

Acts of the Apostles – Chapter 10

Cornelius Calls for Peter

10:1 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. **2** He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. **3** One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

4 Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. **5** Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. **6** He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

7 When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. **8** He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Now we are introduced to Cornelius who is a Roman Centurion. In Deuteronomy 1:15, Moses appointed men as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. The centurion is over one hundred men. Now this leader was a Roman centurion which makes him a Gentile. This leader and all his family are described by Luke as devout and God-fearing; generous and prayerful. Not what you would have expected from a Roman soldier and gentile.

"Because of the way the life and heart of Cornelius is described, we see a man who obviously had a real relationship with God. At the same time, he was not a part of the mainstream of Jewish life. (Guzik)

We are told that an angel came to Cornelius and told him to "send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter." Peter was staying with Simon the Tanner, sounds familiar right, the end of the last chapter.

In v 7-8 Luke tells us that People who act upon the revelation they have will be given More Revelation, leading them to the truth of the gospel.

Romans 1:20 tells us that even though we have not been told about the Gospel we have no excuse for not knowing about God. God is everywhere in His creation. Romans 1:20 says "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*"

Peter's Vision

10:9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. **10** He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. **11** He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. **12** It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.

So the Centurion is ready to meet Peter now God prepares Peter to meet the Centurion. This is interesting because when Philip was in Samaria, he baptized a number of Gentiles but it doesn't sound like Peter has accepted them yet. While Peter was on the roof praying, he became very

hungry and he fell into a trance. In his dream he saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. The sheet contained “all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.”

10:13 *Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”* **14** *“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”*

15 *The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”*

16 *This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.*

God tells Peter to kill and eat these things. Peter refused to do what God asks him to do because obviously there were things in the large sheet that were not kosher and Peter was still a good Jew. Leviticus 11 tells us what kinds of things are kosher or acceptable for a Jew to eat. The list includes cattle, not camels, not rabbits, not pigs, yes fish with scales and fins, not reptiles, not predator birds, not scavengers. God’s response was that what He cleansed, no longer consider unholy or unclean. This vision played out three (3) times.

“By the time the drama had been acted out the third time, Peter must have begun to get the idea that God was trying to tell him something, even though he did not know exactly what it was.”
(Boice)

Some people take Peter’s vision as freedom to eat whatever they want but Luke has already given us an indication in the first 8 verses of this chapter that the vision is about Gentiles. Jesus had already addressed unclean food in Mark 7:19. In Mark 7:19 we are told *“For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.”* (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)”

10:17 *While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate.* **18** *They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.*

19 *While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you.* **20** *So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”*

21 *Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”*

22 *The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.”* **23** *Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.*

It is interesting that while the Spirit had Peter’s attention, he told him about the men that Cornelius had sent to get him. As far as witnesses testifying for these men from Caesarea, they had the Spirit and an angel.

“By entertaining these Gentile guests, Peter went against the customs and traditions of Israel, but not against God’s Word. Possibly, at this very moment, God flooded Peter’s heart with an understanding that though the Old Testament said God’s people were not to become like their pagan neighbors, it also said God wanted His people to become a light to their neighbors who didn’t know the true God.

Peter at Cornelius's House

10:23b *The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along.* **24** *The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.* **25** *As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.* **26** *But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."*

27 *While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.*

They walked from Joppa to Caesarea which is about 38 miles. This is about a 45 minute drive by car or a 12 hour walk. I would have expected Peter and Cornelius' meeting to be a quiet meeting behind closed doors but Cornelius had invited his family and close friends. When Cornelius first met Peter, Cornelius fell at Peter's feet and worshiped him. Peter told him to stand up because Peter was just a man (NASB). We have seen in the past that when even angels were bowed to as Cornelius did Peter, the angels told the men to get up. Only the Son of God was worthy of being worshiped. For example, Daniel fell on his face and the angel told him to get up in Daniel 10. In Luke 8:28, a demon-possessed man bowed to Jesus but he wasn't told to stand because he was in the presence of the Son of God.

"Peter and Cornelius honored each other. Peter honored Cornelius by coming all the way from Joppa to see him. Cornelius honored Peter by bowing low before him. They did just as Paul would later write, *in honor giving preference to one another* (Romans 12:10)." (Guzik)

10:28 *He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.* **29** *So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"*

Peter told Cornelius that Jews should not associate with foreigners or visit them. One possible source of this law was Joshua 23:6-7. Joshua warns Israel not to associate with these nations that remain among you. The purpose of Joshua's warnings was so they didn't pick up other religions or gods. BUT God showed Peter "that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. We have heard this before in Acts 10:15 above. Peter came to Caesarea without objection because of the vision and what God had told him that God did not make anything that was unclean..

10:30 *Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me* **31** *and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.* **32** *Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.'* **33** *So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."*

Cornelius tells Peter that he had been praying and a man stood before Cornelius and told him to send for Peter. The man's directions were exact or precise. At this point, was Cornelius a Christian. I believe so, God heard his prayers and remembered his generosity. Cornelius then said "we are all present here before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.

"When you go to church, do you want to receive a good message? If so, the best way is to come with a prepared heart. I know that the preacher must be prepared too. But when God prepares the messenger as well as those who are to hear him, then tremendous things happen." (Boice)

10:34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism **35** but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. **36** You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. **37** You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— **38** how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

39 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, **40** but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. **41** He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. **42** He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. **43** All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter starts his short sermon stating what he had learned from the last few days that God does not show any partiality. Peter says that God accepts anyone that fears Him and does what is right. Peter's sermon covers all aspects of Jesus' life. The sermon included:

- Jesus was baptized (v 37) in identification with humanity
- Jesus was anointed (v 38) with the Holy Spirit and with power.
- Jesus went about doing good and healing and delivering those oppressed by the devil (v 38).
- Jesus did this with the power of God (v 38), for God was with Him
- Jesus did these things in the presence of eyewitnesses (v 39)
- Jesus was crucified (v 39)
- Jesus was raised from the dead resurrected, in view of many witnesses (v 40-41)
- Jesus commanded His followers to preach the message of who He is and what He did. (v 42)
- Jesus is ordained by God to be the judge of the entire world. (v 42)
- Jesus is the one foretold by the prophets. (v 43)

10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. **45** The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. **46** For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, **47** "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." **48** So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

The order of the baptism and coming of the Holy Spirit in these verses differs from Acts 8:12-13, in Acts 8, Philip baptized and then Peter and John came and gave them the Holy Spirit. Here the Holy Spirit came upon them before they were baptized. The order doesn't matter. The Baptism is an

outward sign of what is going on inside. The Jews present with Peter were amazed because the Holy Spirit was given to "even Gentiles".

"Peter made the point clearly when he noted that they received the Holy Spirit just as we have. It wasn't just that God loved or blessed the Gentiles that astonished them. It was that God loved and blessed the Gentiles just as He loved and blessed the Jews, and He did it *while they were still Gentiles.*" (Guzik)