

THE BOOK OF ACTS

CHAPTER 10

THE CHALLENGE OF CHAPTER TEN

Just like Cornelius, there are people who have hearts toward God that have not yet heard the message of salvation. We must always remember God is searching for hearts that hunger after Him, regardless of how they look or talk. We must always guard against prejudice, exclusivity, and disrespect of people because of their nationality, race, gender, or social status. Obeying God and the leading of the Holy Spirit ministering to all people should be a vital and integral part of our daily Christian life.

SNAPSHOT

In fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8, witnesses have taken the gospel to "Jerusalem [the Jews]" (Chapter 2), and "Judea [the Samaritans]" (Chapter 8). Now, in Acts 10, They will now take the gospel to "the uttermost part of the earth."

In this chapter, Peter will receive a clearer understanding of God's will for the entire world. But while Peter's vision is becoming clearer, the vision of the church at Jerusalem is becoming more clouded. In Acts 11, Peter will be challenged about ministering to the Gentiles, because church leaders have forgotten the admonition of Jesus. They do eventually recover, but only temporarily. Seeds of discrimination and bigotry have already arisen in the church against other nations receiving the goodness and blessing of the Lord.

AN ANGEL APPEARS TO CORNELIUS (1-8)

Cornelius is a devout man who prays and is generous in giving money to those in need. An angel appears to him instructing him to send a delegation to find Peter. Cornelius obeys and sends men to Joppa

THE CITY OF CAESAREA

Herod the Great built Caesarea as a seaport for the Jews. It took Herod 10 years to dredge the cliffs along the Mediterranean before he could build this great city. He then named the city after his close friend, Julius Caesar.

When the Romans took over Palestine, they made Caesarea their headquarters. It then became despised by the Jews because it represented heathenism to them. Greek culture took over, and the city later became the nerve center of the Gentile world.

THE VISION

Act 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

Cornelius was a leader among the Roman armies. Since he was from Caesarea, he was probably part of the general's staff. He is called a "certain man" and will become a major key to the revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles.

Act 10:2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Although Cornelius is sincere open (verses 22, 35, 37), he is an unbeliever (11:14; 15:7-8). However, he has a genuine desire to know the Lord, and out of his heart he cries to God to know Him. Cornelius wants someone to bring him the message of righteousness and is an example of someone consciously wanting to know the Lord.

Because of his heart's cry, God is under obligation to send someone to Cornelius. God will give the assignment to Peter. The motivation behind Cornelius' prayers and giving to the Lord was a heart of love.

Act 10:3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

Three o'clock in the afternoon is the Jewish time of prayer. It is amazing that a Gentile, a Roman, would observe this tradition. It shows that Cornelius had probably researched salvation as much as possible by looking into Jewish traditions.

Act 10:4 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.

Memorial represents intent. This word "memorial" is also used in Mark 14:9 and Matthew 26:13 when Mary of Bethany broke the ointment over Jesus' head. Jesus had called it a memorial of His burial and resurrection. In this passage, Cornelius's memorial is prayer and giving with an attitude of devotion and worship.

10:4 Compassion for the Poor, SERVING HUMAN NEED. Cornelius earnestly desired to know God. Not only did he pray, but also he put his faith into action through giving alms (gifts) to the poor. Cornelius was similar to other godly men and women throughout history who have been "full of good works and charitable deeds" (9:36). When we have a right relationship with God we have compassion for the poor that motivates us to give

them practical help. Cornelius's actions drew God's favorable attention, and they serve as an example for us.

Act 10:5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

Joppa is another seaport where Jews preferred to stay. It is a smaller, natural seaport, thirty miles south of Caesarea. Cornelius, a soldier high in the Roman aristocracy sends for Peter, a low-class, Jewish fisherman.

Act 10:6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

Since these men are not from Joppa and Peter is lodging temporarily in the city, the angel is exact in describing Peter's location. He does not want Cornelius' men to be wasting time searching for him. Because Joppa is not Peter's hometown and very few people knew where he was staying, it would have been difficult for the men to find him if they had not been directed by the angel.

CORNELIUS OBEYS

Act 10:7 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;

Cornelius obeys immediately. He sends three men (verse 19) to find Peter and bring him to Caesarea.

Act 10:8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

Apparently, these men start their journey late in the day and have to stop and spend the night on their way to Joppa (verse 9).

PETER'S VISION(9-23)

The next day, as Peter is on the housetop praying, he has a vision of a sheet lowered to the earth filled with animals that, according to Jewish tradition, are unclean. This happens three times accompanied by a voice from heaven. As Peter is pondering the meaning of this vision, the men Cornelius has sent arrive. Peter goes with them to Caesarea.

THE HOUSETOP

Act 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:

in that day, it was common to have gardens on your rooftops. In 2 Samuel 11:2, David was walking on the rooftop when he saw Bathsheba. In Matthew 24:17, Jesus warned those alive during the tribulation to come down from the rooftops.

Peter has gone to the rooftop at noontime. It is a tranquil place for Peter to relax and pray.

While the men sent by Cornelius resumed their journey and approach Joppa, Peter is praying.

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

Peter is trying to pray but smells the lunch being prepared in the home below. While waiting for the cooks to call him, he slips into a trance. This is an open vision where the functions of his body are suspended.

Act 10:11 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:

The “open” heaven is the opening of the curtain that separates the spiritual realm from the natural. This is the meaning of the name revelation (apoka-lupsis). This sheet is immense, and all four corners are tied at the top. Like being held by a giant hand from the knot at the top, this sheet is let down to the earth and opens when it touches the ground.

Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

These “beasts” are all unclean animals that are forbidden to be eaten according to Old Testament law.

Act 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

In Greek, these are three commands given in the imperative mood: rise, kill, eat.

Act 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

Peter knows the voice of the Lord, but also knows the commandments of the Old Testament. He is resisting the voice of the Lord, and must be greatly confused by the vision and the command.

Act 10:15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

God is preparing Peter to help the Gentiles come to know the Lord. When God cleanses a person through the new birth, their nationality becomes insignificant. At the very moment God is preparing Peter for the arrival of Cornelius's men at the house, the house of Cornelius is preparing for the arrival of Peter. God is working on both ends of this visitation.

Act 10:16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Peter is acquainted with the grace of God, but he still harbors many prejudices against the Gentile people. This vision will be answered in a few minutes as the group from Caesarea is arriving at this very moment.

PETER SOUGHT OUT

Act 10:17 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 enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

Peter is perplexed because God asked him to do something contrary to the law, which was part of God's Word. He does not fully understand the change in dispensations.

Act 10:18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

And called (shouted), and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed (nicknamed) Peter, were lodged there.

Act 10:19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

Peter cannot hear the men shouting because the gate is a great distance from the house. Also, Peter is concentrating on the vision and is not aware of the men.

Act 10:20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

The Holy Spirit tells Peter of Cornelius' men and their arrival. Not only has the Holy Spirit prepared both sides for their meeting, he alerts Peter the time has arrived to meet. The Holy Spirit instructs Peter not to doubt. He is to go meet the men in faith.

Act 10:21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

Although the Holy Spirit tells Peter of the men and their arrival, He does not inform Peter about their mission. Peter has to ask them a question.

Act 10:22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just (dikaios) man, and one that feareth (phobeo: references) God, and of good report (martureo: witness) among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy (hagios) angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of (from) thee.

These men give Peter all of Cornelius's qualifications. They attempt to convince Peter to go based on the man's merits. Although Peter does want to know something about Cornelius, he travels with them only because God has instructed him to do so.

Act 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.

The Lord is honoring Simon the tanner. Although he is considered ceremonially unclean because he is a tanner, God allows him to witness an important moment in the spiritual history of the Gentile church. Not only does he have Peter, the greatest spiritual leader of the Jewish church, in his home, Roman representatives from the house of Cornelius, a top ranking official in the Italian band, have come. The very people who will witness the Holy Spirit's transition into the Gentile nations are in Simon's home.

THE MEETING OF PETER AND CORNELIUS (24-33)

Upon meeting Cornelius, a Gentile, Peter explains his vision and God's instruction. Peter then asks Cornelius to explain why he had been summoned. Cornelius recounts the angel's visitation four days earlier.

CORNELIUS WAITS

Act 10:24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

And the morrow (morning) after (leaving Joppa) they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen (relatives) and near (close) friends.

During the absence of his men, Cornelius had rounded up his relatives and close friends to hear the message Peter would bring. He has never seen or heard of Peter but is relying completely on the report of the angel.

Act 10:25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

Cornelius knows better than to fall down and worship Peter, but he has been waiting three days, and it is customary to bow before an emperor. He confuses the messenger with the God who sent him.

Act 10:26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

Peter immediately informs Cornelius that he is not a God nor is he the angel who spoke to him.

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

Peter is probably surprised to find a crowd waiting for him.

JEWES AND GENTILES

Act 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.

Peter's tradition begins to arise as he sees the company awaiting him in the next room. This was not the law but customs and traditions instituted by the legalistic religious leaders of Israel. The Mosaic law does not permit fellowship or marriage to the Gentiles, only to believers.

Act 10:29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

Peter let's Cornelius know that despite his Jewish prejudice, he is quick to obey the Lord when He speaks.

CORNELIUS RECOUNTS HIS VISION

Act 10:30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

Act 10:31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

Act 10:32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

Act 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.

Cornelius explains to Peter that four days earlier, an angel appeared to him and instructed him to have Peter brought to Caesarea to share whatever God instructed him to share. He then describes how the angel had given Peter's name and where to find him.

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON THE GENTILES (34-48)

Peter preaches to the household of Cornelius, and the Holy Spirit is poured out on all the Gentiles. The Jews with Peter are astonished because they hear the Gentile believers speaking in tongues and magnifying God, just as they had. The new converts are then baptized in water.

PETER PREACHES

Act 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter **(partiality)** of persons:

Peter knows this is true from the scripture, but now he sees it firsthand. God does not judge anyone according to nationality, color, social status, or sex.

10:34 partiality, *prosopoleptes* (pros-oh-pol-ape-tace); a receiver of a face, one who take sides, showing favoritism, exhibiting bias, showing discrimination, showing partiality, treating one person better than another. While society makes distinctions among people, God's love and grace are available for all, and can be received by anyone.

Act 10:35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh (*ergozomai*: works out) righteousness, is accepted with (by) him.

This passage lines up with the verse of scripture Peter used in his sermon on the day of Pentecost from Joel 2:28.

Act 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

Jesus Christ is the Lord of all things, people, and nations (Colossians 1:16-21). The purpose of the Old Testament is for the Jews to preach God's message to the Gentiles, the message of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. Old Testament and New, Jesus has always been the means of salvation, and reconciliation has always been the message in the Old Testament (Isaiah 52:7) and New Testament (Ephesians 2:17; Colossians 1:20). This is the removal of the barrier of sin. Old Testament speaks of the reconciliation to come, and the New Testament says it has already been accomplished.

Act 10:37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

Peter reminds these Roman Gentiles the message of Jesus is nothing new; they know Jesus. They have heard of His miracles and teachings. He not only came to the Jewish people, He lived in the Roman Empire. Both nations had dealings with Jesus.

John's baptism was mainly for Jews to repent of their sins and apostasy. It is from this point that the message of Jesus spread throughout the empire and into Caesarea, which has brought Cornelius to the present point of hearing the gospel.

Act 10:38 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.

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power (dunamis, Mark 5:30) who went about doing (energeia: producing) good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.

The Holy Spirit anointed the humanity of Jesus and was given for His teaching ministry as well as His miracles (Luke 4:16-21). Another name for the power which anointed Jesus is virtue (Mark 5:30; Luke 6:19).

Act 10:39 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:

Peter is addressing Romans. Romans tried Him, beat Him, and crucified Him; yet Peter blames the Jews. Religion put Jesus on the cross, not the Roman government.

Act 10:40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly (publicly).

Act 10:41 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.

Jesus was able to eat and drink with His resurrection body.

Act 10:42 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.

Jesus, who was judged, will be the judge of the spiritually living and dead.

Act 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

The Holy Spirit will break in at the perfect time. While Peter gives the simplicity of salvation, Cornelius and his household believe (John 8:30). Jews and Gentiles are told in the Old Testament that faith in Jesus (the Messiah) brings remission or cleansing of sins.

THE HOLY SPIRIT FALLS

Act 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Now that these men are born again, just as on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit falls, and they are filled with the Spirit.

Act 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

And the circumcision (Jews) which believed were astonished (astounded), as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

This verse tells us the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles (non-Jews).

Act 10:46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

The Jews know the Gentiles are filled with the Holy Spirit because they are speaking with tongues. Apparently, they also prophesy because they are filled with the Spirit. We see later in Ephesus, Gentiles who had been filled with the Spirit will also prophesy (19:6).

Act 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Peter now changes his sermon to include water baptism as an outward sign of their new birth.

Act 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Peter and his friends stay for a few days to teach and disciple the new converts.

10:44-48 A Miracle with the Gentiles, Too!, HOLY SPIRIT FULLNESS. The fact that the Gentile household of Cornelius was included in the outpouring of the Spirit is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28 (“I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh”). The presence of the sign of tongues was particularly significant to the Jews who were accompanying Peter in that they received the Holy Spirit “just as we have” (Acts 10:47). This was later related to the leadership in Jerusalem as evidence that the Gentiles had truly been accepted by God in the plan of salvation (11:16-17). The baptism with the Holy Spirit is for all believers (2:38-39). That these began speaking in tongues as Peter was preaching reveals that the pattern of receiving Holy Spirit baptism is not dependent upon first being baptized in water, however, it does not make water baptism optional for a believer.