

ACTS 10:1-48 THE LORD CORRECTS PETER, THE RELUCTANT EVANGELIST

We now come to a monumental, epochal event in the progress of early Christianity, the salvation of Gentiles apart from any Jewish, Old Testament encumbrances! Hitherto, Christianity, as spread through the Apostles, limited itself to Jews or Jewish proselytes; hereafter, it will be directed to all peoples and will be devoid of Jewish strictures. Though circumcision was of God, it would have no bearing on Gentile salvation; though the Mosaic Law was of God, it would not be imposed. The hundreds of prohibitions and restrictions of perverted Judaism were to be totally disregarded in the message that goes to these people.

What seems to us as self-evident was to Peter, to the Eleven, and to the early Jewish-Christians a mystery; in fact it will take at least ten more years after the conversion of Cornelius before the details fully impact them. The design of this chapter is to teach that God is no respecter of persons. What often impresses men does not impress Him. Parentage, heredity, nationality, profession, rank, socio-economic status are neither a passport nor a barrier to His grace. In Christ Jesus there is *“neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision or uncircumcision barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all”* (Col. 3:11). In Acts 10, God clearly demonstrates this to Peter. No wonder Luke records this in such detail!

10:1-8 CORNELIUS AND HIS VISION

v. 1 Cornelius Was Militarily:

- *“a centurian,”* a Roman military man in charge of 100 legionnaires, though a non-commissioned officer then, he was our equivalent of a captain.
- *“of an Italian cohort”* (band, KJV), that is, 600 men if the cohort was at full strength. A regular cohort was the tenth part of a Roman legion. Centurions were the cohesive force and backbone of the Roman legions.
- *“in Caesarea,”* a large seacoast fortified city, 30 miles north of Joppa built by Herod the Great who named it for Caesar Augustus.

v. 2 Cornelius Was Spiritually:

- devout, a God-fearer and leader in his home, an alms-giver, a man of prayer –not a Jewish proselyte, but one attracted to their ethical monotheism. HE WAS ALL THIS, YET UNSAVED (comp. 10:6, 11:14).
- being positive to the light that he had, God now sees that he gets more light. This involves a vision.

v. 3-8 Cornelius’ Vision:

An angel appears to Cornelius and tells him to send for Peter who in turn would instruct Cornelius. **WHY DID NOT THE ANGEL SIMPLY TELL HIM HOW TO BE SAVED?**

10:9-16 PETER AND HIS VISION

- v. 9, 10 Note the timing: the risen Lord is in charge; He sends the angel to Cornelius and the next day a vision to Peter. Compare v. 20, where the Holy Spirit is said to have sent the men to Peter.

Visions of this sort are recorded in Acts 7:31 (to Moses); 9:10 & 12 (to Ananias, then to Paul); 10:3, 17, 19 (to Cornelius and Peter); 12:9 (to Peter); 16:9, 10 (to Paul); 18:9 (to Paul). Until the Canon of Scripture was complete, God used visions, dreams, prophets, glossolalia, etc., to communicate His will.

v. 11–16 In this vision, God gives Peter an object lesson to demonstrate that Jewish ceremonial barriers to other people have been abolished. The laws distinguishing clean and unclean animals recorded in Lev. 11 are no longer in force.

The greater lesson: God is no respecter of persons when it comes to salvation; one born a Jew has no advantage over one born a Gentile. This truth was extremely difficult for Peter and the early church to accept. God repeats the vision 3 times!

10:17-23a PETER RECEIVES CORNELIUS' MESSENGERS

Notice the perfect timing of these events! Who is in charge?

10:23b-33 PETER AND ALL GO TO CAESAREA

v. 23 “*certain of the brethren*” – six according to 11:12. These would serve as witnesses.

v. 24 “*and Cornelius waited,*” an imperfect periphrastic verb! There was eager preparation on the part of Cornelius; he waited, he called together his relatives and his close friends. He wanted to hear the truth of salvation and he wanted those closest to him to hear! **THIS WOULD BE THE DAY THAT HE WOULD LEARN OF SALVATION.**

10:34-43 PETER'S MESSAGE TO THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS

v. 34 Peter himself had learned a truth, note three aspects of this:

1. “**Upon (επι/επι) a truth;**” He is saying, “My understanding, my perception is grounded upon a truth.”
2. “**I am perceiving,**” (present middle indicative verb): Peter has come to a personal understanding of a truth.
3. What truth? “**That God is not one who shows partiality. He is no respecter of persons.**”

This truth is written in the Old Testament: Deut. 10:17 and II Chron. 19:7. It is an old truth, but new to Peter! Impartiality has always been characteristic of God: Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; Jas. 2:1; I Pet. 1:17. The Jewish culture of Peter's day had severely clouded this issue; grace in Christ blows the cloud away!

v. 35 Peter applies this truth nationally; this verse does not teach that men merit blessing by works, only that God perceives personal response to Himself and will follow that response impartially with more truth (the Heb. 11:6 principle).

v. 36-43 Peter's Christ-Centered Message

THE INTRODUCTION: v. 36

- My message is that which He (God) sent; it is a divine revelation.
- He sent this to the Sons of Israel; it did not come through Gentiles.
- This message announces the good news of peace with God through Jesus Christ.
- Since Jesus Christ is Lord of all, this message is for all. It is universal.

THE BODY: JESUS CHRIST'S MINISTRY, DEATH, RESURRECTION, v. 37-41

APPLICATION #1: JESUS CHRIST WILL JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, v. 42

- Every man will face Him as either judge or saviour.

APPLICATION #2: FOUR-FOLD, v. 43

- the grounds of salvation are *through his name*;
- the scope of salvation is *whosoever*, i.e., anyone;
- the condition of salvation is *belief, trust* in Him;
- the result of salvation is *forgiveness of sins* (past, present, future).

Thus ends Peter's sermon; at this very point the Holy Spirit interrupts him. WHY? (Listen for 3 reasons.) Luke beautifully records the impact upon all.

10:44-48 THE IMPACT OF PETER'S MESSAGE

v. 44-46 **Impact:** Upon Cornelius and His Household

- They were saved immediately.
- They received the gift of the Holy Spirit immediately.
- They glorified God in foreign languages immediately.

v. 45 **Impact:** Upon The Jewish Believers with Peter

- Amazement, astonishment due to God giving these Gentiles the Holy Spirit as at Pentecost (compare 11:15 and 17).
- GENTILES, WITHOUT CIRCUMCISION, WITHOUT THE LAW, WITHOUT BECOMING JEWS, WERE SAVED AND FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.
- This blew away the minds of the Jewish believers.

v. 46 **Impact:** Upon The Very Clear Order of Salvation; Salvation First, Then Water Baptism

Obviously, water baptism had nothing to do with their salvation, just as circumcision, law-keeping and Jewish rituals had nothing to do with it. Why? Because salvation is by grace alone, through Christ alone, and by faith alone!