

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Ten – First Uncircumcised Gentile Convert

ACTS 10:9-22:

In our last lesson, we were introduced to Cornelius. He was for God a memorial (reminder) of a promise made. As such, we have the beginning of the redemption of all men by the same means (God is not a respecter of persons – **Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17**). As there is always a beginning, Cornelius will be the first uncircumcised Gentile convert. No longer will there be a way for Jews, and a way for Gentiles, but all are to be ‘ONE’ in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:14-18 “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

In this lesson, we will see that Cornelius has obeyed the angel of God and sent for Peter. In addition, Peter being a Jew, will have to be prepared by God to go to a Gentile.

Text #1:

Acts 10:9-15 “The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 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.”

¹⁵ And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.””

The Next Day: We need to make a note concerning the description of days in this context. It is important because the use of days in this text is the same style of use, we see used to describe the days leading up to the Lord’s resurrection (parts of days counted as entire days).

Any part of a day is counted as an entire day in the narrative! **Vs. 3** is the first day, even though it is almost over. **Vs.9** is the second day, **Vs. 23** is the third day, and **Vs. 24** is the fourth day, even though it is not over. Then in **Vs. 30**, it is summarized by Cornelius as four days.

Housetop: The common construction of homes in Judea included a flat rooftop that would enable privacy from the rest of the house for prayer. Here is an excavated home with a rooftop similar to where Peter will have his vision (just for a reference of the housetop!):



Sixth Hour: The time of day is given by Luke to designate that Peter is clearly having a vision, as it is the middle of the afternoon (approximately noon). It is also while he is on the roof praying that he becomes hungry; this is significant as in his preparations to descend and eat, he is completely stopped by the trance he falls into (trance – displacement of mind).

Vision: The visual illustration of the lesson that the Lord wishes to teach Peter descends in front of him. The great sheet, as Luke describes it, is full of all kinds of animals, creeping things, and birds. Then there is the oral instruction to **“Kill and Eat”**.

One should not think that this instruction is unusual but realize that the children of Israel have been trained since birth that they were not allowed by Law to eat just anything; in fact, it was repulsive to the Jews to eat anything considered by Law to be unclean. The specifics of what they could and could not legally eat is found in **Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14:3-21**.

Peter responds with the expected repulsive reaction one would assume a Jew would have to this instruction.

A voice would speak to Peter concerning a needed change in his understanding of what is common or unclean (for the sake of what is about to happen with Cornelius). The mention of

Luke concerning what was done three times, is not referring to the vision being presented three times, but that Peter would have to be told three times to reconsider what he thinks is common or unclean (three times for Peter is something he is becoming known for).

Note: With the abrogation of the Old Law, and the coming of all men to God through Christ, there would no longer be issues of food restrictions to the servants of God through Christ Jesus; but a definite guard against the lusts of the flesh.

Colossians 2:20-23 “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”²² which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

1 Timothy 4:1-5 “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,³ forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.⁴ For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

1 Peter 2:11 “Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul”

Text #2:

Acts 10:17-22 “Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate.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.””

As Peter sat perplexed over the vision and its meaning (showing that even three times was not enough), the men sent by Cornelius arrived. Even before he could be told by those of the

household of Simon the Tanner, the Spirit informed Peter of the men, and added that he go with them **“Doubting nothing”**.

This makes it very clear that Peter would probably not have gone at all without this prompt, even before he comes to a clear understanding of the vision.

Once the servants of Cornelius and Peter are united, they reveal the Divine instructions to come to Peter and bring him to Cornelius in order to hear words from him (emphasized in the last lesson).

Nothing is known about the nationality of Cornelius' household servants that have been sent to Peter; however, we know that Peter is going to speak to all of them and acknowledge that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to keep company with those of another nation (**Vs. 28**). If in fact these are Gentiles, as Cornelius, Peter's lodging them is a sign that he is already beginning to comprehend the vision's message.