

The Book Of Acts: Verse-by-Verse

Study Notes: Acts 10:1-2

- **A Watershed Moment In The Spread Of The Gospel:**

“Acts chapter 10 deals with a great missionary principle and a great missionary historical fact.” – John MacArthur

- **The Master Plan of Missions:** “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” - Acts 1:7-8

The Great Commission is the entire outline of the Book of Acts!

- **Three Things That Slowed The Process:**

1. The growing opposition of the Jewish Council.
2. The regional authority of Rome.
3. The necessity for the Early Church to be anchored both spiritually and organizationally for sustainable growth to occur.

- **Three Things That Energized The Process:**

1. The initial focus on explaining the Gospel to the Jerusalem Jews (and the international visitors).
2. The dispersion of the Greek, Messianic Jews from Jerusalem. Phillip's foray into Samaria, followed by Peter and John's trip there.
3. Peter's Leadership: By Acts 10, it's Peter who is leading the way by

taking advantage of a lull in the Sanhedrin's persecution.

- John McArthur: Peter has become the “point of contact” for the Holy Spirit and people who have been historically marginalized by the Jews.

- F.F. Bruce: “Peter has responded boldly to the challenges of sickness and death; how will he respond to the challenge of racial and religious discrimination?”

- **A Hint Of What Is About To Take Place** – Acts 9:43: “Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.”

- The Name – Simon:

“Simon” is a Jewish surname. It comes from the Hebrew word, “Shimon” which became Simeon in the Old Testament and Simon in the New Testament. In the Hebrew, Simon means “one who listens” – primarily meaning, “one who listens to God.

- The Occupation – “Simon, The Tanner”:

Tanning: Stripping, soaking, and drying animal hides. Simon's home was no doubt on the margins of Joppa – which is situated on the Mediterranean Sea.

The process of tanning produced a very nasty odor. One reason for this was the use of human urine to chemically break down the jelly-like fat portions of the hides.

- **Socially/Spiritually, Simon lived on the margins.**

Tanners were ceremonially unclean as they dealt with dead animals all day. See: Leviticus 11:39-40. Simon would have been disdained by the Jews, and perhaps even some of the Messianic Jews. His story shows how the early believers struggled with Jewish laws about ritual purity as Gentiles joined their movement.

- **Peeking ahead:** Peter is staying at the home of a man who works with animal skins and is considered unclean as far as Old Testament purity laws are concerned. It is at Simon's home that Peter has the vision of unclean animals and will later remark, "God revealed to me that I should not call any man impure or unclean."

Luke tells us about Simon the Tanner because he is telegraphing that Peter is already softening when it comes to his view of the people God has been sending him to (Samaritans).

- **"At Caesarea There Was A Man Named Cornelius." – Acts 10:1**

"At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly."

- More notes on Caesarea Maritima (not Caesarea Philippi):

1st Century: Caesarea Maritima was usually called "Caesarea of Palestine". The name, "Caesarea Maritima" literally means "Caesarea by the sea". It was given this name to separate this city from Caesarea Philippi.

Originally a Phoenician port city called "Strato's Tower". existed there as a port. 22 to 9 B.C.: Herod the Great rebuilt the city and a great harbor and named it in honor of his patron, Caesar Augustus. Only Jerusalem was considered greater than Caesarea of Palestine.

- **The Italian Regiment: Acts 10:1**

"At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment."

Caesarea Maritima was a Roman garrison, housing thousands of soldiers. It was also the administrative capital of the province of Judea.

Cornelius was a centurion – a Roman soldier who was nominally in charge of a thousand men (“captain” or “company commander”).

A regiment consisted of six “centuries”, each under the command of an officer. Six centuries = a “cohort”. Ten cohorts made up a “legion”.

Centurions in the New Testament were viewed favorably. Jesus' words about the centurion stationed in Capernaum: “Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” – Matthew 8:11

- **“Devout And God-Fearing”: Acts 10:2**

“He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.” – v. 2.

Cornelius was a “God-fearer”. Two possibilities: 1. Cornelius was religious. 2. Cornelius had accepted Jewish monotheism, with its ethical standards and attended synagogue services (but not circumcised).

In verse 22, Luke will note that Cornelius was “respected by all the Jewish people”. Still despite these things, he was still a Gentile, an outsider, excluded from God’s covenant with Israel.

No matter how devoted and dedicated Cornelius and his family may have been, as far as the Jews were concerned, they were still outsiders. They could never fully participate in the Jewish religion with its codes and traditions.

- **An Important Question:** “Did the Old Testament teach such a continuing view of a rigid and unmovable wall of separation between the Jews and Gentiles?”

Alongside the Old Testament oracles against the hostile nations, God’s ultimate purpose was to use one of them to bless all of them. He called Abraham out of ancient Mesopotamia and promised to

“bless all the families of the earth” through him. The psalmists and prophets foretold the day when God’s Messiah would inherit all the nations: Isaiah chapter 11; Isaiah 49:6; Joel 2:28.

It is a tragedy that Israel formulated a doctrine of exclusivism, blocking out almost any references to the salvation of the Gentles.

By Peter’s day, no orthodox Jew dared to enter the home of a Gentile – even a God-fearer or proselyte, much less invite one into his own home. Jews were strictly forbidden to have common relationships with Gentiles.

- **The Irony of “Cornelius, the God-Fearer”:**

1. Centurions were, by far, battle-hardened soldiers. They were not generally given to acts of benevolence to others.

2. Roman society was both multicultural, and multi-religious. The Roman army followed its own religious observances. The Romans worshipped numerous gods – including, at times, the emperors themselves.

- **Next time: Cornelius’ Vision**