

³² Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all *parts of the country*, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. ³³ There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. ³⁵ So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

³⁶ At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. ³⁷ But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. ³⁸ And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring *him* not to delay in coming to them. ³⁹ Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought *him* to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ Then he gave her *his* hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. ⁴³ So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

10 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ² a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. ³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

⁴ And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?"

So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. ⁶ He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." ⁷ And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. ⁸ So when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹ The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. ¹⁰ Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹ and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³ And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

¹⁴ But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

¹⁵ And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." ¹⁶ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

¹⁷ Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. ¹⁸ And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

¹⁹ While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. ²⁰ Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

²¹ Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

²² And they said, "Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." ²³ Then he invited them in and lodged *them*.

On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

²⁴ And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. ²⁸ Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has

shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ²⁹ Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

³⁰ So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' ³³ So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ³⁶ The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— ³⁷ that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. ⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. ⁴² And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?" ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Introduction

Before we focus upon chapter 10 which is our main theme, we need to understand what has been happening in v.32-43 of chapter 9.

In the original translation of the New Testament there were no chapters so we can't always study each chapter separately.

We must understand what comes before important events.

So far in the establishing of **God's New Covenant**, we have learnt in Acts Chapter 2 that God was mainly concerned with the Jewish people who attended Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and experienced the birth of God's Church.

The **Old Covenant had been replaced by God's New Covenant.**

This covenant was sealed through the **blood of His Son Jesus Christ.**

Then in Chapter 8 we discovered that **God's grace was extended to the Samaritans** and they experienced the **same Holy Spirit filling** them as the Jews had experienced earlier in Jerusalem.

We are now entering the **third phase of God's mission** to include the **Gentiles officially in God's plan, for entering into His Church.**

It was necessary for the Jewish people to fully understand the inclusion of the Gentiles into a Jewish faith. Although it had been prophesied in the past, mainly in the book of Isaiah, it is unlikely that any Jewish believer would easily accept Gentiles being included into God's New Covenant.

Therefore Peter, whom God used at Pentecost, needed to be convinced himself and also he would need to be **respected in Joppa** where the acceptance of Gentiles into the New Covenant took place.

The text tells us that Peter went through all parts of the country and then visited the believers who were living in Lydda.

Peter met a man called Aeneas who had been confined to bed for 8 years and was paralyzed.

In v. 34 we are told that Peter said to him, "**Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you, arise and make your bed.**" A miracle happened and Aeneas was completely healed.

As a result the **whole town of Lydda turned to the Lord**. We don't know how many people lived in this town but in **1946 there were 1,500 Christians registered in that place**. This is the background for Chapter 10.

In chapter 10 there are **four situations** that we need to learn about.

These are **Cornelius and his meeting with an Angel in v.1-8**.

Then we have **Peter's vision in v. 9-16**.

After this there is a meeting between **Peter and Cornelius in v.17-33**.

Finally we have Peter's declaration that the **Gospel message of Salvation is available to every nation in the world**, and the Holy Spirit confirmed his statement, from v.34-48.

1. **Cornelius Meets an Angel – v.1-8.**

In v.1-2 we are introduced to Cornelius. We learn a few things about this man.

Firstly he was a **Gentile, who was God fearing**. This means that although he was respected because he believed in the Jewish God, **he had not been circumcised, and therefore was an unclean Gentile**.

We are told that he **gave generously to the poor**.

He also was a **man of prayer** who didn't just pray when he wanted something. He prayed because of a **relationship with the Jewish God**.

(The text says, he prayed always)

His job was an **army centurion** and the manager of **100 soldiers**.

His regiment was called **"The Italian Regiment"** because it was originally made up of men from Italy.

(Slide showing Caesarea, Joppa & Lydda)

At 3p.m. in the afternoon **Cornelius had a vision of an Angel**.

The Angel spoke to him **personally and addressed him by name**.

The first thing that the Angel said was to **compliment Cornelius about his prayer life and his generous giving**.

We are told in v.5 that the Angel commanded Cornelius to **send men to Joppa** and **collect Simon whose surname was Peter**.

The Angel gave the location of Simon Peter's residence, saying that he was staying with Simon a Tanner whose house is by the sea.

The Angel told Cornelius **to do this in faith**, assuring him that Simon Peter would know all about the situation.

Cornelius was very obedient to what the Angel had said. He didn't question anything and **immediately sent a soldier with two of his household servants to collect Simon Peter**.

Application

Before we move on I want to make two applications here.

1. **Cornelius was immediately obedient to the commands of the Angel**.

If you are a Christian, you should be reading your Bible every day, and spending time in prayer with God. Although you might get a visit from an Angel, it is more likely that God will speak to you through His word, the Bible.

When we hear God's voice we need to act upon it, and not push it to one side.

God has his own schedule, and in order to be used by Him, we do need to act promptly.

Of course it is good to check things out well before making any major decisions in our lives, but at times, our prompt action blesses others as well as ourselves.

2. **God in Heaven observes our prayer life and our financial giving**.

This ought to **encourage us to take our prayer life seriously**, and to make sure that we **not only tithe 10% of our income to O.I.C. but that we also give offerings on top of that to needed situations**.

At O.I.C. we sometimes have a **"Fund for the Needy"** offering.

We used to have it on a more regular basis, but the problem was that many people did not give their tithe that week and put their tithe into the fund for the needy.

This may be commendable but not correct.

Our offerings for these things should be an **extra gift apart from our tithes**.

In other words it can often be a sacrificial gift.

Perhaps you give up going out for lunch on a Sunday and bring some food from home. You then put the 1,000 yen into the offering for the fund for the needy.

If we all did that then there would still be 80,000 yen in the fund for the needy, and we would still be able to pay our bills at O.I.C. using our tithes.

Why not try this when we have our next Fund for the Needy?

Concerning our prayer life, it needs to be first thing in the morning when we wake up and also before we go to bed. However if we can pray in our lunch hour that is also a good thing to do.

Daniel prayed three times a day and that must have been a good discipline for him.

Prayer doesn't have to be a long session.

Sometimes just talking to Jesus and listening from Him in short periods three or four times a day can be an enriching experience.

At Bible College, the principal used to say, **Pray as you GO and GO as you pray.**

In other words, include Jesus in all your activities.

Proverbs 3: v. 5-6 in N.K.J.

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;

⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

2. **Peter's Vision – v. 9-16.**

In v.9 we are told that Peter went on to the roof of the house **to pray at 12 noon.**

Perhaps it was the only place he could get peace. Peter got hungry as it was close to lunch time.

He gave instructions for his servants to prepare some food.

While they prepared some food, Peter fell into a trance.

It was like a vision.

He saw heaven open and an object like a great sheet, bound at the four corners.

The sheet was coming down to him, and the sheet was let down on the earth.

In the sheet were all kinds of four footed animals, wild beasts, insects and birds.

A voice spoke to Peter and said, **"Rise Peter, kill and eat."**

Peter refused to kill and eat any of these animals declaring that he had been **obedient to the Jewish food laws,** not to eat anything prohibited in Old Testament Law. (**Leviticus Chapter 11 gives us all these instructions**)

The voice spoke again for a second time and said, **"What God has cleansed you must not call common."**

The lowering of the sheet was done **three times,** and then the object was taken up to Heaven.

When something is done three times in the Bible it is VERY important.

Peter realised that something VERY important was going on. God was teaching him something important.

3. **Peter meets Cornelius – v. 17-33.**

While Peter was very puzzled about his vision on the roof top, a knock came on the door of the house and Peter was called to meet the men who had been sent from Cornelius.

Just before this happened, the Holy Spirit spoke to him.

The Holy Spirit said, **"Behold three men are seeking you, arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." (N.K.J.)**

Peter then went downstairs with the assurance that God had sent these men to his home.

Peter then naturally asked them the reason for their visit.

The men then gave Cornelius a character reference, and explained that an Angel had instructed Cornelius to bring Peter to his home in order to hear instructions from him.

The men were invited into the home of Simon the Tanner and they lodged for one night.

The next day **Peter took some believers from Joppa and they went to Caesarea.**

Cornelius was waiting for Peter and had gathered all his relatives and close friends to hear what Peter was going to say to them.

When Peter arrived, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.

Peter rejected Cornelius's praise and worship, saying that he was just a man like him.

In the presence of the crowd of all the people, Peter explained that as a Jew it was not lawful to keep company with Gentiles, or even go to foreign nations.

However **in a vision God had declared that he should not call any person common or unclean.**

Peter then requested Cornelius to explain why he had been summoned to his home.

Cornelius then explained **that four days ago he had been fasting until 3p.m. in the afternoon, and then an Angel appeared to him.** The Angel is described as a man in bright clothing.

Cornelius then told him what the Angel had said to him.

Basically the Angel told him to bring Peter back to his home and then Peter would explain everything to him.

Cornelius then said, we are all here, ready for a message from God, through you.

Peter had no time to prepare his sermon, but he had time to think about the two visions and to think through God's purposes in both of them meeting together.

4. **Peter preaches to Cornelius's household and the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles.**

(v. 34-48)

As this is the first sermon that was preached by a Jew to the Gentiles, we need to carefully note his main points.

1. **God's Salvation is available for all nations in the world.** – v. 34-35.

Although the Jewish people are still God's chosen people, Salvation in the New Covenant is available to all peoples, provided that they fear God and do what is right.

2. **God's Salvation is only available through Jesus Christ, and therefore, you need to understand his life, who he is, His death and what it achieved, and believe in His resurrection.**

The basic fact you need to understand today is that there is only one God.

He is explained in the Bible. He created this world and everything in it.

He created the first man, and the first woman, to be a helper to that man.

God only placed one law in their life and sadly the first man and women disobeyed God's Law.

As a result DEATH was the punishment for their disobedience.

This curse was spread to all peoples.

However God loved His created people and provided a way back into a relationship with Himself.

Initially it was through the death of an animal, usually an innocent lamb free from all defects.

The animal died in place of the person who sinned, or disobeyed God's Law.

This was a temporary arrangement until God sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the world, who would become the once and for all permanent sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Therefore for all nations, belief in the God of the Bible, and Salvation through Jesus, is the only way of Salvation.

3. **God's Salvation was predicted and supported by the Old Testament Prophets.**

This point is very important. Most of the time Christians in the western world fail to tell people about the Old Testament when presenting the Gospel.

You must start at the beginning of the story for people to understand the whole picture.

If you start a book near the end, you miss most of the story, and can often get a wrong picture of Christianity.

4. **Peter gave a personal testimony as a witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.**

This is an important point. Peter was there at the time and he could give a first hand account about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

We too can be witnesses about Jesus as we teach the Bible from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. **Our lives can the way we live to please Jesus can also be a witness.**

5. **Finally Peter tells the Gentiles that if you believe in Jesus and all that I have told you about Him, then you can be forgiven for all of your sins.**

Peter was very confident about forgiveness of sins for the Gentiles, through Jesus. God had prepared his heart for this sermon by speaking to him on the roof top of the house of Simon the Tanner.

In v.44 we are told that the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word that Peter preached.

The people who believed experienced the same thing as those Jews had experienced at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.

They spoke in another language, praising God.

The reason that God poured out the Holy Spirit in power at this event was to connect all three stages of the establishment of God's Church.

You will notice if you look carefully at the three situations that the Holy Spirit came at different times.

In Acts Chapter 2 the Holy Spirit comes before the preaching of the word. In Acts Chapter 8, the Holy Spirit comes after the preaching of the word, and here in Acts chapter 10 the Holy Spirit comes during the preaching of the word.

I am sure that God did this so people would not make a science of how the Holy Spirit had to work!

After this experience Peter invited the Gentiles who had received forgiveness of sins, to be baptised.

May I just ask if you profess to be a Christian, have you been baptised?

Every mention of Baptism in Acts is always directly after they believe.

Perhaps it is time for your Baptism.

This can be done as soon as you understand what it means and that you are sure of your faith in Jesus.

Peter and his team were invited to stay for a few days.

No doubt lots of teaching took place during this time.

Application from the Passage.

1. **God has a heart to save all peoples and all nations.**

We live and work in Japan, so God wants us to overcome any prejudices, to reach out to the Japanese people. It is no secret that more Japanese people become Christians outside of Japan than in the country of Japan.

Part of the reason for this is that once Japanese people go to Europe or the U.S.A. they feel free to embrace and investigate Christianity.

The culture in Japan does not seem to allow people the freedom to fully surrender their lives to Jesus. There is always the pressure to conform. There is a reason for this, and I only discovered this in December 2018.

I went to a lecture by Dr. Esther Maxton who was teaching Missionaries at the Japan Mission. She explained the following facts.

- a) In 1890 a New Constitution was introduced in Japan that gave freedom of Religion to all in Japan.

However, very cleverly the authorities divided Shinto into two sections.

One was called "**State Shinto**" and the other was called "**Sect or Religious Shinto**".

- b) **State Shinto was declared not to be a religion.** The Emperor was god of Japan. This was declared as a tradition and Japanese culture. Everybody should worship at the Shinto Shrine. This policy was taught in the schools to everybody. The two important things were that you must worship the emperor and you must visit the shrines.

This allowed Japanese people to become Christians but carry on visiting the Shinto Shrine, because that wasn't religious. It was being Japanese.

In Christianity we call this syncretism. The word means the emerging of two different religions to enable the person not to be wholly committed to both, but embrace both.

- c) The authorities allowed the “**Sect or religious Shinto**” to divide into groups. At the time there were 8 separate groups. People could belong to these groups but it was declared as a Religion.
- d) Although a distinction was made on paper, the mind set of the Japanese people did not change.

The reason the mind set did not change is that Shinto has two distinct doctrines.

The first is that Japan is the country of the gods; allegedly 800 million gods)

The second is that the Japanese people are the descendants of the gods.

Therefore historically the Japanese people think of themselves as a special race.

Now for the connection between the Jewish Nation and Japan.

God chosen Abraham to start a nation who were going to be God’s special people. We call them the Jewish Nation. Their history is what the Old Testament is mainly about.

At Pentecost when the Church began, it was mainly Jewish and although the Jewish people embraced the Gospel about Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, they still thought that it was a Jewish thing, although it was a New Covenant with the Jewish People.

Therefore Peter found it very difficult to embrace the Gentiles in God’s New Covenant. There was a problem to overcome.

Now for the Japanese people there is also a problem to overcome.

They think that there are many gods, about 800 million, and they are suddenly confronted in Christianity with only one God, the God of the Bible.

They also have to come to terms with the fact that they are not special people descended from the gods.

On top of this, everything in Japanese culture revolves around Shinto.

So to many Japanese people they think that becoming a Christian will involve not being Japanese anymore, because so much of Japanese culture has Shinto influence.

However when you become a Christian from any nation, even Japan, God will give you a New identity.

This identity is about who you are in Jesus Christ.

It is important that all Christians overcome who they were before they believed in Jesus and embrace their new identity.

I don’t have time to teach on this important subject now but next week, I will include a section in my sermon which clearly teaches who you are in Jesus Christ.

Next week’s message from Chapter 11 is mainly Peter defending his belief in God’s inclusion of the Gentiles to God’s Jewish Church.

At the end of the 2nd world war the emperor was forced to declare that he was not a god. At this time, all Christian Churches were forced to unite.

Now the point that I am making is that if you are a Japanese person and you become a Christian, you have to overcome the mind set of visiting a shrine, even if it is once a year or some family obligation.

Every Japanese person must understand that State Shinto is still a religion.

When you become a Christian, whether you are Japanese or any other nationality, you need to separate yourselves from all things religious, or idols of the heart as we call it today, and dedicate yourself 100% to God’s will and purpose for your life.

I was told by a famous Japanese evangelist over 30 years ago that the biggest obstacle in Japan to the growth of Christianity is that Japanese Christians find it very hard to remove the Shinto or Buddhist altar from their home or stop going to a shrine, even if it is only at New Years.

2. The second application is that we must take the Gospel to the Japanese people, not just outside of Japan, but in the country of Japan.

At the retreat we will hear two wonderful testimonies; one from a Japanese man and one from a man from Northern Ireland.

Both of them have been called by God to reach Japanese people.

In O.I.C.'s recent history, I am not aware of any Japanese man being commissioned by the Church and sent out to train at a Bible College to reach Japanese people.
However it is about time we prayed that God would raise up a Japanese man from our own fellowship to serve Jesus full time and plant a Japanese style international Church. **May God answer our prayers.**