

# The Book of Acts

## Chapter 10

*Acts 10:28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

- I. Review
  1. Last week we covered Acts 9:26-43. The earlier part of chapter 9 covered Saul's conversion story, and last week we saw how Saul received the revelation of the gospel directly from Jesus, evidently in Arabia.
  2. After 3 years, evidently of study and revelations from Jesus, Saul went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and James.
  3. But if it wasn't for Barnabas who spoke up on Saul's behalf, the church may not have received him.

4. But soon a group identified as the Grecians plotted to kill Saul, so the saints sent him off by ship back to his home in Tarsus.
  5. After that brief introduction to Saul, the focus of Acts returned to Peter and his ministry along the coast of the Mediterranean.
  6. First in the city of **Lydda**, where he healed Aeneas, a man sick of the palsy, and next in the city of **Joppa**, where he raised the woman Tabitha, who had died, back to life.
  7. That he was in Joppa was ordained by the Lord. **[map: Peters Travels]**
- II. Cornelius' Angelic Visitation (Verses 1-8)
- A. Shift of ministry focus to Gentiles
1. In later years, Paul wrote that all get into the church in the same way, regardless of national origin, ethnicity, or cultural background:  
*1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews*

*or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;  
and have been all made to drink into one  
Spirit.*

2. This was definitely a shift in ministry focus from the time of the start Jesus' ministry:

*Matt 10:5-6*

*5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and  
commanded them, saying, Go not into the  
way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the  
Samaritans enter ye not:*

*6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the  
house of Israel.*

3. But that ministry focus gradually shifted from totally on Jews, to Jews and a few Gentiles, to many Gentiles and a few Jews, and ultimately to almost entirely to Gentiles.

4. As we read in chapter 9, Jesus told Ananias that He had called Saul to bear his name before the Gentiles as well as Jews:

*Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy  
way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to*

*bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:*

5. Soon we will see how God opened that door to the Gentiles.

B. God-fearing Gentiles

1. In New Testament times, there were many Gentiles who had become either full converts to Judaism, or just had a high respect for the God of the Jews and Jewish causes.

2. In the gospel of Luke we meet a military officer like this:

*Luke 7:4-5*

*4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he [the Centurion] was worthy for whom he should do this:*

*5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.*

3. Now in Acts 10, we meet another military officer named Cornelius.

## *Acts 10:1-2*

*10 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band [cohort] called the Italian band,*

*2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.*

4. “Band” or military cohort is mentioned 7 times in the New Testament and refers to a group of soldiers.
5. A Roman centurion was a mid-level officer<sup>1</sup> who commanded 80 men and was one of six centurions who served in a cohort of 480 men.<sup>2</sup> There were 5 military ranks above the Centurion.
6. We see he was devout (sincerely religious) and gave much alms to the needy and prayed to God alway (daily), and was well respected among the Jews:

*Acts 10:22 And they said, Cornelius the*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unrv.com/military/legion.php>

<sup>2</sup> The ESV Archeology Study Bible, Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2017. P. 1613 footnote on 10:1.

*centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews...*

7. Cornelius had a vision at the ninth hour **[image of clock: third, sixth, ninth hour]:**
8. God took special notice of this praying Gentile. It seems Cornelius observed the regular Jewish prayer hours: the third hour of the day (about 9:00 a.m.), the sixth hour (12:00 noon), and the ninth hour (about 3:00 p.m.).

*Acts 10:3-4*

*3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour [3:00pm] of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.*

*4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.*

9. As we read, on a certain day while he was fasting (v. 30) and praying at the 3:00pm

prayer time, the Lord sent an angel to him with a world-changing message.

- c. Tell me how to be saved
  - 1. The angel told him to send men to Joppa and call for one named Simon Peter who lodged with Simon the tanner in a house by the seaside.
  - 2. By the way, a tanner is a leather worker who would make sandals, shoes, straps and harnesses for livestock, skin bottles for liquids, or leather parchments for writing.

*Acts 10:5-6*

*5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:*

*6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.*

- 3. By the time Peter retold this story in the next chapter, he had learned the real reason God had connected him with Cornelius:

*Acts 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house **shall be saved**.*

4. It is interesting how God may use angels to send messages, but not to preach the gospel or give revelations. Who can tell it better than one who knows what it is like to have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and filled with the Holy Ghost? It is a song the angels cannot sing!

*Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

5. And now Peter is in a sense, heading to the uttermost part of the earth—the Gentiles!
6. Cornelius lost no time in carrying out the instruction of the angel.
7. He called two of his most trusted servants and a devout soldier of his band, and

apparently sent them that same afternoon on the way to Joppa to find the man whose name and street address had been given him by the angel.

*Acts 10:7-8*

*7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;*

*8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.*

8. And just as God had prepared the hearts of Saul of Tarsus as well as his preacher, Ananias of Damascus, God prepared Cornelius' heart as well as his preacher, Peter, at Joppa.
- iii. Peter's Vision (Verses 9-16)
  1. While the three messengers of Cornelius (two servants and one soldier-v.7) were enroute to Joppa, God prepared the praying preacher, Peter, with a special revelation.

2. The journey to Caesarea from Joppa was merely 35 miles up the seacoast, but Peter was much further than that from being willing to accept the task before him. But God can talk to praying preachers!
3. The servants of Cornelius were evidently sent on their way the very afternoon of his vision, sometime after 3:00 pm traveling on an 11-hour walk.
4. Evidently they would have lodged somewhere that night and resumed the journey early the next morning, for they arrived in Joppa soon after the sixth hour (noon).

*Acts 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:*

5. The sixth hour is the time of the noon prayer. Peter went up on the housetop to pray. Flat rooftops were often used as an outdoor sitting room.

6. The noon meal was being prepared downstairs in the house, and as the aroma of cooking food was wafted to him at his place of prayer he suddenly felt very hungry, but something interrupted his meal plan.

*Acts 10:10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,*

7. God used Peter's hunger to teach him a very important and timely object lesson before the messengers from Cornelius should arrive.

*Acts 10:11-16*

*11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:*

*12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.*

*13 And there came a voice to him, Rise,*

*Peter; kill, and eat.*

*14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.*

*15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*

*16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.*

8. Peter was hungry, but he was aware of Jewish dietary laws that forbade the eating of certain animals that the scriptures had designated as unclean.
9. And looking at the animals before him, there were only animals designated as unclean, so he refused them all.
10. But the Lord told him: do not call that which I have cleansed common or unclean.
11. But after seeing the vision **three** times, he still did not understand its meaning, that is until **three** men showed up at the door.  
Then it had less to do with *wild beasts, and*

*creeping things, and fowls of the air, and more to do with people outside of the Jewish family.*

IV. Peter's Obedience to the Vision (Verses 17-33)

1. Cornelius' two servants and one soldier arrived about the time Peter's three visions concluded, and the Lord told him he should go with them without doubting.

*Acts 10:17-20*

*17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,*

*18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.*

*19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.*

*20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.*

2. He obediently went down to greet them and, after entertaining the three visitors overnight, left with them the following morning.
3. Peter also took six men from Joppa along on the journey:

*Acts 10:23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.*

4. Acts 11:12 says there were six men from Joppa who went with him, and 10:45 says they were Jewish Christians.
5. Peter, the six Jewish brothers, and three from Cornelius's house=**10 total**.
6. Apparently none of the 10 fully understand the importance of the angel's message or the vision, but that was revealed soon after they arrived at the home of Cornelius.

7. When they arrived in Caesarea, Cornelius was ready for them. Verse 24 says he had called in his kinsmen and near friends, so Peter had many in his congregation waiting to hear what he had to say:

*Acts 10:27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and **found many that were come together.***

8. It appears that Cornelius initially believed Peter was some type of divine being:

*Acts 10:25-26*

*25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.*

*26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.*

9. Peter then understood the meaning of his vision and explained to the group that it was not lawful in the Jewish religion to enter into their house, but God had convinced him to go, and not to call them common or unclean.

10. Then Cornelius restated the events of the past four days that led him to call for Peter, and then introduced Peter with this remarkable open door:

*Acts 10:33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore **are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.***

- v. Peter's Gospel Sermon (Verses 34-43)
  1. God had convinced these two men to meet, He had arranged the details for their meeting, and now He provided Peter freedom to tell everything God had for them.

2. Let us read Peter's full message:

*Acts 10:34-43*

*34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:*

*35 But in every nation he that feareth him,*

*and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

*36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)*

*37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;*

*38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

*39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom **they slew and hanged on a tree:***

*40 Him **God raised up the third day,** and shewed him openly;*

*41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did*

*eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.*

*42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.*

*43 To him give all the prophets witness, that **through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.***

vi. The Result of Peter's Sermon (Verses 44-48)

1. A careful reading of Acts shows that the message had not changed since they had preached it first in Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 4, Acts 5, Acts 7, Acts 8, and Acts 9. And now in Acts 10, when Peter preached it again.
2. The Holy Ghost was poured out on them even before Peter concluded his message, with the Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost with the same evidence of speaking in tongues, just as the Jews had:

*Acts 10:44-46*

*44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.*

*45 And they of the circumcision which believed [the six traveling companions from Joppa] were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that **on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.***

*46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,*

3. And when retelling the story later, Peter identified their experience was not different than what the Jews had experienced in the beginning.

*Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost **fell on them, as on us at the beginning.***

4. The events of Acts 10 were around 7 years after Pentecost, and Peter was still guarding the original gospel message as foundational to the church.

5. Notice that the Holy Ghost was poured out before they were baptized. And since God does the filling, He does not have to follow a formula or our traditions.
6. That was actually very helpful to Peter as he later explained these events to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Seeing God was behind it, they rejoiced along with Peter:  
*Acts 11:17-18*  
*17 Forasmuch then as God **gave them the like gift as he did unto us**, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*  
*18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*
7. Believing the gospel message is crucial to salvation.
8. Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin so we could be granted forgiveness, so believing that and being baptized applies that forgiveness.

9. But God claims us as His own and empowers us with new life when He fills us with His Spirit.
10. Death and resurrection = repentance and baptism are our death to the old life, and receiving the Holy Ghost is our resurrection into the new life.
11. And because they had received the Holy Ghost, Peter commanded them to be baptized:

*Acts 10:47-48*

*47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?*

*48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*

12. Just as he had preached to the Jews in Acts 2, and to the Samaritans in Acts 8, now to the Gentiles in Acts 10, Peter, the man Jesus had given the keys to the kingdom in

Matthew 16, had now been used of God to open the doors to the world.