**ACTS & US**

Last Week: Acts 9

Saul completely transformed by divine intervention and the obedience of Ananias.

“Ananias told God who Saul WAS and IS,

The Lord responds by telling Ananias who Saul WILL BE”

Because of persecution in Jerusalem, the disciples fled to many other places and brought the message of Jesus with them.

**This week: “Gentiles for Jesus”**

Peter traveled to the region of Joppa (near modern day Tel Aviv) visiting the believers who had fled.

In one instance he healed another paralyzed man, in another he raised a woman named Tabitha from the dead.

He became instantly popular as a result of these and other miracles. And stayed there in the home of “Simon the Tanner”.

Meanwhile, in Ceasarea…

**ACTS 10 “**At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the “*Italian Regiment*”. **2**He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. **3**One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

**4**Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked.

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. **5**Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. **6**He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

**7**When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. **8**He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

### Peter’s Vision

**9**About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. **10**He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. **11**He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. **12**It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. **13**Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

**14**“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

**15**The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

**16**This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

**17**While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision,

*“Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision”.*

Remember that up until this point ALL the Apostles and believers were Jewish. Which means that among other things they held to strict dietary laws and did not associate with Gentiles (non-Jews) whom they considered “*unclean”.*

Eating Kosher basically meant no unclean animals, particularly *pork and shellfish*.

Many people look at this section of scripture and immediately assume that the meaning of the dream is to put an end to the Kosher food requirements set forth in Leviticus 11 and other places in the Bible. That is not necessarily true. There are other places in the New testament that may address that, for instance in Mark, Jesus says;

Mark 7:18-19 “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? **19**For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.”

Some versions and manuscripts add the words - (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

[I have been eating kosher since I was 10 years old, not because I am Jewish and bound by the law, but as a lifelong fast before the Lord.]

17b the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. **18**They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

**19**While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. **20**So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”

**21**Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”

**22**The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” **23**Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

### Peter goes to Cornelius’s House in Caesarea

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. **24**The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. **25**As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. **26**But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”

**27**While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. **28**He said to them: “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. **29**So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”

**30**Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me **31**and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. **32**Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ **33**So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

**34**Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism **35**but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. **36**You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. **37**You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— **38**how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

**39**“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, **40**but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. **41**He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. **42**He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. **43**All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

**44**While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. **45**The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. **46**For they heard them speaking in tongues[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+10&version=NIV#fen-NIV-27306b)] and praising God.

Then Peter said, **47**“Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” **48**So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

This was a monumental shift. The doors were flung wide open. It was no longer a “Just Jews Kosher Club” it was now open to “whosoever will.”

Question: Was this a new unexpected twist to the story, or was this the plan all along?

Answer: This was the plan from the beginning of “The Promise”.

The *Promise* is a three-part, specific promise that was given to Abraham when God first made His Covenant with His people.

**Gen. 12:1-3**The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

**2**“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
**3**I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Promise:

* Land. First, he promised Abraham a land, a specific location for his people.
* Descendants. Secondly, he promised Abraham many descendants.
* Blessing to the nations. And thirdly, he’s promising Abraham that the plan related to the first two promises would be blessing to all the nations.

Blessing to the “Nations”

Nations (Goyim) = “Gentiles” (non-Jews)

In the Old Testament it most often meant “heathen”, (non-Jewish idolaters who did not believe in the one true God.)

The Gentiles being part of the plan should have come as no surprise to the Jews who knew the ancient prophecies very well.

 Isaiah 60, a very popular verse from the prophet Isaiah (actually the verse that inspired our logo):

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**Isa. 60:1-2**

Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. **2**For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you,

And His glory will be seen upon you.

The very next verse in this scripture…

**3**The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.

The greater story of God is that He wants ALL PEOPLE to be saved.

His plan was rolled out in order according to Romans.

**Romans 1:16** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

As we read through the Old Testament we see that God revealed Himself first to a specific people group (The Hebrews) through; the Patriarchs, Kings and Prophets. All with obligatory adherence to the law and temple sacrifice.

The plan had a deliberate order and timing. When Jesus came He fulfilled the plan:

**Gal 4:4-6**

**“4**But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,**5**to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

Jesus died and rose again. Fulfilling the righteous requirement of the law. He said “It IS Finished” and the veil was ripped in two, allowing everyone everywhere to receive God’s presence.

But beyond that, the next most significant part of the plan was Peter having his dream on the roof-top and an Italian guy up the coast receiving the Holy Spirit.

Peter’s dream was not about eating unkosher meat, it was about the news that everyone everywhere can receive Jesus as their Messiah, whether they are Jewish or not.

When Cornelius received Jesus as Messiah, he became the first of billions of non-Jewish believers to receive that which was promised, thousands of years before Jesus was ever born.

What does that mean for us today?

**1 Tim 2:4-6** “God our Savior wants *all people* to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. **5**For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, **6**who gave himself as a ransom for *all people.”*

Last week I challenged you to have eyes and hearts that don’t dwell on people’s past and present sins, but focus on what their lives would be like if they became more and more like Jesus. And to ask God to give you;

* FAITH – That even the hardest hearts of the people in your life can change.
* VISION – That even people who would be considered “Heathens” would come to Jesus.
* COURAGE (Chutzpah) – To be willing to speak the right word at the right time that they need to hear.

This week I want you to look at all the **nations** of the world as those who Jesus died for and wants to come into a relationship with Him. There is no religion, nation, creed or faith that is exempt from the plan of salvation.

\*1 Tim 2:6 “Christ Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all people.”

*All people*, means *all people*! Regardless of who they are, what they believe or don’t believe, what their lifestyle is, or what their ethnicity is, they are part of God’s plan.

They were made to be reconciled into relationship with God. That is really good news.

Our job is to tell them that good news (that’s called sharing the “gospel”).

**”God our Savior wants all people to be saved!”**

**We need to understand this and believe this.**

**Because when we believe it,**

**It will affect the way we act, think, pray and what we say and do.**