righteousness was through the Blood of Christ, not the Law. Jesus fulfilled the Law for us. Every food is now clean because of the Blood of Jesus. Peter's vision had all kinds of animals, including unclean ones. Peter is told 3 times to **"Rise, Peter; kill and eat"**.

Peter is no different than all of us, he is a creature of habit, he followed the Mosaic Law, the idea of eating "Pork" was anathema to him. Peter at first rejected the message, but it was repeated three times, including the voice telling him, **"What God has made clean, do not call common"**. It was made clean on the "Cross", because all sins were paid for.

Hebrews 9:11-15

- 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)
12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.
13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,
14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Understanding the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, is one of the major focuses of the book of Acts, as the Gospel begins to move from the Jewish world to the Gentile world. One of the major questions faced was regarding following the Mosaic Law, what are gentiles and Jews required to do? Here God is answering that question with Peter. The term, "God has made clean", means that its no longer unclean. The law is fulfilled with the blood of Jesus. Peter can freely go into the gentile world to proclaim the Good News.

Peter Meets Cornelius Men

Acts 10:17-23

- 17 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
18 and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.
19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.
20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."
21 And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?"
22 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."
23 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.

Vs. 17-23

Peter is trying to understand exactly how all this fits together, why can I now eat unclean animals? People are still asking this question today. We are not under the laws of the Old Covenant as believers, we under the New Covenant. We have freedom in Jesus Christ, because he has fulfilled the law for us. Paul explains this in Romans 14:13-14:

Romans 14:13-14

- 13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or

hindrance in the way of a brother.

14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

This is a major transition, to this day people still struggle with understanding how the Old Covenant rules and regulations apply in their lives, versus the freedom of Christ in the Gospel. Part of the provision of the New Covenant, is the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is directing our lives.

Jeremiah 31:33-34

33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Before Peter could go, Peter had to understand what was happening, he had to know this was from the Lord so, he was told; **accompany them without hesitation**. Peter might be a little startled to see a Roman soldier and two men just show up looking for him. Imagine praying and the police or the FBI shows up at your door, just after you have a dream that goes against everything you were taught from your youth. Peter needed to know this was from the LORD.

Here is the first fruits, the men, Gentiles were invited to stay in the Peter's guests. So the next day, they set off, the return party was about ten men, because six brothers accompanied Peter (Acts 11:12). They had at least about six hours on the return trip, to have time to get caught up and understand what was taking place. God gives us time to process and understand his WORD, and Peter along with the brothers were still trying to understand this transition.

Peter Meets Cornelius

This was an amazing day, it was revolutionary, imagine a very well connected and influential Roman centurion, from Italy who was in a major Roman garrison city with three to four thousand soldiers. This man had called together his relatives, this could have included his wife and children, because it was a roman city, and he was a higher rank than a common soldier Cornelius would have kept his own private house with servants, such as those sent to Peter. Here is where two different worlds met, to be one, the Gentile and the Jewish, to be united in Christ.

Ephesians 2:14

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

Acts 10:24-33

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

25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man."

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

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.

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

30 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

31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

32 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.'

33 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."

Cornelius had significant rank and power, as he waited for his men to return with Peter, his whole house would have been in the highest levels of expectation. Remember an appeared to him, he was terrified at first. Now here he was, waiting two days later as received word Peter was coming with six men from Joppa. He had gathered everybody dear to him, to hear the words from Peter's mouth.

As soon as Peter enters his house this powerful man **fell down and worshiped him**, Infront of all his guests, so we can imagine the intense feeling of Cornelius at this point. Peter quickly corrects him tell him to **"Stand up, I too am a man"**. John in Revelation has a similar experience, he is overwhelmed by

what he is seeing and falls down to worship the angel, who tells us to get up, this happens twice in Revelation, that he needed to be corrected for incorrect worship (Revelation 19:10, 22:9). We are told **"many persons gathered"**, so we could imagine 20 or 50 were in the room when Peter arrived with his six men from Joppa and the three sent from Caesura. Cornelius had probably told everybody close to him about what had happened, so the room would have been electrified in anticipation, waiting for Peter.

Peter was making a big step, he represented the Church, he represented Israel, so by entering the world of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, it was a revolutionary. Image the food waiting in the home, there was probably roasted pork and other common Roman foods thought of as repugnant and unclean by Jews who followed the law. Peter had to remind his audience of this transformation; **how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate**, so he explains how God miraculously showed Peter that the former ways have changed because of the work of Christ. Peter was now under the New Covenant; **I should not call any person common or unclean.**

Gentiles Hear the Good News

The room was ready to hear the message, Peter presented the Gospel, explaining the situation, to audience who was familiar with some of the events; **"You yourselves know what happened"**, but they needed to understand the context. Just like today, many hear about Jesus, but they need to know what to do. They need to understand how to accept the free gift of salvation, this is what Peter was doing. He was explaining to his audience there next step.

Acts 10:34-43

34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,

35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),

37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:

38 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.

39 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,

40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear,

41 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.

42 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.

43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter received the message on the roof and understood, **God shows no partiality**, this was a paradigm shift in Peter thinking and understanding. This is the power of the Gospel to change the way we both think and act, because the Holy Spirit gives us the power.

Jesus is the focus of the Old Testament, his audience did not have a New Testament, their Bible was the Old Testament, with prophets of Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel, so Peter explains to his Gentile audience, how the all **the prophets bear witness**. Jesus is the focus of scripture

Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

The same Spirit which fell on the men and woman in the upper room had now fallen on Peter's Gentile audience. It was a beautiful scene, the power of the Holy Spirit was now reaching the end of the earth, as these Italians and other Gentiles were now experiencing what previously only the Jews and Samaritans experienced.

Acts 10:44-48

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.

45 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.

46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared,

47 "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.