

The Gospel Is For Everyone

Introduction

Review of the Old Testament Framework

Beginning with Adam and Eve in the creation story, the framework that God operated in was that He placed people in a specific place and engaged with them there in that place. The Old Testament is virtually devoid of missionaries (Jonah was one and he hated it). The Old Testament framework was that God was with a particular people in a particular place. The tabernacle and temple were built to house the glory and the presence of God—God in a place. Regularly, prophets were sent out to call back the nation to repentance and to remember the Law (think of them as internal missionaries), but only rarely would prophets be sent out to other nations. The normal construct was God is in Israel and if you want to experience Him, you have to go to Israel.

The impact of this is seen in the way the Israelites viewed other nations in the New Testament—they despised them. From the Romans (which was understandable) to the Samaritans, the Jews viewed God as for them and them alone. Look at how many times Jesus was ridiculed for socializing with those on the ‘outside.’ To cement further this concept, when Jesus came, He came for Israel first.

The Big Shift

However, when Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, He left us with the Holy Spirit and this forced His followers to see things differently—it changed everything. This ‘God *always* with us’ framework was a framework that was not present in the Old Testament—this was the permanent indwelling of God in us (as opposed to permanently indwelling a place). A stationary God was the idea in the Old Testament. A mobile God was the idea after the resurrection of Jesus. This new framework illustrates that God moves with us. This view of God was for wherever we went. This view of God was not just for Israel.

This changed everything—this view means that the gospel is for everyone.

Acts 10-11

The book of [Acts](#) is the historical record of the transition period from the sacrificial system to the church age. God gets out of Israel in [Acts. Acts 10-11](#) illustrates this shift.

After Jesus leaves and the Holy Spirit comes, we see the apostles begin to understand that things are now different and to be honest, it takes them a while to get it. Remember that we

are still very early on in the history of the church. Simon Peter (the big-name apostle in today's text) is just now coming to grips with the idea that the gospel is for everyone.

Now, to Simon Peter's credit, once he gets a hold of this idea, he really understood that everything has to change. Everyone is now a possible convert. Jesus came for everyone. We continue to see this in the writings of the apostles and the authors of the New Testament and it radically shifts the mindset of all followers of the one true God.

A meeting takes place in [Acts 10-11](#) between Peter and Cornelius and God uses this story to teach Peter a fundamental truth about God's Good News: salvation through Jesus Christ is for everyone, not just a select group of insiders. The Kingdom of Heaven is open to all who believe in Jesus Christ ([Acts 10:43](#)). This has powerful ramifications for the church.

Key thought: The gospel is for **everyone**

Scripture: Acts 10-11

Acts 10

Cornelius Sends a Delegation (10:1-8)

1 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 [3:00 pm of day one] 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?" [notice the lower-case, 'l,' indicating that this is someone Cornelius is subject to, but this is not God]

So he [the angel] said to him [Cornelius], "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa [30+ miles south], 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.

Peter's Vision (10:9-16)

9 The next day [day two], as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter [note the scene shift—we were with Cornelius' men, now we are with Peter] went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour [noon]. 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.” [Peter was an obedient Jew who held to the dietary constraints of the Old Testament, but when Jesus came, His sacrifice overcame the bonds of the Law and set the Jews free from it. Paul even wrote a letter about this—[Galatians](#)—and he told the Galatians that they were free from the Law. [Ben Myers](#) (on Galatians): [We felt insecure without our chains so we hired experts to repair them. Then Paul came wielding a sledgehammer.](#) Peter was beginning to understand that **everything** in the Old Testament pointed to Jesus in the New Testament.]

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 [which almost implies that Peter said no a second time]. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Summoned to Caesarea (10:17-23)

17 Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant [How hard would this be to understand? Peter, you can eat anything now. Peter wants to pick up those chains so badly.], behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate [still day two]. **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 [day three] Peter went away with them, and some brethren [these are others] from Joppa accompanied him.

Peter Meets Cornelius (10:24-33)

24 And the following day [day four] 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 [phase one: Peter sees **value** in those that are not like him]. 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.’ [This is an almost word-for-word retelling of [Acts 10:4-6](#)] 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.” [Bring this attitude every time the Scripture is opened. These people were not concerned about the time, they were not concerned about the subject, and they were not concerned about the ramifications. They just wanted to hear from God.]

Preaching to Cornelius’ Household (10:34-43)

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality [there are serious ramifications from this statement: phase two: Peter sees that all men are **loved** by God]. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him [national boundaries are irrelevant in God’s kingdom ([John Piper: America and all its presidents will be a footnote in history, but the kingdom of Jesus will never end](#))]. 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.”

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles (10:44-48)

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 [Jews] 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 [the Holy Spirit is for all believers]. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues [languages] and magnify God [visible evidence that the gospel is for everyone—but not all know about it].

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 [baptism is for all believers]. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Acts 11

Peter Defends God’s Grace (11:1-18)

1 Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision [Jews] contended with him, 3 saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men [Gentiles] and ate with them!” [i.e., you broke the rules of the modern-day religious leaders]

4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: 5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. 6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ 8 But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ 10 Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. 12 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren [the others] accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. 13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’ 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning [what we experienced at Pentecost, they experienced (they are like us—‘us’ is redefined here)]. 16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit [Peter is beginning to connect the theological dots between his Rabbi and the work of the Holy Spirit].’ 17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” [i.e., God is doing something new here and I had better not get in the way—the gospel is for everyone]

18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” [YES! YES! YES! We get life, too! Don’t you see? This changes everything! Phase three: **All** the apostles understand that the gospel is for everyone—now they understood why Jesus ate with sinners and hung out with outcasts—because Jesus came for the sinners and the outcasts too. Jesus came for us! The gospel is for everyone!]

Since the gospel is for everyone, our challenge is to be as **liberal** as we can with it:

- Skin color does not matter to the gospel
- Nationality does not matter to the gospel
- Religions and denominations do not matter to the gospel
- Language and accents do not matter to the gospel
- Physical disability does not matter to the gospel
- Ethnicity does not matter to the gospel
- Social class does not matter to the gospel
- Employment status does not matter to the gospel
- Age does not matter to the gospel
- Gender and gender identity do not matter to the gospel

Application (What is the point?)

1. Everyone except Jesus had/has theological deficiencies
2. **The gospel is for everyone** (let me break that down for you)
 - a. The – there is only one gospel (and if you monkey with it, it is no longer the gospel)
 - b. Gospel – the gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus
 - c. Is – we need the gospel before we are saved, at the moment of salvation, and every moment thereafter—the gospel will always be important
 - d. For – the gospel has a purpose and it is not to remain wrapped up in a tract—it is to be shared directly, explicitly, and verbally with everyone on the planet
 - e. Everyone – you, me, everyone alive now, everyone that ever has been alive, and everyone that will live after us—it is for everyone—because everyone will live in heaven or in hell for all of eternity—the stakes are too high to put boundaries on the gospel’s reach

Personalization (What do I do with that?)

1. Be open to have your theology **tweaked** by God (none of us have it all 100% correct)
2. See everyone as savable (rich, old, young, poor, talented, straight, gay, unsure, intelligent, annoying, and mean) and **share** with everyone because the gospel is for everyone