

**Acts 10****Lesson 10  
Conversion of Cornelius****Outline****I. The Man Cornelius** (vv. 1-2, 22)

- A. *A Centurion of the Italian Regiment* (v. 1)
- B. *His qualities* (vv. 2, 22)
  - 1. Devout (v. 2)
  - 2. Feared God (v. 2)
  - 3. Gave alms (v. 2)
  - 4. Prayed always (v. 2)
  - 5. Just (v. 22)
  - 6. Good reputation (v. 22)

**II. God Brings Cornelius and Peter Together** (vv. 3-33)

- A. *Cornelius' vision to call for Peter* (vv. 3-8)
  - 1. The angel told Cornelius to send for Peter who would tell him what he must do (vv. 3-6)
  - 2. He sent three men for Peter (vv. 7-8)
- B. *Peter's vision to go to Cornelius* (vv. 9-23)
  - 1. The vision (vv. 9-16)
    - a. Great sheet let down from heaven with all kinds of wild animals (vv. 11-12)
    - b. Peter instructed to eat (vv. 13-15)
      - 1.) Peter refused saying it is unclean (v. 14)
      - 2.) Voice said, "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (v. 15)
    - c. Done three times (v. 16)
  - 2. The three men requested that Peter come to Cornelius (vv. 17-23)
- C. *Peter came to Cornelius* (vv. 24-33)
  - 1. Cornelius welcomed Peter (vv. 24-27)
    - a. Waited with his family and friends (vv. 24, 27)
    - b. Attempted to worship Peter (vv. 25-26)
  - 2. Peter explained why he came to Gentiles (vv. 28-29)
  - 3. Cornelius explained his calling for Peter (vv. 30-33)
    - a. His vision (vv. 30-32)
    - b. Now ready to hear all things commanded of God (v. 33)

**III. Peter's Sermon** (vv. 34-48)

- A. *God does not show partiality* (vv. 34-35)
- B. *The word of peace about Jesus is for all* (vv. 36-43)
  - 1. God anointed Jesus with power – he worked miracles (v. 38)
  - 2. Was killed (v. 39)
  - 3. Raised from the dead (vv. 40-41)

4. Judge of the living and the dead (v. 42)
5. Fulfillment of prophecy (v. 43)
6. Those who believe on him receive the remission of sins (v. 43)

C. *The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his house* (vv. 44-48)

1. As Peter spoke those who heard were filled with the Spirit (vv. 44-46)
2. Peter concluded that they could be baptized (vv. 47-48)

### Key Verses that Summarize the Chapter

#### Acts 10:34-35

*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."*

This chapter is of particular interest because it is about the first Gentile convert. To this point the gospel has only been preached to the Jews. Here a Gentile is saved without being circumcised. Three chapters tell of the conversion of Cornelius. Acts 10 is the account. Acts 11 records Peter's retelling the story. Acts 15 tells of Peter's use of the story in the Jerusalem discussion.

At the center of this chapter is the principle that God shows no partiality (vv. 34-35). Prior to those verses we see how that conclusion was reached (vv. 1-33). Then we have the conclusion (vv. 34-35). Next, we see two actions because of that conclusion (vv. 36-48): Peter preaches to the Gentiles (vv. 36-43), and Cornelius obeys the gospel (v. 48).

### The Man Cornelius (vv. 1-2, 22)

*A centurion of the Italian Regiment* (v. 1). Cornelius was a military man, a centurion who had command over 100 soldiers. A regiment (band, KJV) was a division of the Roman army consisting of 500 to 1000 soldiers. The Italian Regiment was "Probably a band or regiment that was composed of soldiers from Italy, in distinction from those which were composed of soldiers born in provinces. It is evident that many of the soldiers in the Roman army would be those who were born in other parts of the world; and it is altogether probable that those who were born in Rome or Italy would claim pre-eminence over those enlisted in other places."<sup>1</sup>

Despite his power and authority, Cornelius had the same need (for salvation) that the lowest private had.

*His qualities* (vv. 2, 22). Cornelius was a good moral and religious man. He was devout (v. 2). He was sincerely devoted to his religious service. He was active in his convictions. He feared God (vv. 2, 22). He gave alms (charity, benevolence) generously (v. 2). He was good

<sup>1</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft.

to others. He prayed to God continually (v. 2). He was a just man (v. 22). He was honorable or honest. He had a good reputation among all the Jews (v. 22).

In spite of all these great qualities, he was not saved (cf. 11:14). His outstanding morals didn't save him. Just being religious did not save him.

### **God Brings Cornelius and Peter Together (vv. 3-33)**

There are two miracles that are recorded in this section. Why are these miracles present in this case of conversion and not in others? This is the first Gentile convert. The purpose of these is to bring Cornelius (a prospect for the gospel) and Peter (the preacher) together.

*Cornelius' vision to call for Peter* (vv. 3-8). About the ninth hour of the day<sup>2</sup> he had a vision of an angel speaking to him. The angel told him that his prayers and alms have come up as a memorial before God (v. 4).<sup>3</sup> He was then told to send men to Joppa to bring Peter who would tell him what he must do (vv. 5-6). Cornelius called three men (2 household servants and a soldier) and sent them to Joppa (vv. 7-8).<sup>4</sup>

This vision (miracle) had nothing to do with Cornelius being saved. If it did, why didn't the same happen in all cases of conversion? When the angel departed, there was no evidence that he yet believed in Christ (he had not heard the sermon). The point of this vision was to call for Peter.

*Peter's vision to go to Cornelius* (vv. 9-23). Peter went upon the house top<sup>5</sup> to pray about the sixth hour (v. 9).<sup>6</sup> While there waiting for a meal to be prepared he fell into a trance in which he saw a vision (v. 10). He saw something like a sheet let down out of heaven with all kinds of wild beasts, creeping things and birds (v. 12). He heard a voice say, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat" (v. 13). Peter refused saying that he didn't eat things common or unclean (v. 14). Then the voice said, "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (v. 15). This was done three times (v. 16).

Peter learned from the vision that the Gentiles are acceptable (cf. vv. 28-29). The point being that Peter was to go to the Gentiles.

While Peter pondered on the meaning of the vision, the three men from Cornelius arrived asking for Peter (vv. 17-18). The Spirit told Peter that the three men were looking for him and instructed him to go with them (vv. 19-20). After they told Peter about the vision of Cornelius (their reason for coming) and spent the night, they traveled to Caesarea along with some brethren from Joppa (vv. 21-23).

---

2 3:00 p.m.

3 This raises a question about the harmony of this with passages like John 9:31 were we read that God does not hear sinners. "God may 'hear' the prayer of the alien. That we would not argue. We can be sure that God is aware of what the alien is doing and saying. Evidence would be the case of Cornelius and Saul. God may even respond somehow. But, that is not answering the prayer in the sense that he promises to listen to the prayers of the righteous. His ears are not open to those who are not righteous (1 Pet. 3:12)" (Donnie V. Rader, *Teach us to Pray*, Guardian of Truth Foundation, 9).

4 Joppa was about 30 miles from Caesarea (v. 1).

5 A flat roof which was common in Palestine.

6 12:00 noon.

*Peter comes to Cornelius* (vv. 24-33). When Peter arrived he found that Cornelius had gathered his family and close friends (vv. 24, 27). Cornelius, attempting to show respect for the one the angel had told him to seek, fell down and attempted to worship Peter (v. 25). Peter refused, saying he was just a man as Cornelius was (v. 26).<sup>7</sup>

Peter explained why he came (vv. 28-29). It was considered unlawful for a Jew to keep company with a Gentile, yet God had shown him (in the vision) that the Gentiles were no longer considered unclean (v. 28). He asked Cornelius why he had sent for him (v. 29).

Cornelius explained his calling for Peter (30-33). He told Peter about the angel appearing to him four days earlier telling him to send for Peter (vv. 30-32). He told Peter that they were all present before God to hear all that God has commanded (v. 33).<sup>8</sup>

### **Peter's Sermon (vv. 34-48)**

*God does not show partiality* (vv. 34-35). Peter begins his sermon with the conclusion that he draws from the two miracles (the vision of Cornelius and his own): God does not show partiality. Rather, anyone from any nation who fears God and works righteousness<sup>9</sup> is accepted by God (v. 35).

*The word of peace about Jesus is for all* (vv. 36-43). Since God does not show partiality, the gospel message concerning peace that comes through Jesus Christ is for all (v. 36). Jesus is Lord of all. Six points are developed in his sermon about Christ:

1. **God anointed Jesus with power so that he worked miracles (v. 38).** Those miracles were evidence of his claims (cf. John 20:30-31).
2. **Jesus was killed (v. 39).** He was crucified on the cross of Calvary.
3. **He was raised from the dead (vv. 40-41).** God raised him up the third day. He was shown openly following his resurrection. Those who saw him were witnesses to the resurrection. Those who ate and drank with him knew for sure that there had been a bodily resurrection (v. 41).
4. **He is the Judge of the living and dead (v. 42).** This same Jesus has been appointed to be the Judge in the Day of Judgment (cf. John 5:22).
5. **He fulfilled prophecy (v. 43).** Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the prophets foretold. He is the Messiah of whom the prophets foretold.
6. **Those who believe on him receive remission of sins (v. 43).** Peter ends his sermon saying that whoever (Jew or Gentile) believes in Christ will have the remission of sins.

---

7 Peter must not have been the Pope as the Catholics claim or he would have accepted the worship.

8 It would do us all well if we approach listening to a sermon or a study of the word with this attitude. We should recognize that we are in the presence of God and desire to hear all things that God has commanded.

9 To work righteousness is to be obedient to God's commands which are righteous (Psa.119:172).

*The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his house* (vv. 44-48). As Peter spoke those who heard were filled with the Spirit (v. 44). They were enabled to speak in tongues (v. 46).<sup>10</sup> Those Jews who were with Peter were amazed to see this happening upon Gentiles (v. 45).

**What measure of the Spirit did Cornelius and his family receive?** It was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Consider the following evidence: (1) This was like what the apostles had received (vv. 45, 47). (2) It reminded Peter of the promise of Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 11:16). (3) It was called the “same gift” (Acts 11:17). Peter said God gave them the Spirit “just as he did to us” (Acts 15:8).

**What was its purpose?** It proved that the Gentiles are now gospel subjects (Acts 11:18).

**What it does not prove.** (1) It does not prove that Holy Spirit baptism is for believers today. Those who believe in Holy Spirit baptism today cite the case of Cornelius as proof. The purpose for which the Spirit fell on Cornelius has been accomplished. After the case of Cornelius, Paul wrote that there is “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5).

(2) It does not prove that one is saved before being baptized. Many of those who contend that one is saved before and without water baptism cite the case as proof. They argue that the fact that Cornelius and his house received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized proves they were saved before being baptized. If the reception of the Holy Spirit proves salvation before baptism, it proves salvation before faith. The Spirit fell as Peter *began* to speak (Acts 11:15). Thus, the Spirit fell *before* they heard the message about Jesus that would produce faith (Rom. 10:17).

After seeing that the Spirit fell on the house of Cornelius, Peter concluded that they could be baptized (vv. 47-48). Thus, he commanded them to be baptized (v. 48). Here again, we have a progress report with the first Gentiles to be obedient.<sup>11</sup>

## Questions

1. What is the central principle of this chapter and what does it mean? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What were the qualities that Cornelius had? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

10 To speak in tongues was to miraculously speak in a language one has never learned. Look back at lesson 2. Evidence that it was an indelible language and not gibberish is that the Jews knew these Gentiles were glorifying God (v.46).

11 Cornelius believed (Acts 10:43; 15:7), repented (Acts 11:18), and was baptized (Acts 10:47-48).

3. What was the vision Cornelius had and what was the point of it? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

4. What was the vision Peter had and what was the point of it? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

5. How do you know that the vision Cornelius had was not the means by which he was saved?

---

---

---

6. Does the fact that God acknowledged the prayers of Cornelius prove that God hears and answer the prayers of the alien sinner? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

7. What attitudes do you see in Cornelius that would help us in our approach to listening to the teaching of the word? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

8. How would you summarize the sermon Peter preached? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

9. What was the purpose of the Holy Spirit falling upon the house of Cornelius? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

10. How would you answer the contention that when the Spirit fell on Cornelius (before he was baptized) it proves he was saved without being baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---