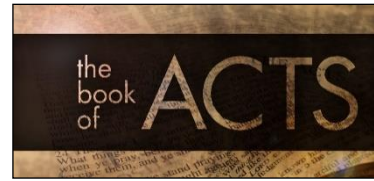


ACTS – Fall 2025 D-Groups

For Wednesday, October 15
Acts 10:1-12:25



The Big Picture - ACTS as a Whole

“How did we get here?” Some have used this question to capture what Luke answers with the overall story of Acts. Let’s assume that he writes while Paul is in house arrest in Rome, a reasonable conclusion, given how the book ends. Whatever the *specific* reason behind the question, Luke writes to show how the Church has spread by the end of Acts - from Jesus in the Gospel onward. As captured by an accusation from opponents in Thessalonica, Jesus’ followers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, had “turned the world upside-down” (see Acts 17:6). That statement sums up the impact of the Church - an impact that could only come about through its spread. So far, we’ve seen this expansion geographically, as anticipated in 1:8. We’ve also seen it culturally. Underneath all of this is an *ethnic* expansion - this is what seems to matter most in the end. Jesus’ Church started as a Jewish group, but by the end of Acts, it has spread to include Gentiles too (Paul sees this as being so important that he calls this God’s “mystery” revealed and fulfilled in Christ - see Ephesians 2:14-3:13). Indeed, *all* nations are included as the Good News goes “to the ends of the earth.”

This inclusion of the Gentiles truly has been God’s heart all along, even in the Old Testament. For example, see the promise in Genesis 12:1-3 that “all the families/people on earth” would be blessed through Abram and his offspring (a text that established the foundational reason for the Jewish people - they were the avenue through whom the Messiah would come). This is ultimately fulfilled through Jesus and is a key part of His commission to His Church! We have seen hints of this expansion beyond the Jews, especially starting in Acts 8. It’s also anticipated directly through the way Jesus speaks to Ananias about Saul - he’s “My chosen instrument to take My message to the Gentiles.” Before we get to Saul-to-Paul’s place in the story, though, the door to the Gentiles has to be fully opened by Peter, the one who has the “keys.” That’s the primary story we find in this week’s text.

As a note: to help us make it through Acts this semester, we’ve lumped chapter 12 into this week as well. While it deserves its own attention and is worth reading, we’re specifically focusing-in on chapters 10 and 11 with this guide.

The Close-Up for October 15 - Acts 10:1-12:25 (make sure to read the text!)

Some notes on the overall flow of this section:

10:1-48 (really, a single unit, even if it can be broken up into various parts) ... Luke really slows down the action to tell this story in fairly great detail; that in and of itself is a clue of how much this scene matters in the overall story. Through visions, God sovereignly arranges this meeting between a seeking Gentile and Peter (his slowness to realize what is happening is a key theme in this chapter - both with the vision repeated 3 times and later on as well). It leads to this opportunity for Peter to preach the Good News, on one level, recognizing that “God shows no favoritism” (v. 34) and that “everyone who believes in [Jesus] will have their sins forgiven through His Name” (v. 43). Somewhat ironically, though, it takes the Holy Spirit making it obvious (v. 44) for Peter and his companions to

get the truth that yes, indeed, the promise, including the Holy Spirit, is for the Gentiles too, “far off” as they may be (remember those words in Acts 2:38-39). The vision Peter has three times ends up being rich in symbolism: what may have previously been seen as “unclean,” is now acceptable, no longer off limits. Of course, the ultimate point isn’t about food, but people! Anyone who “fears God and does what is right - who “believes in Him,” responding with faith, repentance and baptism can receive the blessings of the Good News of Jesus ... even Gentiles like Cornelius and eventually us!

11:1-18 ... Peter defends what has happened to Jewish believers in Jerusalem, re-telling the story of chapter 10. The conclusion affirms this new reality that Gentiles too can be “in” (see vv. 17-18).

11:19-30 ... the transition to a new central place from which the Gentile mission will launch, Antioch of Syria (see 13:1ff). As the Good News continues to spread beyond Judaism, it produces a great harvest of converts. Even still, there is care and practical concern shown to the believers in Judea.

12:1-25 ... more opposition back in Jerusalem by King Agrippa (the Apostle James, brother of John is killed and Peter is imprisoned); yet, by the end of the chapter, the Lord brings about his own death.

Some of our KEY THEMES specifically on display in chapters 10-11 (we’re not repeating the chart; however, as a reminder, there are separate sheets with it available in the foyer):

The emphasis on JESUS and the GOOD NEWS ... even as the message goes into Gentile territory, the focus of the Good News is on Him, especially His death and resurrection plus what it all means for those who respond to Him in faith.

The HOLY SPIRIT’s activity ... He seems to be orchestrating things with the visions and shows up to provide confirmation of the Gentiles’ inclusion (see 10:44).

The Church’s EXTERNAL MISSION in the world ... while there is initial reluctance in both Peter (chapter 10) and Jewish believers in Jerusalem (chapter 11), Gentiles being included is the end-goal of the Church’s mission - as originally anticipated in Genesis 12, Jesus came for *all*!

CONVERSIONS ... we’ve seen some “unlikely” people being saved already in Acts: Samaritans, an Ethiopian eunuch who was excluded within Judaism and the persecutor named Saul. This takes it to a whole new level as it becomes crystal clear that even the Gentiles can be included in God’s promises through faith in Jesus!

KINGDOM EXPANSION across boundaries ... this is obviously a foundational part of this text.

Some additional questions to reflect on leading-up to next week’s D-Group:

- *Then and now, why is it hard to see Jesus and the Good News as available for all?*
- *Who are the “outsiders” that we might struggle to see as being included in salvation?*
- *Even with this expansion, how does this overall scene in chapter 10 continue to emphasize an overall response of faith? Even as we think about the door being open to “outsiders,” how can we guard against a perspective that pretends there are no conditions?*
- *How does this story challenge you to be a part of God’s mission, especially globally?*

A Challenge for this Week: consider those who might be “outsiders” still today (whether due to limited access to the Gospel or otherwise), spend time praying for them to come to faith!