



LESSON 33

The Gentiles receive the gospel

ACTS 10:1-11:18



God saves people who seek Him from every nation.



“They glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life’” (Acts 11:18).

Supporting Truths

1. God saves anyone who believes in Jesus.
2. God does not show favoritism.
3. God saves people who seek Him.
4. God guides the process of salvation.
5. God saves through obedient servants.

Objectives

1. List several truths about Jesus that Peter preached to the Gentiles.
2. Explain what Peter’s vision meant.
3. Describe what Cornelius and his family were like.
4. Describe how angels, visions, and the Spirit prepared Peter and Cornelius.
5. Explain why it was so unusual for Peter to go into a Gentile’s home.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

The Gentiles receive the gospel • Acts 10:1-11:18



Lesson Summary

God sent Peter to Gentiles in Caesarea, a huge step in the spread of the gospel. He told Cornelius, a Gentile, to send for Peter, and He prepared Peter in advance to accept all people as clean in God's eyes. Then, after Peter explained the gospel, the Holy Spirit came on those listening so that no one could miss the point: salvation had come to Gentiles. Upon seeing this, Peter and his companions baptized the Gentiles, affirming their salvation through Jesus.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Peter preached that the gospel is good news. The good news is that we can have peace through Jesus. We can have this peace because Jesus died to forgive the sins that separate us from God. But this peace comes only through Jesus, because He is Lord of all. To be forgiven and have peace, you must believe in Jesus. If you do, He will save you, no matter where you live or what people you belong to.

LAST WEEK



Saul is converted
Acts 9:1-31

THIS WEEK



**The Gentiles receive
the gospel**
Acts 10:1-11:18

NEXT WEEK



**God frees Peter from
prison**
Acts 12:1-24

THE GOSPEL SPREADS INTO JUDEA AND SAMARIA

Lesson Commentary

God saves people who seek Him from every nation.

Way back in the beginning, God created a perfect world for people to live in, but humans rebelled. By becoming enemies of God, they brought all kinds of brokenness and pain into this world. In response, God chose to bless one man, Abraham, along with his family (Gen 12:1–2). But if everyone in the world is trapped by sin, how does it help to bless only the *Jews—Abraham’s descendants through the line of Jacob*? Through them God planned to bless all nations (12:3b). From the Jews came Jesus, who died for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). And now in Acts 10, the 2,000-year-old promise began to come true, for God brought salvation to Gentiles.

God prepared to save Gentiles (10:1–33)

God prepared the way for this massive step in His salvation plan. He had already prepared the heart of Cornelius. Cornelius was centurion in the Roman army (Acts 10:1). He was probably not Roman himself, since the troops stationed in Judea were mostly recruited from the provinces. But he was still a Gentile. Also, since he was a centurion in charge of about 100 soldiers, he was a strong, courageous, and responsible man. More importantly, he was a worshiper of the true God. Although he was not a *proselyte, a full convert to Judaism*, he prayed to the God of Israel and showed practical love to the people of Israel (10:2;

Gen 12:3a). Like Cornelius, his whole family also worshiped God. That included not just immediate family members, but also slaves and others who lived or worked as part of the household.

God responds to those who seek Him (Isa 55:6–7; Jer 29:13), so He sent an angel in response to Cornelius’ prayers and kindness (Acts 10:3–4). Cornelius was terrified at the sight of this fiery heavenly warrior, but he also believed the angel’s message. Although

he didn’t know Peter or why exactly he needed him, he trusted God and sent for Peter just as instructed (10:5–8). Thus, God prepared the Gentiles to receive the gospel.

Meanwhile, Jesus and the Holy Spirit prepared Peter to respond to Cornelius’ invitation. This was important, because Jews thought Gentiles were unclean. They even considered it wrong to enter a Gentile’s home (10:28). For this reason, Jesus gave Peter a vision of clean and unclean animals and told Peter to eat them (10:9–16). This vision came three times to confirm without a doubt that Jesus had ended the old food laws (Mark 7:18–19; 1 Tim 4:4). But what did this have to do with Gentiles? The old laws regarding food were not primarily about food to begin with. They were designed to keep Israel separate from the people around them, to guard Israel from their idolatry and keep them holy (Lev 20:25–26). To avoid being contaminated by unclean food, Jews refused to enter Gentile homes (Acts 11:3).

But now, by His death Jesus created a new community cleansed by His blood and kept holy by the Spirit on the inside rather than by laws on the outside (Gal 5:18; Col 2:20–23). Peter did not quite understand this just from the vision, so the Holy Spirit spoke directly to Peter to help him make the connection (Acts 10:17–20). Now Peter understood: the same new covenant that made all food clean also made all people clean (10:28). Peter went to Cornelius, and the preparation was complete. God had brought His obedient Jewish witness to an eager Gentile audience (10:24, 33).

The gospel offers salvation to all people (10:34–43)

Peter preached with a new sense of awe, but he preached the same gospel. He was in awe because now he saw that God’s offer of salvation truly is for all people (10:34–35). The gospel is not limited to any



THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus reveals God to people who humbly seek Him (Matt 11:25).



THINK ABOUT IT

God reveals His gospel through obedient human messengers (Rom 10:14).

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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race or culture. It cannot be held back, even from those Christians think are unclean or unworthy. At the same time, the gospel cannot be changed to fit a new group of people. When Peter said that God accepts anyone who fears Him and does what is right (10:35), he did not mean that being a good person makes one pleasing to God. Rather, he meant that God will reveal the gospel to all who seek Him. That is why God brought Peter to these Gentiles: they were sincere, but they still needed the salvation that comes only through Jesus (4:12).

What *gospel* did Peter preach? He preached the good news of peace through Jesus Christ (10:36). This is good news because all our problems come from not having peace with God. Our sin is war between us and God (Jas 4:4). It separates us from God (Isa 59:2). And when we do not live in harmony with God, we also are unable to live in harmony with ourselves, with others, and with the rest of creation. News of peace really is good news, and that is what Jesus came to do. Jesus died to bear God's wrath against sin (2 Cor 5:19), so He turns enemies of God into friends (Rom 5:10) and brings peace to all of creation (Col 1:20).

Jesus is able to bring such total peace because He is Lord of all. While on earth, Jesus proved He is Lord of all (Acts 10:38–39a; 1 John 3:8). The Father, the Spirit, and His own righteous actions confirmed that He is Lord, even over Satan. Second, His death and resurrection prove that He is Lord (Acts 10:39b–42). He is the Lord of life (3:15) and also the judge of the living and the dead (John 5:21–29). To some, judgment does not seem like “good news,” but it is only bad news to those who reject Jesus. To those who love Jesus, it is just one more reason to trust Him with their lives. So the *gospel* is the good news that Jesus is Lord of all.

Finally, as the prophets predicted (Isa 53:11), the *gospel* is the good news of forgiveness by faith in Jesus (Acts 10:43). Forgiveness is good news, because we can never have peace so long as God holds our sins against us.

But by His death, Jesus offers to wipe our sins away (3:19) and cancel the debt we owe God (Col 2:14). Because Jesus paid the price, forgiveness is a gift that we cannot earn. Since it is a gift, it only comes by faith (Rom 4:16). Jesus' death counts for us the moment we believe (10:9). Finally, just as the prophets predicted, this forgiveness is offered to everyone (Isa 55:1–7). This is the gospel that Peter was now offering to Gentiles.

God saved Gentiles (10:44–48; 11:15–18)

Peter had not even finished when the Holy Spirit came on everyone who was listening (Acts 10:44). To make sure that Peter and the other Jews did not miss it, the Spirit caused the Gentiles to speak in other languages (10:46). Peter realized that this sign, which did not normally happen, was meant to connect to what happened at Pentecost (11:15–16). The Spirit came in such a visible way to prove even to skeptical Jews that the Gentiles really did have faith, repentance, and eternal life (11:17–18). Having the Holy Spirit is an essential part of what it means to be a Christian (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:13). Since the Holy Spirit came on everyone in Cornelius' household, they were all true believers, and they all had been forgiven.

Because Peter realized that they had all believed, he immediately had the six Jewish Christians who were with him baptize everyone in Cornelius' household (Acts 10:48; cf. 11:12). He did this because baptism is the sign of faith. Through baptism, a believer identifies himself as someone who belongs to Jesus and puts his trust in God for forgiveness of sin (Rom 6:3–4; 1 Pet 3:21). After that, Peter stayed a few days. This would have been unthinkable for him before, but now he saw that God cleansed both Jew and Gentile without distinction (Acts 15:9). He understood that since Jesus is our peace, there is no more wall separating Jew and Gentile (Eph 4:12).

Lesson Outline

God saves people who seek Him from every nation.



AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. Gentiles were seeking God (10:1–2).
2. God sent Peter to Gentiles (10:3–33).
3. Peter told Gentiles about Jesus (10:34–43).
4. Gentiles believed and were saved (10:44–48; 11:15–18).



AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. God prepared to save Gentiles (10:1–33).
 - Cornelius and his whole family worshiped God (10:1–2).
 - An angel told him to call for Peter (10:3–8).
 - Jesus taught Peter to accept what God made clean (10:9–16).
 - The Spirit led Peter to eager Gentiles (10:17–33).
2. The gospel offers salvation to all people (10:34–43).
 - The good news is for all people (10:34–35).
 - The good news is peace through Jesus (10:36a).
 - The good news is that Jesus is Lord of all (10:36b–42).
 - The good news is that Jesus forgives those who believe (10:43).
3. God saved Gentiles (10:44–48; 11:15–18).
 - The Holy Spirit proved the Gentiles were saved by faith (10:44–46; 11:15–18).
 - Baptism confirmed the Gentiles were saved by faith (10:47–48).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **Who was the centurion who prayed to God?**
Cornelius.
2. **Who did God send to answer his prayer?**
Peter.
3. **What did Peter say is the only way to be forgiven?**
By believing in Jesus.
4. **How do you know that Cornelius and his family believed?**
The Holy Spirit came on all of them and Peter and his companions baptized them.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **Why did God notice Cornelius and his family?**
Cornelius and his whole family were seeking God.
2. **What did Jesus show Peter to prepare him to go to Gentiles?**
A sheet full of clean and unclean animals.
3. **What did Jesus say about the vision?**
What God has made clean, do not call common.
4. **What did the Spirit say this meant?**
Go to the Gentiles. God offers salvation to them too.
5. **How did Peter define the gospel?**
It is the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.
6. **What are some things Jesus is Lord over?**
Satan, life and death, judgment.
7. **Why did the Spirit cause the Gentiles to speak in other languages?**
To make it very clear to all the Jews that God had accepted Gentiles.
8. **Why did Peter have them all baptized?**
Baptism is a mark of faith, and because they all received the Spirit, Peter knew they all believed.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

FAVORITES

Ask the children to name their favorite things (activities, food, pets, etc.). Explain that we have favorites, but God does not have favorites when it comes to people. He loves people all around the world and wants them all to be saved.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN, PART 1

Bring in clean and unclean stuffed animals. Have the children separate the animals into groups of clean and unclean animals. Keep these groups separate as you begin the lesson.

In the Old Testament, God said the Jews could eat certain animals but not others. The animals that the Jews could eat and use to sacrifice to God were called clean, and the others were unclean. There was nothing wrong with the unclean animals, but God wanted His people to obey Him. Clean animals were those that parted the hoof and were cloven-footed and chewed the cud, animals in the water that have fins and scales, and locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers. Unclean animals include: camel, rock badger, hare, pig, eagle, vulture, falcon, raven, ostrich, sea gull, hawk, owl, stork, heron, bat, rat, mouse, lizard, gecko, chameleon, and snake (Lev 11).



ILLUSTRATE

ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE WORLD

Have the children ever got a special gift from their parents? Was it hard to share this gift when their siblings or friends asked to play with it? This is how the Jews felt about salvation. God gave them the gift of salvation first, but through them He also gave salvation to the rest of the world (Rom 1:16). However, many Jews did not want to share this gift with Gentiles.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN, PART 2

When teaching about the great sheet full of clean and unclean animals that descended from heaven (Acts 10:11–16), place all the animals, both clean and unclean, together on a sheet. Ask the children for help mixing them up to show that they are no longer separated. Explain that Peter could now eat any of the animals—all the animals were clean. This happened to show Peter that he was no longer to consider any other people unclean.



APPLY

GOD PREPARES THE WAY

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, cardstock, crayons, glue stick, scissors.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on cardstock. Color the images. Fold the main page, and in the middle glue the image of Cornelius' conversion.

God Prepares the Way
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2



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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

DO NOT BECOME UNCLEAN

Create cards with the words “Clean” and “Unclean.” Pass the cards out to the children and ask them to divide up into two separate groups without touching each other as fast as they can. Any of the “clean” children who touch an “unclean” child become unclean. The group that can assemble the fastest wins. In today’s lesson, we are going to learn about the gospel spreading to those the Jews considered unclean—Gentiles.

MISSIONS

Come to class wearing a foreign country’s native dress. You might also bring in some objects representative of that country. Ask the children if the gospel is for this country. Do you know of any missionaries currently ministering in this country? In today’s lesson, we’re going to see how God prepared both Gentile and Jew for the spread of the gospel.



ILLUSTRATE

AWESOME GOSPEL

Have you ever been on a hike in the woods or mountains? You are enjoying the outdoors around you. The trees are majestic, the birds are singing, the flowers are colorful, the air is fresh. It is all so pleasant. But then you come around a bend and the view takes your breath away. As the hillside drops away before you, you gaze in awe at the landscape for miles around. The feeling this view gives you might give an idea of what Peter felt as he began to preach to the Gentiles: the gospel was already amazing to him, but now it takes his breath away even more—this amazing gift of salvation is available to all people! (Acts 10:34).

GENTILE

A Gentile is any person who is not a Jew. They were part of a different family and they believed differently than Jewish people. Refer to different races of people in your country or near your country’s borders. Talk about the different holidays celebrated by these groups of people. Note the differences in language, food, music, and clothing.



APPLY

“MADE CLEAN” SHEET

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, cardstock, crayons, scissors, yarn, glue stick, hole punch.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on cardstock. Color every image with crayons, and cut them. hole punch where are the holes. Glue the verses on the folded sheet. Use the yarn to close the folded sheet. Put the animal inside.

*“Made Clean” Sheet
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2*



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

NEW INSTRUCTIONS

Have you ever followed some sort of map or instruction book or directions on your phone, only to have it not make sense? Although the instructions may seem a little odd or different at first, they generally prove right and usually get you where you need to go. The Jews in today's lesson experience a similar event. For years God's plan of salvation had only involved Jews (and those who became Jews). But in Acts 10–11 the Jews see God's plan of salvation in a way that they would have never expected: the gospel was for Gentiles too!

PLAYING FAVORITES

Can the children remember the name of Jacob's favorite son? *Joseph*. How did Joseph's father show that he loved Joseph more than his brothers? *He made him a robe of many colors* (Gen 37:3). What was the result of Jacob's favoritism? *Joseph's brothers hated him* (Gen 37:4). In today's lesson, we're going to learn about a group of people who thought they were God's favorite: the Jews. However, as we will see today, God did not give His gift of salvation to the Jews only. He is not like Jacob. Through the Jews, God would offer salvation to the entire world.



ILLUSTRATE

PROOF OF FAITH

Bring in two clear containers, one filled with water, one with bleach (don't spill it!). Also bring food coloring. How can we find out which one has water and which one has bleach? When we put a drop of food coloring in the water, it will turn it a color. But when we put it in bleach, it will stay clear. Put food coloring in each: which one is water? Just like the coloring proved which one is water, so the ability to speak in other languages proved the Gentiles truly had salvation and the Spirit.

GRAFTED IN

Graft two twigs together, or show a picture or brief video that describes the process. Grafting is used to combine two different plants so that they continue to grow together. Paul uses this process to describe the inclusion of Gentiles into the family of God (Rom 11:13–24).



APPLY

PATRIOTISM

It is fun to celebrate the uniqueness and achievements of our native country. This is especially seen every four years as all the countries of the world gather to compete in the Olympic games. Our hearts swell with pride each time a representative from our nation wins an Olympic medal. But sadly, this kind of nationalism can go too far. Every country has its strengths and weaknesses, but no one group of people is more valuable in God's eyes than another. Yet it is possible that this kind of thinking may creep into our minds. Do you think less of those from other countries? What about those who do not go to church? What about those that go to church, but not yours? What about those who come from low income families? Or what about those who attend a different school? While there are many different people in the world, there is only one problem: sin. Thankfully, God has provided one solution for all people: the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's share it with every person!