



Message Guide

FOR JULY 20, 2025

THE STORY UNLEASHED- 5: UNLEASHED TO THE NATIONS ACTS 10-11



**LAKE WEBB,
ASSOCIATE WORSHIP PASTOR**

As we walk through the book of Acts together, we should be changed. We should be convicted and encouraged to walk in boldness through the power of the Holy Spirit. As those who have accepted Christ, we have received the promised Holy Spirit. We've been given a testimony to share. We've been enabled to produce right worship. We've been given unique gifts to serve the Lord and other people. Today we are going to reenter the story of Acts to a moment that shook up the course of history and hopefully will shake up that way we walk out our faith.

Summary from Acts 1-9

We began in Acts 1-2 where Jesus ascends and the Holy Spirit is then poured out on the day of Pentecost, forming the Church. Peter preaches on that day and thousands of Jews turn to Jesus. Acts 3-4 is Peter's famous sermon in Solomon's Colonnade. More and more people in Jerusalem were being saved and joining the Church through the spreading of the gospel. Acts 5-9 introduces persecution into the Church. And despite persecution by the Jewish religious leaders, the people of Jerusalem and surrounding towns continue to accept Jesus and join the Church. We even see one of the leaders of the persecution, a pharisee named Saul, encounter Jesus and repent of his sin.

At this point there are somewhere between 10 and 20 thousand Christians in Jerusalem, which is the result of, get this, 8-10 years of sharing the gospel. We kind of like to think that all of this exploded over the course of a week or something, but this kind of growth took a while! Even so, 120 had at least grown 100-fold.

Did you notice that every single event that has happened to this point saw a specific group of people as recipients of the gospel? For the first 8-10 years, the story was absolutely being unleashed, but it was unleashed to a specific group of people: the Jews. The gospel had not been presented to the Gentiles yet!

So far it seems as if God is reserving the truth and power of the gospel, as well as the gifting of the Holy Spirit to ethnic Jews and Jewish proselytes (converts to Judaism). So, this story we are about to examine is the most significant event in the New Testament outside of the resurrection of Jesus. Why? Because without this story, without the revelation that God gives to Peter, we would all either be Jewish, or Christianity would have remained localized to Judea and Samaria.



Message Guide

FOR JULY 20, 2025

1. Have you ever had an experience that completely changed the way you saw a person or people group? What happened? How did it change you?

In the church, we talk about Jews and Gentiles a lot, but we don't use that language outside of church circles and when we do, we typically think Jewish people and everyone who isn't. Yes, but it's far deeper than that. In Ephesians 2:14, the apostle Paul writes, *"For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility."*

When we understand the depth of the distinction between the groups, these verses matter more. We understand that there was a true dividing wall between our lineage and the lineage of God. We understand just how great the love of Christ is. So, let's talk about this distinction.

What is a Jew? Jew - A recipient of the Abrahamic Covenant and keeper of the Mosaic Covenant.

"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." **Genesis 12:2-3 (ESV)**

God made a promise to Abraham, and because of that promise, the descendants of Abraham were as Romans says, "entrusted with the very words of God." The sign of this covenant was circumcision. Later, God would extend upon this covenant with not just the direct descendants of Abraham, but the nation of Israel through Moses. In this "Mosaic Covenant," God gave the Jewish people Torah, which separated them from the rest of the world. They were to be a kingdom of priests, sealed by the holy Law. Bottom line: to be Jewish was to be chosen. To be Jewish was to be a child of the one true God. And this was worth protecting.

In contrast, Gentiles were not people of promise. The Hebrew word for Gentile literally just means "nation." The Gentiles were not part of the Mosaic covenant, but instead they were the pagan people of surrounding nations. They were not keepers of Jewish Law. And for most of Jewish history, the Jewish people were held captive, exiled, or militarily opposed by Gentiles.

Bottom line: Gentiles were not chosen. They were not children of God. The only way for Gentiles to be blessed in the Jewish mind was to take on circumcision and become Jewish, but even so, they could still never become



Message Guide

FOR JULY 20, 2025

fully Jewish. Over time, Jews and Gentiles had to learn how to coexist together, even though in the Jewish mind there would never be truly equality. Because Gentiles did not follow Torah, they routinely engaged in practices that the Law would deem “unclean.” So, while some Jews truly did hate Gentiles, most Jews just didn’t want to jeopardize their observance of the Law by association with those who were not under it.

To help with this, religious leaders “built a fence around Torah,” adding thousands of arbitrary rules for the Jewish people to observe in order for them to stay as far away from breaking Torah as possible. An example of this? Jews did not eat with Gentiles. Why? Because there was a high likelihood that in the preparation of food, the Gentiles would have used unclean food and practices, leading to uncleanness for the Jews. Keep in mind, nowhere in Torah says Jews cannot eat with Gentiles, but this new man-made religious rule guarded the Jewish people from even coming close to breaking the Law. Did it keep Jews from breaking Kosher? Sure. Did many Jews over the course of generations begin to believe that Gentiles themselves were unclean? Yes.

This fence around Torah was one of the main targets of Jesus’ earthly ministry. His opposition to it helped get Him killed, but even though He made it clear that man-made laws were harmful, apparently the fence built between Jews and Gentiles was still standing. So how did this fence come down? Let’s take a look at Acts, chapter 10.

Acts 10 begins “At Caesarea, there was a man named Cornelius.”

2. Read Acts 10:1-8. What does the Scripture tell us about this man, Cornelius?

Cornelius was generous. He was a worshiper. And He submitted himself and his household to the God of Israel. Because of this, God sent an angel to him, telling him to send men to Joppa (which was like 35 miles away) and ask for a man named Simon Peter. With no more context than this, Cornelius sends three of his men to Joppa for Peter. We knew that Cornelius was generous and worshipful, but now we learn he is faithful.

Read Acts 10:9-16

- The next day at noon, Peter goes to the rooftop to pray.
- He fell into a trance and sees a vision: “a great sheet with all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.”



Message Guide

FOR JULY 20, 2025

- A voice comes to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”
- And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.” This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven. Acts 10:10b-16 (ESV)

3. After this vision, it says that Peter was “inwardly perplexed.” Why would he be inwardly perplexed? It was obvious what the vision was about, right? God just eliminated your food laws.

We like to think that Peter was stupid. Peter was not stupid. Peter knew his Scriptures and walked physically with Jesus. Peter did not know what the dream meant because he knew that it wasn't about food! But as Peter was contemplating this, the men sent from Cornelius a day earlier came to the door, and the Holy Spirit prompted him to greet them. Basically, God tells Peter, “You want to know what that vision meant? Follow my instruction.”

When God reveals something to you, follow Him in obedience, even when you haven't made sense of His ways yet.

What does Peter, a Jew, do? He invites two Gentile servants and one Roman soldier into the home to presumably eat with him and give them shelter for the night. Peter likely understood what was going to happen as soon as he saw the Gentile men at the door. Why? Because Peter tore down the fence around Torah!

Acts 10:24-27- The next day, the three sent by Cornelius, Peter, and six other followers of Jesus took the journey back to Caesarea. When they arrive, Cornelius, a Roman soldier, falls at the feet of Peter and starts to worship him. Peter says, “Yeah no. Wrong guy.” They start talking and Peter says this:

“You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.” **Acts 10:28b-29 (ESV)**

What was Peter's interpretation of the vision? “Peter, you need to stop calling Gentiles unclean because I never said they were.” Peter got it! He knows what's coming. Cornelius tells Peter that an angel came and told him to send for Peter. We are ready to hear what you have to say. **Read Acts 10:30-43.**



Message Guide

FOR JULY 20, 2025

So, Peter responds with the gospel. But not a gospel of exclusivity. It's not a gospel for Jews, but a gospel for all people!

4. Since the gospel is for all people, who do you know in your life that needs to hear it? Can you name a few?

Read Acts 10:44-48.

While Peter is sharing the gospel, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, just like He did at Pentecost. They were amazed. Why? Because the favor of the Lord, the gifting of the Lord, the seal of the Lord, came to the Gentiles in the exact same way as the Jews!

This was not like the giving of the Law in the Mosaic covenant. This was given freely to a Roman. In response to this, Peter and his friends baptize the entire household. Why is that important? Because just like circumcision was the sign of the old covenant, baptism was the sign of the new covenant in Christ. All of the sudden, Gentiles are part of the family of God - equal to the Jews who had also taken on the sign of the New Covenant.

Imagine you just came back from the greatest mission trip of your life. You went to Afghanistan, and you saw a whole village of Muslims under Taliban control repent and convert to Christianity. You saw an entire lineage take up the name of Jesus, putting their lives on the line because the gospel changed them. You and your group baptized them, even though you're still trying to get passed the idea that they may not be genuine, that this couldn't be real, or that it's all a setup. You stay with them after they are converted. You see clear signs of the Holy Spirit in them. You send a message back home to the Church of this unbelievable work of God, and you can't wait to share it in person. You show up to church the first Sunday back, and a group of people are ready to greet you. "You ate with Muslims?" "You ate with people that hate us?" "Why would you go there when there are so many Americans that need to hear the gospel too?" Sounds crazy right?

But that's exactly how Peter was greeted in Jerusalem. This broke down so many religious walls, and it was so hard for the Jewish people to grasp. They also rightly recognize how many problems this introduces into how followers of Jesus are supposed to live out their faith if they are not keepers of the Law. How does Peter handle this? He walks step by step through what happened. He understands why they feel this way. He is compassionate despite their pride.

So, how did the people respond to Peter?



Message Guide

FOR JULY 20, 2025

They could have doubled down and rejected the inclusivity of this new covenant. They could have placed their Jewish identity above the work of God. They could have, but they didn't. What did they do? They were silent. They could not deny the work of the Holy Spirit. So, they stopped talking.

But they didn't stay in that grief and mope. What did they do? They glorified God saying, "*Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life*" **Acts 11:18b (ESV)**.

If that is the will of God, that is our will too!

ONE KEY TAKEAWAY: Please have ears to hear this – God shows no partiality. Romans 2:11 (ESV). Ephesians says, "be imitators of God," so we also cannot show partiality.

What impartiality means is that even though God has created each one of you uniquely, each one of you is just as dead in sin and in need of a savior. We do see color. We do see gender. We do see how we are different from one another. But God sees us as equally broken. Equally hopeless in our sin. But also invaluable, and equally redeemable in Christ.

When we are redeemed in Christ, the physical differences we have that used to separate us from one another, beautify the kingdom of God. The uniqueness of us as individuals that used to uphold or pride and divide us come to accentuate the creativity of God. And while our physical differences glorify God and his Kingdom, a paradox occurs: Our souls collectively grow toward looking more similar, toward looking more like Jesus. "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" **Galatians 3:27-28 (ESV)**

When you come face to face with someone different than you - maybe a Muslim, maybe an atheist, maybe someone who is gay, remember that the gospel is for them, just as it is for you!

Peter came face to face with a Roman soldier and didn't run through a big, long questionnaire about his theology and how he would set aside Rome and everything that came with it. No, he told him what Jesus did on the cross and trusted that if the Holy Spirit entered him, He would work out the rest.

5. What next step is the Holy Spirit telling to you to take this week, to be unleashed to the nations?