



The Gospel for All Nations

Acts 10-11

Lake Arrowhead Church, Waleska, Georgia
©Monty Watson – July 12, 2026

THE GOSPEL FOR ALL NATIONS

Acts 10-11

Does God love someone who looks like this? This is Rolf Buchholz. He's 66 years old and lives in Germany. He holds the Guinness world record for having the most body modifications. He has 453 piercings, 2 horns, and 90% of his body is covered in tattoos. Does God love someone who looks like this? Or does God only love someone who looks like this? An average white guy wearing khakis and a tie.

Who does God love more? We can't help having a reaction to how people look. We can't help prejudging people by how they look. And we can't help being more comfortable with people who look more like us. But that's where God is different. The Bible says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, NAS). The Bible says, "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16, NAS).

He loves Muslims and Buddhists. He loves Jews and Arabs. He loves Republicans and Democrats. He loves the drug addict and the sex worker. He loves the successful CEO and the homeless guy living on the street. He loves Americans and Iranians. He loves people who live in Ukraine and Russia. He loves those who live in Europe, Asia, and Africa. He loves people who live in great cities and those who live in remote jungles. Every color, every language, every person in every place ... ***"for God so loved the world."***

When God looks down on earth, He does not see skin color or nationality, wealth or political party, and He does not care about khakis or tattoos. He sees those who do not know Him, and His heart breaks for those who have yet to believe in His Son Jesus. And this message is about having a heart like God, a heart for those who do not know Him. This message is about having a heart for the world.

According to the International Mission Board, 4.8 billion of the 8.2 billion people in the world are classified as unreached people groups.¹ An unreached people group is defined as having less than 2% Christian population and with little or no access to the Gospel. Of the 12,000 people groups in the world, there are 7,324 unreached people groups which make up 58% of the world's population. Fifty-eight percent of the world's population has little or no access to the Gospel. That is the mission and the responsibility of the church today, and every Christian has a role to play in that mission.

It all started in the book of Acts. The book of Acts records the birth of the Church and the thirty-year period following the resurrection of Jesus. The book is filled with dramatic events and incredible stories of faith. Those who were there heard His teaching and witnessed His miracles. They saw Him die and they saw Him alive again. They believed He was the Son of God. They were convinced it was true. They were compelled to talk about it. And they were courageous to take a stand. And today, the book of Acts continues to be written, and we are living and writing our chapter. ***The story continues, the mission continues, and it's still about Jesus.***

TWO VISIONS

Acts 10 is the meeting of Peter and Cornelius. Peter, a Jew. Cornelius, a Gentile. Peter, a fisherman. Cornelius, a soldier. Two very different men had two very dramatic visions from God. ***Yet these two visions had one message. God spoke to two men, then brought them together to understand that the Gospel is meant for every person in the world.***

“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment” (Acts 10:1, NIV). A centurion was the captain of 100 soldiers and the Italian Regiment posted in Caesarea would have included 600 soldiers. Cornelius “and all his family were devout and God-fearing, and he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly” (Acts 10:2, NIV). Cornelius was a Roman soldier, a Gentile, not a Jew and not a Christian, but God-fearing and generous to the poor.

“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!’ Cornelius stared at him in fear. ‘What is it, Lord?’ The angel answered, ‘Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter’ (Acts 10:3-5, NIV). Angels did not usually appear and talk to Roman soldiers. But Cornelius did as the angel said and sent his men to Joppa to find Peter and bring him back.

Here’s what was happening with Peter. “About noon the following day ... Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ ‘Surely not, Lord!’ Peter replied. ‘I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’ The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven ... Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision” (Acts 10:9-17, NIV).

Some background on Peter’s strange dream.² The Old Testament prohibited Jews from eating certain foods. One reason was for health purposes. Another reason was to demonstrate that Israel was distinct from other nations. Jews could not eat badgers or rabbits or pigs. That means no bacon! It was okay to eat fish but not shrimp or crawfish. I’m from Louisiana. Say it isn’t so Lord! Thankfully, Acts 10 rescinds these limitations and we can eat all the bacon and crawfish we want.

Here’s the point of the dream. God was showing Peter that these foods were no longer unclean. But there was more to it. Peter had only half of the vision and Cornelius had the other half. God was arranging their meeting so both would learn, at the same time, an incredible message about the Gospel.

So, Peter agreed to go to Caesarea to meet Cornelius.

“Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him

get up. ‘Stand up,’ he said, ‘I am only a man myself’” (Acts 10:24-26, NIV). After the angel visited Cornelius, he was expecting a message from God. That’s why he fell to his knees before Peter. That’s why he gathered his family and friends. He wanted everyone he knew to hear this message from God.

Peter said, “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean” (Acts 10:28, NIV). This was a new revelation. This was not about food. It was about people.

A Jew was not allowed to associate with a Gentile, eat with a Gentile, or go into the house of a Gentile. Israel was God’s chosen people. He told them to be separate from ungodly nations and ungodly people. But Israel’s error was thinking that their favor with God meant despising the rest of the world.³ God chose Israel to be “a light to the nations,” to share His love with the rest of the world, but Israel failed in that calling.⁴

Instead, racism and spite flourished in the first century world. Romans despised the Jews and looked down upon them as inferior. And Jews despised Romans as evil oppressors. For Peter to walk into the home of a Roman soldier would be like a Jew in 1940 walking into the home of a Nazi officer.

But God had spoken. Peter explained his vision to Cornelius, and Cornelius explained his vision to Peter. And it was clear that these two visions were one message.

ONE MESSAGE

The story continues as Peter said, “I now realize that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. The message God sent to the people of Israel, of the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, ***He is Lord of all!***” (Acts 10:34-36, NIV).

This is the longest story in the book of Acts, suggesting its importance. And the point? That the Gospel is meant for all nations, for every person, regardless of race, language, or station in life. ***The Gospel is meant for every person in the world!***

I can imagine Peter with tears in his eyes as he explained the Gospel to Cornelius and his family. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all – the living and the dead. He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name” (Acts 10:38-43, NLT).

Two visions, one message. Peter realized that God's love was for every person in the world, not just for Jews. And Cornelius realized that God's love was for him, a Gentile, a Roman. What an emotional moment it must have been for both of them.

Later in the New Testament, Paul described the Gospel as "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16, NAS).⁵ He said, "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female ... You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, 26, NLT). Imagine what it was like for Peter, a Jew, to realize this. Imagine what it was like for Cornelius, a Gentile, to hear this.

I've had the privilege of preaching the Gospel on five continents. And no matter what people look like, the color of their skin, or the language they speak, the saying is true. You will never look eyes with anyone in the world whom God does not love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son" (John 3:16, NIV).

- God loves this little girl from Nepal.
- He loves this redhead from Ireland.
- He loves this black guy from Detroit.
- He loves this blonde from Sweden.
- He loves this tribesman from Ethiopia.
- He loves this Chinese university student.
- He loves this young Russian soldier standing guard outside the Kremlin.
- He loves this Muslim woman, her eyes peering through her burka.
- He loves this mother from Sudan with two hungry children.
- He loves this camel rancher in India.
- He loves this old man from China.
- He loves this Montana cowboy.
- He loves this New York model.
- He loves this toothless, old woman from Ecuador.
- And God loves this little girl who lives in the Wakhan Valley in Afghanistan.

"Red and yellow, black and white ... They are precious in His sight ... Jesus loves the little children of the world." The Gospel is for every person in the world.



OUR MISSION

The Gospel is meant for every person in the world, and every Christian has a role to play in that mission.

“For God so loved *the world* that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV). “You will be my witnesses ... *to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8, NIV). “Therefore go and make disciples *of all nations*” (Matthew 28:19).

The purpose of a hospital is to heal the sick. The purpose of a school is to educate children. The purpose of a grocery store is to provide food. The purpose of a church is ...? What is the purpose of the church? Is the church just a classroom where we pride ourselves in studying the Bible? Is the church just a place that inspires us to be kind and moral? Is the church just a place where we meet friends who believe like us, act like us, and look like us? What is the purpose of the church? ***The Gospel is meant for every person in the world, and every Christian has a role to play in that mission.***

But how do we play our role in this massive global mission? (1) It begins with the HEART. Paul said, “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart” for my brothers who do not know Jesus (Romans 9:2-3, ESV). He said, “My heart’s desire and my prayer to God is for their salvation” (Romans 10:1, NAS). Paul’s heart broke for those who did not know Jesus. May our hearts break for our neighbors and friends and family who do not know Jesus. And may our hearts break for people all over the world who do not know Jesus.

What can we do? (2) PRAY. Pray for the world, especially for people and places that touch your heart. Pray for the Gospel to get to those 4.8 billion people who have little or no opportunity to hear about Jesus.

(3) GIVE. Give financially. Support global mission agencies that touch your heart. Support our church's efforts in both local and global missions. And know that last year, 22% of all the church received we gave away to missions. Give to the mission.

(4) GO. At this point in your life, God may not be sending you to Africa. But He is sending you, and that may simply be walking across the street. When He says, "Go," be willing to go. And keep asking Him, ***"Lord, what role do you want me to play in the mission?"***

CONCLUSION

When the Apostle John was an old man, he was allowed a peek into heaven, a preview of the future. He wrote down what he saw. "I looked and before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb'" (Revelation 7:9-10, NIV).

Heaven will be filled with people from every nation, of every color, and every language. ***The Gospel is meant for every person in the world, and every Christian has a role to play in that mission.***

NOTES

¹ These statistics found at www.peoplesgroups.org, with data confirmed by the International Mission Board and The Joshua Project.

² See Darrell L. Bock, *Acts – Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), pages 388-391.

³ See John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), page 185.

⁴ See Isaiah 42:6.

⁵ See also Romans 3:22, Romans 3:29, Galatians 3:8, Ephesians 2:12-16.