

The New Begins To Replace the Old-Part 3-Acts 10:1-23—3/22/26
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Open your Bibles to Acts 10 as we continue in this section when God led Peter to cross the line to include Gentiles in the New Covenant.

Let's read the section we're covering in Acts 10:1-23. [READ]

If you're a Gentile believer in Jesus Christ, this is your chapter that began the spread of the Gospel to the nations that has reached us.

God had saved some Gentiles as He worked with Israel, but this chapter begins unveiling His plans to reach the nations.

And this chapter also gets at some sticky questions, like why we don't follow dietary laws for clean & unclean foods.

If you've talked to a skeptic trying to undermine the credibility of the Bible, you may have heard objections about those laws.

Skeptics may say that Christians pick & choose what they want to believe or practice & don't obey all that's in the Bible.

Or skeptics may say that Christians are not consistent in our claims that the whole Bible is God's Word to mankind.

For example, some skeptics claim we can't use the OT to condemn homosexuality as sinful if we eat unclean foods.

Of course, the NT also condemns homosexuality as sinful, but we need to answer such claims that we are not consistent.

We need to know how to interpret Scripture consistently & to explain God's Law for Israel in relation to life today.

You need to know how to faithfully read the Bible for yourself; & you also need to know how to explain & defend it to others

So I pray it's been worth it to spend some extra time grasping the historical & theological context of Acts 10 as we waded into it.

We've been walking through this section with an outline of **preparations God made as the New began to replace the Old.**

By that, I do **not** mean that **Israel** was replaced in God's plan or as an ethnic people & nation to whom God will keep His promises.

I mean the **New Covenant** began to replace the **Old Covenant**.

So today I want to add that as an additional point that I did not have in my original plan to cover this section in one sermon with 3 points.

Answering your questions has expanded this to 3 sermons & I think it's helpful to add a point today that clarifies the title.

So we'll cover 2 final points about the new starting to replace the old.

But 1st recall that in verses 1-8 we saw how God prepared **new members** to **add to** His people & in verses 9-16 we saw how God prepared **new methods** to **set apart** His people.

1st, God prepared new members—Cornelius & his household—to add to His newly formed people of the church as distinct from Israel.

But to distinguish His people as no longer merely one nation, **God 2^{ndly} prepared new methods to set apart His people.**

Those **new methods** were no longer the laws for what was clean & unclean, holy & common, like in the dietary laws of Leviticus 11.

Rather, now God's people would be **set apart** as holy to Him **by their sacrificial love** like Jesus had loved.

They would be set apart by love for those who were formerly enemies or strangers, again like Jesus' love for all who are born sinners.

God's people would distinguished **no longer** by external rituals & ceremonial separations of food & fluids & such things.

God prepared **new methods** to set apart His people by showing Peter the vision of animals that **He** declared **clean** with **threefold** certainty.

God had to show Peter how the dietary laws were part of the **Old Covenant** that was being replaced by the New Covenant.

Get that—God had designed the Old Covenant, meaning His Laws through Moses at Mount Sinai, to be Israel's national constitution.

But that governing document was being **replaced by the New Covenant**, a new governing document.

God's people would be defined by the New Covenant.

Acts 10-11 begins to extend that to every tribe & tongue & nation as people show the same faith in Jesus as Lord & Christ.

So I want to add a point about the New Covenant to this outline of preparations God made as the new began to replace the old.

This will be a 3rd overall point continuing from the past two weeks & a 1st of 2 points today to finish out this section.

Point #3—God prepared new management to govern His people.

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The New Covenant became a new means of **managing** & guiding & ruling & leading & defining God's people.

God gave a **new constitution** structuring how the relationship with His people functions.

God **no longer** governs through the Old Covenant as one nation Israel.

That's the **old** managing system, the **old** governing documents, the **old** that was **broken** by Israel's disobedience.

The **new** management is the **New Covenant**, the **new** governing rule of the **law of Christ** under **grace**.

God was here beginning to reveal the details of what that would mean, not only for food, but also for relationships.

Read Acts 10:17-18 again as Peter was struggling with this. [READ]

Don't miss that—Peter was still continually at a loss, greatly perplexed to himself what the vision he had seen could be.

He knew that God had obviously said that what God had cleansed, he was no longer to consider as common or unclean.

But what were the **implications** of that?

Was it about **more than** food, since those laws connected to more?

And if so, how?—Peter could not just go read Hebrews.

To get the struggle, recall that God revealed His plans progressively.

God mentioned blessing the nations, but did not clarify **how**.

The Old Covenant was given through Moses at Mount Sinai to establish Israel as a nation & to guide them in God's blessings.

God called Israel to be a kingdom of priests & a holy nation to other nations, but they failed that before they left Mount Sinai.

So God renewed the covenant in Deuteronomy before Moses died & yet Israel failed repeatedly & broke the covenant again.

That's why God promised a New Covenant better than the Old one, new by His Spirit coming to give new hearts & more.

As we've read before in Jeremiah 31 & Ezekiel 36, that New Covenant was promised **to Israel** to replace the Old Covenant.

The New Covenant promised both **spiritual** blessings—like a new heart & forgiveness—& also **physical** blessings for Israel.

Those blessings were to come **together**—Israel was to repent & turn to their Messiah **before** their restoration would come.

Blessing to the nations was expected **when Israel was blessed**.

Peter & the Apostles expected Jesus to restore His kingdom **to Israel first**, as they asked about in Acts 1:6-8.

Get that—the OT expectation was that the nations would be blessed **in & through Israel when** Israel was blessed.

From OT promises, Peter & the Apostles expected that God would bless Israel **first & then** use Israel to bless the nations.

Turn to Acts 3:19-21 to see what Peter had told the men of Israel would happen if they would turn to Jesus. [READ]

Peter preached that **when Israelites repented & returned**, the **result** would **not only** be their individual blessing of having sins wiped away.

The result would **also** be that the **times of refreshing** would come from the presence of the Lord & that would **include Jesus the Christ returning** from heaven to earth.

Jesus would stay in heaven **until that period of restoration of all things** that God had spoken about by His holy prophets from ancient time.

Do you see & hear that expected flow of events?

Jesus came as the Christ & He has returned to heaven **until** Israel repents & turns to Him & **then** He will return & **restore all things**.

So it made sense for Peter & the Apostles to focus their preaching on **the Jews**, on **Israelites** scattered abroad.

There were good reasons Peter was perplexed about the vision he had seen as God prepared him for what was next.

It was **unexpected** for Gentiles to be welcomed as equals in New Covenant blessings **without Israel turning to Jesus**.

God had proven Israel's need for the Savior, but they had not trusted that Savior nor become a kingdom of priests to reach the nations.

But the Savior had come & God was going to welcome Gentiles with same promises that Jewish believers received.

For **that** unexpected step to happen, God had to give new revelation.

Of course, don't misunderstand—that does **not** mean the church was Plan B because Plan A with Israel failed.

It means the church was **Plan A, Part 2**—God had planned blessing to the nations all along, but He had only said a little bit about it before.

Peter would have known from Jesus' Last Passover Supper with them, as Luke 22:20 reports, that Jesus said, "*This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.*"

He knew to preach Jesus, but he needed what Hebrews 8:13 later said.

Hebrews 8:13 explained that, "*When He [God] said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.*"

Peter needed to grasp that the Old Covenant was obsolete, that God had shown him the laws for cleanness were **not** to rule him any longer.

Those were Old Covenant rules that no longer governed him.

Peter could have expected **some** change because God had promised a **New** Covenant to **replace** the Old Covenant that Israel had broken.

So God was not contradicting Himself or changing His mind or reframing the intended meaning of His former words.

Rather, God was doing exactly what He promised.

And that change is why Christians are no longer bound to the Law, meaning the Law of Moses, the Old Covenant.

As Romans 7:4 says: *“you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.”*

Romans 7:6 adds that *“now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”*

And Romans 8:2 says *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”*

So Galatians 5:18 says, *“if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”*

And Paul described himself in 1st Corinthians 9:21 *“as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ.”*

The point is **not** that the Law of God through Moses was bad or evil or useless or a failure in what God intended it to do.

No. Rather, as Galatians 3:19 & 24 say, the Law *“was added because of transgressions”* & *“the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.”*

As Romans 5:20, *“The Law came in so that the transgression would increase”*, meaning it defined sins to make them clear.

So the Old Covenant & its Law did what God planned.

He planned to use it as a tool to reveal sins to point Israel & all nations to our need for Christ.

That’s why the Old Covenant Law still has applications today even though Christians are under the New Covenant & not the Old.

And the moral demands of the Old Covenant Law are repeated in the NT & described as the Law of Christ.

James 1:25 & 2:12 describes it as *the Law of liberty* & 1st Timothy 1:8 says *we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully.*

And Romans 13:8-10 speaks of fulfilling law qualitatively, not the Mosaic Law as a Covenant, but as in the moral intent.

Romans 13:8-10 says, *“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled law. For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of law.”*

As Galatians 6:2 *“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Similarly, Galatians 5:14 says, *“For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.””*

And all that makes sense when we remember that Jesus summarized the moral essence of the Law with 2 commands—love God with your all & love your neighbor as yourself.

That’s why the lasting implications of the Sabbath command focus on loving God & loving His people.

Even though the Sabbath command is not repeated in the NT, the principle of regular weekly rest was rooted in creation & the priority of worshipping God with His people still applies.

But now that is focused on Sunday as the Lord's Day Jesus rose.

The Saturday Sabbath was given as the sign of the Old Covenant as part of separating Israel as distinct.

So with the Sabbath as with dietary laws, the New Covenant in Christ has replaced the Old Covenant & the new applications flow from love.

Love again is the focus as we turn to Acts 10 for 1 final way God was preparing His people for the new to replace the old.

We might simply describe what God did with Peter next like this—point #4—God prepared new **ministry to stretch** His people.

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This was a preparation for greater love like Jesus loved because this change from the old to the new involved more than mere food.

It involved men like those sent from Cornelius who approached at the gate after searching & finding the house of Simon.

And these men were the immediate focus as they were asking if Simon Peter was being kept as a guest there.

The men from Cornelius knew to come to the house of Simon the Tanner & they knew Simon Peter was being lodged there.

Those details could have been enough to wonder what God was doing, but read verses 19-20 where God got specific. [READ]

Luke mentions Peter's ongoing serious pondering about the vision that was interrupted by the Spirit speaking to him.

The Spirit first alerted Peter—behold—like being sure Peter knew he was awake & back in real time.

Having faced persecution, it was likely comforting for the Spirit to be the 1 who told Peter that 3 men were seeking him.

But the Spirit's purpose was to point to what may be uncomfortable.

Peter would quickly see that these men were Gentiles, unclean to associate with or to welcome into the house.

Peter must have been sitting or lying down because the 2 commands & explanation that the Spirit gave were to be after Peter got up.

Since Peter was on the flat rooftop, he needed to rise up to stand before he then walked down the outside stairs from the roof to the ground where these men had arrived.

But the Spirit commanded more than mere conversation, He added the command to go with them.

And that phrase *without misgivings* is literally *not hesitating or doubting nothing or not at all wavering*.

Those commands were clarifying action from the vision because those Gentile men would have been unclean.

And the divine clincher was that God Himself sent them.

The Spirit Himself had done the sending so that the men were there by divine purpose & design & timing.

So what God had sent to Peter, he should not consider unclean.

Peter was not to separate from the Gentiles or try to maintain his ceremonial cleanness by only speaking with them outside.

Read verse 21 again to note that Peter obeyed. [READ]

The Spirit said go down and Peter went down to the men.

Since the Spirit said He had sent the men, Peter knew they were seeking for him & identified himself.

And since the Spirit sent them, he asked the cause of them coming.

God had arranged the vision & the situation & set Peter up to respond to what He had planned.

And think about why God had chosen Peter for this.

God could have proclaimed the truths of Jesus to Cornelius through the angel that appeared to Cornelius.

But Jesus had commissioned His Apostles as His witnesses & Peter was the leader among them.

And Peter had been proven as God's messenger by the miraculous signs done through him for 5-10 years.

So Peter would be trusted in receiving further revelation from God & in confirming the Spirit's work in what was going to occur.

God's proof to Peter here would convince the Jerusalem church & its leaders & all the believers who had spread from there.

This was new revelation to move Peter & God's people forward in advancing the Gospel of Jesus to the nations.

He was preparing new ministry to stretch Peter beyond what he had previously thought was kosher & acceptable.

God was preparing Peter & the men who would go with Peter & the church that would follow Peter for what was next.

Read verse 22 to recall more of God's preparations. [READ]

These men reported what verses 1-8 described about the centurion Cornelius & his reputation as upright & fearing God as testified.

The whole nation of the Jews testified to him, likely because of his devotion to pray continually & give generously.

A holy angel brought Cornelius a divine message to summon Peter to his house & to hear words from him.

The Spirit had prepared Peter to welcome these men & go with them & their request also carried divine weight to compel him.

Peter knew he had to go & now it was clear he had to go preach.

But read verse 23 to see what Peter did first. [READ]

Peter invited these unclean Gentile servants of a Roman centurion into the house where he was staying with Simon the Tanner.

As if the tanner's work was not unclean enough, this was more.

He even entertained them as guests to stay the night there.

Then rising the next day, he obeyed what the Spirit had told him & departed with them for Cornelius's house in Caesarea.

But Peter did not cross this line of uncleanness on his own—he took others with him to whom he must have explained his vision.

I say that because his traveling companions were some of the brothers from Joppa, meaning these were other Christians.

Peter was not alone in taking this step of faith & obedience.

He led others on this adventure into New Covenant ministry.

It would've been a stretch for them that required reinforcing their consciences about what God considered clean based on Peter's vision.

They did not yet know what would happen, though we do.

But God had prepared new ministry to Gentiles with clear revelation to Peter & to Cornelius & so no one could doubt the divine design in this.

As they took this step of faith, it would stretch them with ministry that they would not have considered an option before.

We're not told whether they were excited, fearful, or uncertain.

We're only told that they were obedient to what God said.

God had proven this path through His lead Apostle Peter as He prepared new ministry to stretch His people.

As we said last week, the church is not to be set apart by what is clean or unclean in what we eat or touch.

Those old applications are replaced by many other applications for holiness in lifestyle & choices & priorities & habits.

And specifically, those old applications are replaced by Jesus' new commandment to love one another just as He has loved us.

The new applications that replace the old are rooted in the new, sacrificial love of believers from different backgrounds.

We may not share the same ancestry or heritage or ethnicity, but we share the same Lord & Christ & the same Holy Spirit.

We share what we treasure in our hearts by the one true faith handed down to the saints & that unifies us & defines us.

With that Oneness in Christ in common, we are set apart by our love for one another, by distinctive sacrificial care & serving.

As Jesus said in John 13:35, "*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*"

That's a stretch for us as God's people—it's a stretch to love people sacrificially like Jesus loved us.

And it's a stretch to love people who are different, who are not comfortable for us to be around or talk with or open up to.

But that's what distinguishes us as God's people now in Christ.

So may God stretch us to greater depths of love in our relationships.

How might God be preparing new ministry to stretch you?

We have plenty of opportunities because we all have issues.

We have our own selfishness to overcome to love others.

And we may have strangenesses of fellow believers to stretch us.

But you can do it if you are in Christ because you have new management—you have the Spirit of God to empower you.

2nd Corinthians 3:6 says Christians are *servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

If you have the Spirit, you can share that life of the Spirit through your life poured out to love others.

And if you don't know that love in your own heart, we want you to know that God can give you a new heart by His Spirit.

He can give you the same salvation through the same Savior that He promised through the ages & brought to Israel.

Jesus is that Savior & Christ & He is worthy to be trusted & followed.

He is God the Son who came from heaven to be a man to live perfectly like we never could & to die to pay sin's penalty for all who trust Him.

Then He rose from the dead to prove that He had conquered sin & death & He sent the Spirit to do what no law could do for us.

So turn from your self & sin to faith in Him & enjoy new life in Him.

No matter your background, Jesus Christ can save you.

He can forgive your sins & welcome you into His family.

When the church began, the Apostles did **not** know the church would be a **unified body** of **both** Jewish & Gentile believers.

But what God **began showing in Acts** is that Gentile believers receive the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant & will share in the future blessings alongside Israel.

So the way to think of God's New Covenant promises is not that they are either for Israel or for the church.

The way to think of it is both-and, both for Israel & for the church.

God had promised the New Covenant to Israel **AND He also** chose to show grace to Gentiles, the nations, who trust Christ.

God did **not** redefine Israel or replace Israel because God does not change His Word or alter His promises.

Rather, God **did more than** He said before—God **added more** who would receive the blessings of New Covenant.

He did it because He is gracious & He can also be gracious to you.

So ask Him to do so as you turn from your sins to faith in Jesus as your Lord & Savior.

And then let us know how we can pray for you & help you.

And as we all follow Jesus, let's ask Him to abound our love to be like His love to show the world that we are His disciples.

Pray that with me now as we close.