

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 10

We have been going through the Book of Acts –

And we have been seeing how the Holy Spirit worked among the early church.

Beginning in chapter 10 - We are now going to move into a new era for the Christian church, and that is when God opens the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

There are a few things that we have to keep in mind as we begin chapter 10 –

The early church was predominant Jewish up to this point in history – by the time we get to chapter 10 – it has been about 10 years since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have seen the gospel preached in Jerusalem to Jews, we have seen the gospel preached in Samaria and the surrounding areas – (the Samaritans were part Jewish), we have seen the gospel preached in Damascus – we saw this last week as Saul tried to share it in the synagogue (fellow Jews) – and was rejected.

So the gospel was preached to Jews only up to chapter 10.

In fact, Acts 11:19 makes it clear that when the early church scattered because of the persecution of Saul – it says that they preached the word to no one but the Jews.

The other thing I want you to keep in mind was that the Jews hated the Gentiles.

There was a deep prejudice that the Jews had against the Gentiles.

Even though Jesus instructed the disciples after His resurrection to go therefore and make disciples of all the nations – not just Jews.

I am pretty sure that some of disciples must have been scratching their heads when Jesus gave them the command.

The idea that God intended to also save the Gentiles was utterly foreign to their way of thinking.

As Jews, they had been raised with the idea that Gentiles were completely beyond either the love or concern of God.

Chapter 10 tells the story of how God broke through the prejudice of the Jewish church and showed them His master plan to evangelize the entire world

Let's pray...

**[Act 10:1-23 NKJV] 1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout [man] and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.**

So chapter 10 begins with the introduction of Cornelius.

He lived in Caesarea – which was the Roman capital of the province of Judea.

He was also a centurion in the Roman Army.

The Roman Army divided into legions (6000 men), those were divided into cohorts (600 men) and those 600 were divided into companies of 100 men.

And each one of the companies was led by a centurion.

They were the real backbone of the Roman army because they functioned as the sergeants – therefore battles were won or lost on the quality of the centurions

So the centurion had to be someone who was trustworthy, someone who was of great courage and integrity.

Notice how this man Cornelius is described . . .

A devout man who feared God with all his house

Meaning that he was not only religious in word - he was religious in action

He was devout, meaning he lived a religious careful life and his example was so genuine and powerful that his entire household, his family and his servants, were influenced by his life to also devote themselves to God

He was the example that his family followed.

He also showed grace and mercy to the people (alms)– much in the same way that we saw Tabitha do last week.

And he was a man of prayer. Who prayed to the God of Israel.

Make a note: always.

He wanted to know God.

There was a problem – Cornelius was not a Jew.

Even though he worshipped the same God and served the community – he was still a Gentile – an outcast to the Jew.

He could have become a proselyte and converted to Judaism – however, that would have meant that he would have to follow all the rules and regulations of the Jewish faith.

Circumcision, diet, etc.

**3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"**

Now, the ninth hour in Jewish standard time is around 3:00 PM.

You might remember that the Jews developed a tradition of praying three times a day.

Morning – 9:00 AM

Noon – 12:00 PM

And the ninth hour which is 3:00 PM

So, Cornelius is most likely praying when he receives this vision.

**4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5 "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. 6 "He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." 7 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. 8 So when he had explained all [these] things to them, he sent them to Joppa.**

The message to Cornelius from God through the vision of the angel was that God had noticed the life of Cornelius.

God had seen that Cornelius was seeking after the truth – he was living in the little light that he had been given – but it wasn't enough - So God set about to bring him to more.

Here is the significance of this –

Cornelius was a good man – he was a religious man.

The problem – it wasn't good enough to save him.

So God sent an angel to give him instructions to find Peter – and Peter would be the one who was going to share the good news (the gospel) to Cornelius.

Question -

Why didn't God simply instruct the angel to share the gospel to Cornelius in the vision?

Because that is not the job of the angels.

There will be a day in the future where God will use angels to proclaim the gospel – we that in our study through the book of Revelation (14)

However, until that day – God has reserved that job to you and me.

“But angels are in His presence” – they know Him – they know what heaven is like –

That is correct –

However, the one thing that an angel cannot do – is say to someone, “I was once lost and hopeless like you, but Jesus Christ rescued me and now has given me the hope and the promise of heaven.”

Angels cannot be saved, so they do not have a testimony of Christ's redeeming work.

Only people can be saved, and the personal experience of the power of God to forgive sins and redeem lost sinners is a necessary part of proclaiming the Gospel.

Cornelius needed Jesus, so God sent an angel to tell him to go find the person that was going to tell him the good news.

**9 The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.**

So, its lunch time – noon.

Peter is getting hungry – he goes on top of the roof – homes during this time had flat roofs – he goes up there to pray – while the servants are making lunch and while he is praying, he has a vision.

And in his vision, he sees heaven open up and a large sheet – with the 4 corners tied together – like a pouch.

And in the pouch was a collection of yummy animals, insects, reptiles and birds.

Now, in Leviticus 11 – we have the list of the animals and critters that Lord told the Children of Israel that were ok to eat and those that were considered unclean.

So the picture here is that there is a mixture of clean and unclean animals in this pouch that Peter sees in this vision.

**13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."**

So not only were there unclean animals in the pouch – the Jews had very strict rules for butchering animals – (Lev 11)

If it wasn't done correctly, the meat wouldn't be kosher.

But here, God tells Peter to get up, kill what's in the pouch and eat.

**14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."**

Peter tells the Lord – there is no way I am going to eat what's in the pouch.

Before we pick on Peter, we need to try understanding just how hard it would have been for Peter to eat one of the unclean animals.

It would be like me showing up to at one of our lunches and bringing live mice – and telling everyone to dig in.

It would be unthinkable to eat right.

For all we know, Peter probably thought that the Lord might be trying to trick him – this is a test.

However, we need to remember that God never tests us this way.

He never commands us to do something evil.

If God commands us to do something – the only right response is, "Yes, Lord"

I had you make a note of where Peter says, Not so Lord –

If He is your Lord then He is your Master – one cannot say Lord and No at the same time.

But Peter does – and the Lord corrects him.

Now, keep in mind that this is the same Peter that the Holy Spirit empowered to heal people – we saw Tabitha and Aeneas last week.

This is the same Peter that the Holy Spirit empowered to preach boldly in front of the Sanhedrin.

This is the same Peter that we have read multiple times in the first 9 chapters – that he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

However, we must remember that Peter was still Peter.

God didn't use Peter because Peter was perfect.

God used Peter because he continued to draw closer to God and because he made himself available to be used by God.

**15 And a voice [spoke] to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.**

Three times Peter had the same vision of the sheet, three times, he hears the voice commanding him to eat and three times he refuses.

And each time, the vision ends with God telling Peter not to resist  
Kill and eat Peter!!! And Peter said “No” each time.

How many times was Cornelius told to go find Peter? 1

Yet, here we have an apostle having to be told three times to do something.

I think we can all relate to Peter in a way –

God commands us to do something and we drag our feet. “No Lord.”

You see church, what is happening here is that God is about to confront a major error in not only Peter’s thinking – but the entire early church.

As Jews, they had a very narrow understanding of the plan of God – and here God was preparing Peter for a dramatic reworking of his understanding.

Peter was being held back by the traditions of the Jewish religion.

And here, God is moving beyond the boundaries of Judaism.

And it is only fitting that He begins with the leader of the apostles first.

Turn to Mark 7

In Mark chapter 7 –

The Pharisees noticed that the disciples of Jesus were not adhering to some of the traditions when it came to eating.

They were eating bread with dirty hands.

**[Mar 7:14-23 NKJV] 14 When He had called all the multitude to [Himself], He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15 "There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. 16 "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" 17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 "because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, [thus] purifying all foods?" 20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 "thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 "All these evil things come from within and defile a man."**

Here in Mark's gospel - the argument was that defilement came from not partaking of the washing of hands before eating.

And Jesus made the argument that defilement comes from within us – it is what comes out of our heart that defiles us.

Peter was making the argument that defilement would come if he ate of the unclean animals – however, the principle is to be applied to people.

The unclean animals and dirty hands are the gentiles in the story.

The Jews thought that if they ate with a gentile or did anything with a gentile – they would become unclean or defiled.

Peter was living with a tanner – so he had started to let go some of the prejudices that he had – yet, he was having a hard time letting go of all of them.

**17 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. 18 And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. 19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. 20 "Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."**

Talk about God's perfect timing.

He is never late, nor early

He always brings everything to pass at exactly the right moment

And that is exactly what happens here.

As Peter is wondering the meaning of the vision – the guys that Cornelius had sent, they show up to get Peter and God tells him to go with them.

**21 Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius [the] centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." 23 Then he invited them in and lodged [them]. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.**

Notice that after Peter's conversation with the gentiles, he invited them in and lodged with them.

He went against the customs and traditions of the Jews – but not against God's Word.

So, we see a little bit more of the prejudices start to disappear.

And the next day, they make their way up to Caesarea – which is a full days journey from Joppa.

Now, I had you make a note of the city Joppa.

Because centuries before this – another Jew made his way to Joppa with a message from God to be proclaimed to the gentiles –

Anyone want to take a guess at who it was?

It was Jonah?

He went down to Joppa and got in a ship and went the opposite way – as far as he could get from Nineveh.

He did not have share God's heart for the lost – especially for the gentiles.

And we will see, in two weeks, that Peter, will not follow in the footsteps of Jonah – as he will re-examine his traditions and prejudices in light of God's word – and he will share God's heart for a lost word as he shares the good news with Cornelius and his household.

May we have a heart like Peter and not like Jonah.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

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