



Chapter 10: Breaking Barriers

The Day God's Family Outgrew a Single Nation

ACTS TIMELINE		
30 AD	Jesus' ascension, Pentecost	Acts 1-2
31/32 AD	Stoning of Stephen	Acts 7
33/34 AD	Philip witnesses in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch	Acts 8
34 AD	Saul's conversion	Acts 9
37 AD	Peter witnesses to Cornelius	Acts 10-11
41 AD	Saul/Paul begins ministry in Antioch	Acts 11:25-26
48 AD	Paul's First Missionary Journey with Barnabas	Acts 13-14
49 AD	Jerusalem Council Paul begins 2nd missionary journey	Acts 15-16
53-57 AD	Paul's Third Missionary Journey, including a long stay in Ephesus	Acts 18-21
57 AD	Paul returns to Jerusalem and is arrested in the temple area	Acts 21-23
57-59 AD	Paul's imprisonment and trials under Governor Felix in Caesarea	Acts 24
59 AD	Paul appeals to Rome Shipwrecked on Malta	Acts 25-28
60-62 AD	Paul arrives in Rome and begins two years of house arrest	Acts 28

Acts 9:32-43

I. Peter's Ministry (9:32-43)

A. Healing Aeneas in Lydda (vv. 32-35)

- Peter is "visiting the saints," ordinary pastoral ministry.
- Aeneas has been paralyzed for eight years. Peter says: "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat."
- The healing is immediate and complete.
- Result: "All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord." (v. 35)
- The authority of Jesus' name continues to validate the apostolic message. Miracles serve the mission of conversion, not spectacle.

B. Raising Tabitha (Dorcas) in Joppa (vv. 36-43)

- Tabitha = Aramaic; Dorcas = Greek. She is a disciple known for good works and charity.
- She becomes sick and dies. The believers send for Peter.
- Peter arrives, prays, and says, "Tabitha, get up." She opens her eyes and sits up.
- Result: "This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord." (v. 42)
- Peter stays in Joppa "for some time with a tanner named Simon." (v. 43)
- God cares about widows and the vulnerable — Tabitha's ministry to them mattered.
- Peter staying with a tanner is significant: tanners worked with dead animals, making them ritually unclean. Peter is already being loosened from strict Jewish ceremonial boundaries before the vision in chapter 10.



Acts 10:1-48

II. Peter and Cornelius: God's Sovereign Initiative (10:1-48)

A. Two Vision Stories Running in Parallel (vv. 1-23)

- **Cornelius' vision in Caesarea (vv. 1-8)**
 - A centurion, "God-fearing," generous, prayerful, but still an uncircumcised Gentile.
 - An angel appears: "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God." (v. 4)
 - Command: Send for Peter in Joppa.
 - Cornelius was seeking God, but his righteousness was insufficient. He still needed the gospel preached to him. His seeking was evidence of God's prior work, not a meritorious work itself.
- **Peter's Vision in Joppa (vv. 9-23)**
 - Peter goes up to pray at noon. He falls into a trance.
 - A sheet descends with all kinds of "unclean" animals. Voice: "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." (v. 13)
 - Peter refuses: "Surely not, Lord! I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." (v. 14)
 - The voice responds: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." (v. 15)
 - This happens three times, echoing Jesus' threefold restoration of Peter in John 21.
 - The Spirit tells Peter that three men are looking for him and he should go with them without hesitation.
 - The vision is not primarily about food — it is about people. The dietary laws were boundary markers between Jew and Gentile. God is declaring that the Gentile nations are now clean and welcome in Christ.

Jewish dietary laws (kashrut) outline specific food permissions and restrictions, such as allowing only split-hoofed ruminants and fish with fins and scales (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14). They prohibit consuming blood and certain fats, and mixing meat with dairy, while also requiring the avoidance of the thigh sinew (Genesis 32:32; Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 7, 17).

Beyond health, these laws promote self-mastery, spiritual distinction between clean and unclean, and elevate daily eating into a sacred act.

B. Peter Enters a Gentile Home (vv. 24-33)

- Cornelius has gathered his relatives and close friends — he expects something significant.
- Peter's opening statement is remarkable: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection." (vv. 28-29)
- Cornelius falls at Peter's feet in reverence. Peter corrects him: "Stand up. I am only a man myself." (v. 26)
- Cornelius explains his vision and says: "We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." (v. 33)
- The posture of both men is crucial. Peter is crossing a massive cultural and religious boundary. Cornelius is ready to hear. Both have been prepared by God.

C. Peter's Sermon to the Gentiles (vv. 34-43)

- Peter begins: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." (vv. 34-35)
- This is a bombshell statement. The gospel is for "every nation" (ethne, from which we get the word "ethnic").
- Peter summarizes the gospel:
 - God sent the good news to Israel.
 - Jesus of Nazareth went around doing good and healing.
 - They killed him by hanging him on a cross.
 - God raised him from the dead on the third day.
 - He appeared to chosen witnesses.
 - He commanded us to preach and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.
 - "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (v. 43)
- Peter's message is essentially the same as his Pentecost sermon, but now the audience is Gentile. The content of the gospel does not change; the audience does.

D. The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (vv. 44-48)

- While Peter is still speaking, the Holy Spirit comes on all who heard the message.
- The circumcised believers (Jewish Christians who came with Peter) are "astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles." (v. 45)
- Evidence: They spoke in tongues and praised God, the same sign given at Pentecost.
- Peter's response: "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." (v. 47)
- He orders them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
- This is the Gentile Pentecost. God Himself validates these new believers with the same gift given to Jewish believers. The gift of the Spirit precedes water baptism, showing that salvation is God's sovereign gift, not a human achievement.

III. Key Theological Themes

- **God's Sovereignty in Salvation**
 - Cornelius did not find God; God found Cornelius. The angel, the vision, the timing — all orchestrated.
 - Peter did not plan this; the Spirit compelled him.
 - Salvation is entirely from the Lord.
- **The Breaking of the Gentile Barrier**
 - This is the fulfillment of Genesis 12:3 ("all peoples on earth will be blessed through you") and Acts 1:8 ("to the ends of the earth").
 - The kosher laws, which functioned as a wall between Jew and Gentile, are fulfilled and transcended in Christ.
 - The church is no longer an exclusively Jewish movement.
- **The Unity of the Gospel**
 - Peter preaches the same Christ, the same cross, the same resurrection, the same forgiveness to Gentiles as to Jews.
 - There is not a Jewish gospel and a Gentile gospel. There is one gospel for all peoples.
- **The Role of the Holy Spirit**
 - The Spirit is the initiator, the witness, and the validator.
 - Where the Spirit is given, the church must recognize full membership.

Next: Acts 11