

**The New Begins To Replace the Old, Part 1—Acts 10:1-23—3/8/26**  
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Open your Bibles to Acts 10 & let's begin again today by reading this whole long section to get the flow into our minds in Acts 10:1-11:18.

Read as we marvel at God working among Gentiles. [READ]

Last week we waded into the majestic waters of Acts 10 in our study by considering how the mystery begins to be unveiled.

We defined mystery as the NT does—something hidden before in the OT that has now been revealed in the New.

And that mystery in Acts 10 is that Gentiles began to enter the New Covenant blessings that were promised to Israel in the OT.

Jesus had certified, the New Covenant at the cross.

God was sending those blessings not to Jews only, but **also** to Gentiles.

So we considered that theology of **ALSO**, as we might call it—God overflowing His grace **also** to those beyond expectations.

Last week we first asked—what was the big deal with the Gentiles?

We answered by pointing to God's **grace** to give His New Covenant blessings to the Gentiles **also**.

Acts 10-11 used that word **also** several times in referring to the **same** salvation & **same** outpouring of the Spirit that the Jews had received.

Understand the amazement when the Gentiles received those **same** blessings **also**—also **just as** the Jews had received.

Last week we read from Jeremiah 31:31-34 & Ezekiel 36:22-28 to see that God promised His New Covenant blessings to Israel as a nation.

We won't read them again, but Jeremiah 31:31 speaks of *a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah*."

Similarly in Ezekiel 36, Ezekiel & his readers understood Israel as an ethnic people, a nation with land that other nations would see.

Those were physical designations, not figurative symbols.

But the New Covenant blessings included forgiveness of sins & a new heart & new Spirit, things **we also** as believers today claim as our own.

So you may question how we as Gentiles can claim those New Covenant promises if we were not included in what God said in Jeremiah 31 & Ezekiel 36 & other New Covenant passages.

I mean—if you are trusting your sins are forgiven, you better be sure.

I'm grateful for a new heart & the indwelling Holy Spirit by grace through faith in Jesus & I want us all to be sure of that.

If you don't know those blessings, we want you to come to Jesus & receive all He promised for all who trust Him.

And if you do know Him, I want you anchored with assurance in knowing Him & ready to share His Word with others.

And since you had questions, I'm starting today with review to clarify the answers to the two questions in last week's outline.

It may be tempting to think I'm merely teaching for or against a certain theological system when I talk about this, but that's not the point as most Christians agree on what I'm explaining.

My main goal as we consider the Gospel going to the Gentiles in Acts 10 is this—to help us grasp how immeasurably gracious God is in that.

I want us to appreciate how **undeserving** we **all** are & how superabundant God's grace is to send the Gospel to the nations.

My other goal is to help you understand the Bible & to model & teach a consistent approach to straightforward interpretation & application.

I want the second & third generations & beyond to have a clear path to follow to rightly understand Scripture.

So when God made promises **to Israel** for a New Covenant to replace the old one He gave at Mount Sinai, we expect Him to keep His Word.

That means God's promises to Israel **cannot** be changed to only mean some idea of the church now being spiritual Israel.

That's true because Israel **always** refers to ethnic, national people.

That's true even when distinguishing a remnant of believers in Israel from the larger circle that includes unbelieving Israel.

And that's why Acts 10 is about God's **grace** to go to Gentiles **also**.

To illustrate this again, let's go back to that picture of my kids eating whatever they want at my house as I said last week.

If you come to my house, you will find my kids eating whatever they want—they act like they own the place, like they belong there.

I should caveat that my kids do so obviously within reason & with honor for what has been bought or is planned for meals.

I don't mean my kids are recklessly foraging animals, just to clarify.

They are respectful & the ones who have moved out are even kind to ask & be sure before they take something.

I did not give that illustration to paint my kids in a bad light.

My kids know that they basically can have anything of mine.

And why?—because they are my kids & as a father, I genuinely love to give good gifts to my children.

But what was the point of the illustration?

The point was that when you come over & you are not my children, then you likely wait for a meal to be served or you ask before you eat something or use something or whatever else.

And the difference in that approach is that you don't assume you are entitled to do as you wish or take what you want.

You do not assume that you can act like part of the family.

But let's round out that illustration a bit more today.

Many of you know that my wife & I are more than happy to feed you anything you want when you come over to our house.

Some of you know that we even press against your hesitancy to eat what you want or to ask for more or whatever else.

And just imagine if we had an endless supply of all the best foods & we were eager to give it to everyone who came to our house.

Imagine if we treated everyone like we did our kids, even though we were not required to do so & no one asked us to do so & we never promised anyone that we would do so.

That would be exceedingly **gracious**, over the top, above & beyond expectations, overflowing outside of what we had said or needed to do.

That would be treating others **also** like I treat my kids.

That is the point of the illustration—**grace** to Israel & to others **also**.

And that was the answer to last week's 1<sup>st</sup> outline question—what's the big deal about the Gentiles in Acts 10—it's **grace**.

Then last week's 2<sup>nd</sup> outline question was this—what's the big deal about the mystery?—& the answer in one word was **unity**.

Ephesians 3:6 defines the mystery like this—*that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

Fellow heirs, fellow members, & fellow partakers—those are 3 with all with the same prefix that means **together with**.

The mystery is that Gentile believers have been unified with Jewish believers to make one new body in Christ, the church.

As Ephesians 2:12-16 tells Gentiles to *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

The grace of Christ reconciling people to Himself also brings those same diverse people together in unity in the church.

That's what Jesus accomplished for His people who are called the church in what is revealed in the NT that was formerly hidden.

That brings us to the 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 points from Acts 10:1-23 that I outlined to walk through the new beginning to replace the old.

Just as Acts 10 begins to unveil the mystery of the church by moving to the Gentiles, so Acts 10 also begins to replace the old with the new.

By that I mean that practices of the Old Covenant God made with Israel begin to be replaced by New Covenant practices.

As we've said before, the events of Acts 10 happened before the rest of the NT was written & so all these changes had to be worked out.

We're going to walk through 3 preparations God made to move from Old Covenant thinking to New Covenant thinking.

Since there's much to answer & explain, we're only going to see the 1<sup>st</sup> of these 3 preparations today & then study the other 2 next week.

With each preparation, Jesus was advancing His plan to send His witnesses to the end of the earth as He said in Acts 1:8.

The 1<sup>st</sup> of those preparations we see in verses 1-8 is what we'll describe with a point parallel to the two we'll cover next week.

Point #1—God prepared **new members** to add to His people.

Next week we'll add 2 more new ways God prepared His people; but today just note #1—God prepared new members to add to His people.

As we walk through verses 1-8, I'll raise & answer 3 questions related to God preparing new members to add to His people.

Today's 1 point will have 3 subpoints—3 questions I'll pose & answer as we see how God prepared new members to add to His people.

Read Acts 10:1-2 where we meet those new members. [READ]

We are introduced here to Cornelius & his household, which included family & servants & at least one other soldier & personal attendants.

Together with those of his household, he was a God-fearer.

He had humbled himself to recognize the true God of Israel as distinct from the false gods in the Greek & Roman pantheon.

Verse 2 says he was even devout or reverent & godly, meaning his fear of God was evident in how he conducted himself.

His honor for the true God of Israel was also evident by his generosity.

He was regularly doing a lot of alms-giving & acts of mercy.

Many such charitable gifts were directed to the people, referring to the people of the God He feared, meaning the Jewish people.

He was also praying to that One true God continually.

This man named Cornelius was doing all this contrary to the dominant pagan religion of Rome around him.

Being a centurion generally meant leading 100 soldiers that were part of a cohort of 600 men & a legion of 6000.

Cornelius was among others in that time called God-fearers who had not become full proselytes of the God of Israel.

They had not been circumcised & they had not submitted to other regulations of the Law of Moses for worship.

God had been preparing him & his household for true faith, but verse 37 implies that he had only heard about Jesus.

Now at this point, I want to pose & answer a 1<sup>st</sup> question today that arises when verse 2 refers to Jews as *the people*.

As we consider verses 1-8 as God preparing new members to add to His people, here's a **1<sup>st</sup> question—why was Israel God's people?**

I've been asked this question—Why was Israel God's people?

Answer: God chose them by His grace to bring His Word & His Christ

**God chose Israel by His grace**—it was all by His initiative that He set His love on them & not because they deserved it.

As God said in Deuteronomy 7:7-8 & 9:4-6, He did not set His love on them nor choose nor bless them because of anything about them.

God chose Abraham out of the pagan land of Ur & He chose to give His Word to Abraham & His descendants after him.

God chose to make Abraham & Israel the line of His promised Seed who would crush Satan as He promised in Genesis 3:16.

That's why Israel was God's people—because God chose them by His grace to bring His Word & His Promised Seed to them.

That's not a statement about Israel's superiority—it's a statement about God's sovereignty & God's faithfulness to His Word.

As Romans 3:2 says, the advantage of being a Jew was that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Romans 9:4-5 says to them “*belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh.*”

Ephesians 2 describes Gentiles as born outside such blessings.

So Romans 11:28 says, “*from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.*”

That's why passages like Romans 9-11 call Israel God's people even when they have yet to trust in Jesus as their Messiah.

But only a smaller remnant within ethnic Israel was saved in any time.

They were not saved merely because Abraham was a biological forefather as Jewish leaders of Jesus' time wrongly claimed.

And that's a warning today for those who grow up in church & have the privileges of hearing God's Word about Christ.

It's a warning not to assume you are right with God merely because you were born in a Christian family or grew up in a Bible-believing church or know the truths of the Gospel.

Don't miss this—it's important to know why Israel was God's people so that we don't make the same mistakes they did.

Don't trust yourself or your family or church or anyone other than Jesus to forgive your sins & be your Lord & Savior.

Only those who trust the promised Christ are saved as God's people no matter where they grow up or when they were born.

That answers the 1<sup>st</sup> question we posed to ponder this passage that Israel is God's people because God chose Israel by His grace to bring His Word & His Christ.

But that leads to a 2<sup>nd</sup> question—why were Gentiles **new members**?

Question #2—why were Gentiles **new** members to His people?

Why are we saying that Gentiles were new members of God's people?

The answer is that the New Covenant is going to the Gentiles.

**Why were the Gentiles new members of God's people?—because Acts 10 describes the New Covenant going to the Gentiles.**

This was not like Rahab or Ruth who were from Jericho & Moab & became part of Israel from outside Israel.

They came to faith in the God of Israel & became a part of the nation & worshipped under regulations in the Old Covenant for Israel.

Numbers 15:14-16 & 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:41-43 gave guidelines for foreigners in Israel who wanted to worship the God in Israel.

2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 5 says Naaman the leper Elisha healed took dirt to Syria to honor the land & people of Yahweh God in worship.

Nebuchadnezzar & the Ninevites turned to Israel's God.

But this was different from those times when Israel was the focus of God's revelation & hope in the world.

This was new because Jesus had come & proven to be the Promised Christ & He was sending His grace to the nations.

Jesus came to make it clear & His words give us how we as Gentiles can be sure we can claim New Covenant blessings.

We can receive New Covenant blessings because Jesus said so.

We can see that in the word for Gentiles that is the same as the word for nations in the Great Commission passages.

Don't miss the *ethnos*—the Gentiles—in the familiar words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 when He told His followers to make disciples of all nations—that's all the *ethnos*, Gentiles.

When we hear all nations, we think of nations today & that's true—but that word for nations is the Greek *ethnos*—from which we get ethnic.

And that's the same word in Acts 10:45 that Luke used to refer to the Gentiles when Peter had preached to them.

Acts 10:45 says, “all ... who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the **Gentiles also**.”

Since the **Gentiles** there are the *ethnos*—the **nations**, Jesus' Great Commission was similarly to the **Gentiles also**.

So in the Great Commission, Jesus was saying something newly formational to make followers from nations outside Israel also.

And we know He included New Covenant blessings because of Luke's statement of the Great Commission in Luke 24:47.

Turn to Luke 24:46-47 & follow along as I read what Jesus told His disciples about New Covenant blessings to the nations. [READ]

Again here, nations is the same word—ethnos, Gentiles.

So Jesus said that *repentance for the forgiveness of sins* would be proclaimed in His name to all the Gentiles, beginning from Jerusalem.

It's translated 'nations' there because it begins in Jerusalem & the word can mean both 'nations' generally & Gentiles specifically as nations in contrast with Israel.

And Jesus said to preach *the forgiveness of sins*—just like God promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31:34—to all the nations.

That's another way you can know that the blessings of the New Covenant are applied to you—Jesus said so.

Jesus said in Luke 24:47 *“that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations.”*

Jesus was saying that those New Covenant blessings would be proclaimed in His name ALSO to all the nations.

Yes, those Gospel blessings were historically & specifically promised to the Jew first, as Romans 1:16 says, but they are also to the Greek.

And those Gospel blessings are from the New Covenant as Jesus said in Matthew 26:28 at His Last Supper.

He took the cup & said in Matthew 26:28, *“for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”*

When Jesus shed His blood on the cross as the sacrifice for sins for all who ever trust Him, He provided for the New Covenant.

We can know we receive New Covenant forgiveness because of Jesus.

And then think of what happened in Acts 2—the miraculous sign of the Spirit's coming was people praising God in the languages of people gathered from every nation under heaven.

Why?—because God was judging Israel's unbelief & signaling that the message of Jesus was going to the nations.

And Peter said that sign meant that the last days had begun.

The Spirit's coming was a sign of the New Covenant & the last days.

Then when the people asked what they should do, Peter replied in New Covenant language even to those far off in Acts 2:38.

Turn back to Acts & let's read Acts 2:38-39 to see that. [READ]

Peter offered forgiveness & the Holy Spirit, both mentioned as New Covenant blessings in Jeremiah 31 & Ezekiel 36.

But more so, in addition to Israelite children, he offered that promise to all who are far off, meaning far off & outside of the nation Israel.

So like Jesus said to preach to the nations, Peter said promises of forgiveness & the Spirit were for those far off from Israel.

And therefore, you can know that the promises of the New Covenant can be claimed by you even though you are far off from Israel.

Jesus made it clear that God's grace overflows beyond its originally stated bounds to do more than He promised.

And that is a reason to rejoice—that is grounds for glad worship!

No matter where you are from or what you have done, you can turn from your sins to faith in Jesus & find forgiveness.

Praise God & preach that glorious Gospel to the ends of the earth!

As the Gospel is preached & received, God is giving His New Covenant blessings to individuals from diverse nations.

And it's not because they stop being from different nations.

It's not because believers in Christ stop being the different ethnicities that they are by genealogy & geography.

We cannot stop being the genealogical makeup of our birth, but we can be together in Christ without becoming ceremonially Jewish.

That's a massive change from the Old Covenant to the New.

Believers in the God of Israel & the promised Messiah before Christ were pointed toward Israel to worship God.

They were directed to Israel for revelation to approach God.

God's priests were in Israel & God's Word came through Israel & the promised Savior & King was awaited from Israel.

So all believing eyes looked to Israel for the future hope.

But once Jesus came as that hope, believing eyes look to Him.

Knowing that should make us eager to proclaim Christ!

And that leads to a 3<sup>rd</sup> question for this text today & that's this—**why was this not preached to the Gentiles already?**

Why was this message of New Covenant blessings not preached to the Gentiles already?

We might think that Peter could have learned from Jonah to preach repentance to Gentiles & learned from things Jesus had said & even from what he had preached, but apparently he had not.

So why was this not preached to Gentiles already?

The answer is that **this mystery required new revelation from God.**

**This was not shared because Jews & Gentiles were separated.**

The delay was **because this mystery** of Gentiles being fellow heirs of New Covenant promises **required new revelation from God.**

Read how God initiated new revelation in verses 3-4. [READ]

The ninth hour was about 3pm, the third of three times of daily prayer—morning, noon, & this early evening time.

Like the Jews in Acts 3:1, Cornelius prayed at this time & yet this was like no other time that he had prayed before.

This time, he distinctly saw an angel of God in a vision having come in to him & said his name to him.

As Cornelius stared & was terrified, he addressed the angel as “lord, or sir, or master”, asking what it was.

And imagine the joy of the angel's assurance that his prayers & his giving had ascended up to the presence of God as a memorial.

He may not have followed all the laws for offerings, but his prayers & gifts had reached God's presence to be remembered.

That picture of acceptance led to commands in verses 5-6. [READ]

The angel knew the precise location of Simon the tanner whose house was by the sea & knew that Simon Peter was there.

So he commanded him to send men to Joppa to summon Peter.

And Cornelius obeyed immediately—read verses 7-8. [READ]

We see Cornelius's wealth & status with the mention of servants & soldiers who continually attended to him.

We also see that he had a devout soldier among his attendants & two of his other servants also seemed to understand all this.

As soon as the angel left, he called those men & explained everything so that they were prepared to report to Peter.

Then he sent them to Joppa even though he had no guarantee that a Jew like Peter would welcome them or return with them.

Yet think of what God did to prepare Cornelius here—don't miss what was needed to prepare to cross this barrier.

When did a Gentile receive a vision like this in history?

Maybe Balaam did, but that showed God's supremacy over anyone opposed to Israel entering the Promised Land.

And certainly Nebuchadnezzar did, but that was for Daniel to prophesy all kinds of things about the span of history.

Maybe you can share others, but Cornelius seems more like the Syrophenician woman Jesus commended in Mark 7:24-30.

Mark 7:24-30 says "*Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He was saying to her, "Let the children be*

*satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered and \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left."*

She called the Israelites children & the Gentiles dogs & yet this woman trusted Jesus to overflow with grace to her also.

She had seen & heard enough of Jesus to know He would show grace.

You might think that experience was enough to prepare Peter to be ready to show grace & fellowship with Gentiles.

But it was not—he & Cornelius needed to be prepared with visions from God to move toward this mystery being revealed.

This was a new era, a new dawn as the New Covenant began to replace the Old in the thinking & practice of God's people.

After being anticipated since the promise of Him to Adam & Eve, the Sinless Savior had come.

The Messiah & Christ was pouring out His Spirit to forgive people not only in Israel, but to the end of the earth.

His glory & salvation was too great to be kept only for Israel.

And He was making sure that everyone would know that His New Covenant blessings were to be offered to all the nations.

So don't doubt Him for your own soul or for others.

Believe Him & preach Him & His promises & pray for Him to show His grace again & again for His glory.

Let's pray that we will do so now as we close.