

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Ten – First Uncircumcised Gentile Convert

ACTS 10:1-8:

Having concluded the ninth chapter with Peter in Joppa with Simon the tanner, Luke continues to focus on Peter in this narrative and the same western portion of Judea.

All of **chapter ten** and the **first eighteen verses of chapter eleven** will all be tied together under this single historic event. Up till now, the Gospel of Jesus as Christ has only come to the Jews (or proselytes to Judaism).

The significance of this event, as a first, will be found in the work of God, to demonstrate His approval of this event in the same way He approved the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus as Christ on the day of Pentecost.

Let's take a look into how this unfolds in order to appreciate what God has provided for all men!

Text #1:

Acts 10:1-8 “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 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?” So he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa, 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.”

Cornelius: What is divulged by Luke concerning this man is first evident in his work. He is a centurion in the Roman army (the captain of a hundred men), stationed in Caesarea, which is the Roman headquarters in the region. He has a Latin name and is of the Italian Regiment relegating him as a true Roman.

Luke records that he is devout – dutiful to God, and fearful – a reverent fear in awe, respect, and concern for the wrath of God; and has taught his household as well. He demonstrated his duty and respect by his generosity to the less fortunate (alms) and constant prayer.

The significance of this, is that he has all these attributes, and yet he is not circumcised as many of the proselytes, who have come to serve God through Judaism (**vs. 28**). It is very likely and

probable that Cornelius has come to know God and serve Him because of his present location to the Jews who serve God in Judaism.

This was the very purpose that God brought forth the people of Israel, gave them a specific law just for them, so that they would be unique among peoples, and their very presence in this unique form would allow all nations to know God.

Exodus 19:5-6 “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.””

Deuteronomy 28:9-10 ““The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. ¹⁰ Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.”

The fact that Cornelius is referred to by Luke as acceptable to God, apart from circumcision and the Law of Moses is tribute to the fact that although the Gentiles before Jesus becoming the Christ did not have a written law, as the Jews, but when they practiced the things within the law, it became to them a law – **Romans 2:14**. Through this lawful practice, they could serve God, avoiding the sins commonly practiced by the Gentiles (**Romans 1:18-32**). Cornelius is righteous to God at this time, under this understanding and apart from circumcision; however, it is not enough to continue to come to God this way; as a singular Way has been established, and Cornelius needs to know!

Vision: This appearance of the angel of God is clearly a vision, not a dream, because he is wide awake and engaged in prayer. In addition, the ninth hour in the second shift of the day is about 3 pm.

Memorial: A memorial is that which brings to one to remember. In this case, God is remembering His righteous promises concerning the redemption of all men!

Genesis 12:3 “I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Galatians 3:16 “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.”

Galatians 3:26-29 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Send for Simon: Simon is one of the names that the Apostle Peter is known for. Simon means ‘hearing’ in Greek – also ‘*Symeon*’ in Hebrew, Peter is from the Greek ‘*Petros*’ which means rock, which Luke tells us, is his surname. A surname is a name that is shared in epithet fashion to characterize him. Cephas was an additional name in Aramaic, which coincides with his surname, it means stone.

It is at this point that we should note that many would have one believe that Cornelius and his household were already saved (in a justified relationship with God, just by faith in God). It is vital to note several of things here:

First, Cornelius has not been made aware of Jesus the Christ as yet. The righteousness of God does not exist apart from Jesus the Christ as the Gospel of Christ is disseminated to the world (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**)!

Second, the appearance of the angel of God has done nothing for Cornelius except to begin the process of introducing a needy soul to a preacher of the Gospel of Christ. This has been the pattern and purpose for these miraculous appearances up to this point (**Acts 3:1-10; 8:26-39; 9:1-19**).

Third, the angel of God has given Cornelius very specific instructions in sending for Peter to be told what he ‘**must**’ do! The fact of the matter is, as the rest of the narrative will manifest, is that he was not saved through the only Way to God, and neither is anyone else without specifically obeying the commands of the Lord.

Note the words of Peter as he describes to the Jews in Jerusalem these events and the words of the angel to Cornelius:

Acts 11:13-14 “**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.’**”

These statements establish Cornelius and his household’s status before these words and how important they would be to his future status to God. When Cornelius, his household, and Peter finally come together, there is also in the mind of Cornelius, a definite recognition of importance in the words of Peter, note:

Acts 10:33 “**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.”**”