

Church – The Beginnings, Part 27
Peter and Cornelius – Gospel to the Gentiles – Part 1
Acts 10:1-48 | 04/30/2017
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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 [along] with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. (Acts 10:1-2)

Who was Cornelius?

He was an Italian. Of the Italian, Roman Cohort of Caesarea.

The Italian Regiment → The Cohores II Miliaria Italica Civium Romanorum.

This Italian Cohort consisted of 10 Centuries (or 10 Centurions) each commanding their battalion

A Centurion was like a Company Commander or an Army Captain.

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Cornelius would have been a winsome figure for Luke's Roman audience. **Polybius** said of centurions, the backbone of the Roman army, "They wish centurions **not** so much to be venturesome and daredevil as natural leaders, of a steady and sedate spirit. They do **not** desire them so much to be men who will initiate attacks and open the battle, but men who will hold their ground when worsted and hard pressed and be ready to die at their posts" (**Histories 6.24.9**). (ref.: <https://biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Acts/Corneliuss-Vision>)
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Thus, Cornelius, as the other Centurion mentioned in the Gospels, was a stationary person, who would have had his entire family there with him, as well. Those who are a part of his battalion were not all military, but many were civilian "employees", as well. They would be considered close working acquaintances, but many become close friends and would be even considered "family" – as we see with Cornelius and with the Centurion in the Gospels who had an ill servant whom Jesus healed, etc.

Caesarea was a, mostly, Gentile city, a port city, and a Roman Colony. Roman Garrisons were stationed there since 6 A.D. Pontius Pilate "governed" from there, as well. It was given to Herod by Caesar Augustus. After that, Herod dedicated it to Caesar Augustus, thus its name: Caesarea. It was populated by mostly foreigners who were a part of the Roman Empire, and other ancillary related business and families, etc. all related in some way to Rome's operations, etc. But, as in all of Israel, there was a significant population of Jewish people there, as well.

It seems that Cornelius, in his time there, developed a love for God and the people of Israel. He must've abandoned, in some way, all of the Roman and Greek gods in favor of the God of Israel. He obviously read God's Word or some of it, as well. But, he was not a Proselyte, a Gentile Convert to Judaism. He was what would be considered a Gentile God-Fearer.

Cornelius did not keep this to himself, but he persuaded all of those in his OIKOS to follow the one, true, and living God, the God of Israel. He, just like the Centurion in the Gospels, did many "favors" and "charitable" giving toward helping God's People (Israel). Remember, the Centurion in the Gospels helped to build the folks in that town a new synagogue. And, so it was with Cornelius, he was good and did good toward God's People. The Promises that relates to Gentiles blessing Israel applied to Cornelius and his whole household (see Genesis 12:1-3; 27:29).

OIKOS – Cornelius' Household ...

This includes his wife and children. **It also includes all** of those under his command, household servants, close friends, etc. See verse 24 & 27 → ²⁴ And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had **called together his relatives and close friends**. - ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found **many who had come together**. ...

So, Cornelius had many folks that he influenced and would consider him and each other "family" or "**OIKOS**" [not the yogurt, of course, although ...]. That is the normal understanding of "household" back then. So, who are the folks in your "household" that are a part of your life, here, locally, that you engage with in relational ways on a consistent basis? If you don't have some, get some, pray for God to multiply your OIKOS for the

Gospel's sake. Try to be like Cornelius, or at least pray that God can use you to influence others in like manner.

Acts 10:3-8 - ³ About the ninth hour of the day [about 3pm] he [Cornelius] 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 [or 'sir']?"

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' Angelic Vision

He saw it, and he went into action, obediently. He sent men, just as the angel had commanded. These men were not just anyone, but they were close, relationally, with Cornelius, like sons or brothers. Not just employees or military privates, etc. They were devout, or devoted to Cornelius. This meant that they were not under threat, or forced to be devoted, but genuinely like, respected, and loved Cornelius.

Journey → Caesarea is over 30 miles from Joppa as the bird flies on the Coast.

The Prayer Time of Peter – His Vision of the Blanket with "Unclean Beasts to Eat" ...

This was NOT about Food, it was about associating with Gentiles ... we'll see later ...

Peter needed some social adjustments – Gospel Focus ... the Goyim needed Jesus just as much as Israel
Acts 1:8; Luke 24:44-49; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15 (all of creation, or all humans under the heavens)
Why didn't Peter understand this and want to reach Gentiles? He's that Super Apostle. God does miracles through him, why doesn't Peter understand all this, after 3.5 years of being with Jesus and then being an apostle for more than 10 years, already? Good Question.

Answer: Traditions, Family, Fear

What God has cleansed and declared clean, it is clean →

"What God has cleansed you must not call common." Acts 10:15

Acts 10:17-23

¹⁷ 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." ²³ Then he invited them in and lodged them.

On the next day Peter went away with them, **and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.**

Don't Argue, Don't Doubt – just go with these Gentiles ... The nature of Doubting God and/or His Word (the Bible) is in effect – Arguing with God (maybe in a soft way, but still it is arguing with God). You have a thought that hold to more and higher than what God says about whatever "it" is. So, you doubt. But, God said, put to death any doubts, and just go with them. Just be obedient, whether you like it or not, whether you understand what is going on. . . just DO IT! I remember my parents telling me to do things like that, and I'd argue with them. We all have had those moment with our parents and with God.

Peter brought at least six other Messianic believers with him to accompany him from Joppa (not sure if this was "just in case" or ... but it works out that they also became WITNESSES to what God was going to do in Caesarea among Gentile God-Fearers). Not sure if this was **Trust God but keep your Powder Dry** ... ?

Acts 10: 24-33 → Cornelius was very busy – huge gathering in his home in Caesarea. He wasn't only thinking of himself. He wanted others to benefit from whatever God was going to do. Are you like that? He was not perfect, he even tried to worship Peter. You know, sometimes your background can trip you up but Peter helped him up and the Peter went into the main room of Cornelius' home and WOW – so many people were there ... all wanting to hear him.

Peter let them know how unclean these Gentiles used to be, in Peter's way of thinking ... how normal Jews, Pharisees, especially, view unclean Gentiles ... → ²⁸ **Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean."**

Well, that's a find introduction ... way to win over your audience, Peter. But Peter seems clueless regarding why he is there. He keeps asking – "so why did you send for me?" (see verses 21 & 29)

Cornelius repeats the Angelic Vision scene, just like the servants told Peter, earlier in this chapter. So, Peter has heard this twice, and Cornelius had obviously told this many, many times, seeing all the folks there gathered. This because huge news, but Peter was still asking ... we find out in Chapter 11 ... something that Chapter 10 does not record, that Peter heard from Cornelius → Acts 11:13-14 → ¹³ **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.'** So, now we know that Peter, finally heard why he was there in Cornelius' home – to Tell them "WORDS" by which they would all be SAVED.

Visions, Dreams, etc. that lead to Salvation in Christ, historically since this time, all have this same kind of pattern. They POINT to Jesus, but the "dreamer" must do something after the Vision, to find Salvation in Christ. This was true for me, and for a Muslim I interviewed. For a Hindu lady about ready to commit suicide unless "the real God" revealed Himself to her. In this last case, the Vision of Jesus told her to go to the church down the street, of "untouchable" people – tell the pastor about the vision and ask for a Bible. She would never associate with "untouchables" but she did what she was told and the Pastor led her to Christ. So, it is with these visions, dreams, etc. they always point to something else that leads us to Christ. We must hear, understand, and trust in the Essentials of the Gospel in order to be saved, Always, no exceptions (ref.: Ephesians 1:13-14; Titus 3:4-7; Romans 10:8-13; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5)

Acts 10:34-43 → Peter tells the whole truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – this is a truncated, bullet point outline of what he talked about ... these are the major points ... because verse 44 shows that he was still talking a while even after the Holy Spirit "came upon" or "fell upon" them all. The Points ARE the ESSENTIALS that we all need to tell others about:

1. God exists and He is Sovereign over The Universe, the Earth, History and the Nations
2. Israel is God's People
3. Jesus is an Israeli and He is God's Messiah and the Savior of the World
4. The Holy Spirit is God and Jesus was Anointed by God, the Holy Spirit
Everything Jesus did was by, through, and being led by, the Holy Spirit to God the Father's Glory
5. Jesus was verifiably crucified and He did actually die.
6. And then rose from the Dead, bodily (Jerusalem)
7. He was seen by multiple eyewitnesses validating and verifying the truth of the Resurrected Messiah, Jesus.
8. Jesus is the Judge of the Living and the Dead – Peter spoke of God's Judgment of sin
9. Forgiveness of sins in ONLY found by personally trusting in Jesus Christ, believing in Him (John 1:12-13)

Acts 10:44-47 -

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. (44)

Received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47)

This is the same as the terms:

Born of God (see John 1:12-13)

Born of the Spirit

Born from Above

Born Again

Saved

"baptized in/by/with the Holy Spirit" (see Acts 11:16-17 – compare with 1 Cor. 12:13)

"repentance that leads to life" (see Acts 11:18)

gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon (Titus 3:4-7; Acts 10:45; Galatians 3:13-14; Eph. 1:13-14)

"Promise of the Father" (Luke 24:49)

This event was **NOT** describing a 2nd Work of the Holy Spirit (or the modern Charismatic/Pentecostal "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" as they teach it ...) No ... But it was describing SALVATION coming to this group of Gentiles. Specifically, Gentile God-Fearers. In every case, when the Gospel FIRST Invades a New People Group we see Powerful Workings of Salvation that includes the recipients speaking in Languages no known to them. Also, in all cases Jewish Believers were present as well. We see this pattern only upon the

Entrance of the Gospel into a Brand New Type of People Group, and Only when Jewish Believers are Present, as well. We have only four passages in the book of Acts that show the First Believers Spoke in Tongue to confirm the reception of the Holy Spirit (i.e. Salvation in Jesus Christ)

1. **Day of Pentecost – Acts 2 – Jewish/Israeli Believers – First Group** of Believers in Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Church was Born. But, we don't see this same thing happen with the 3000 later in chapter 2, nor with those that come to Christ in the next few chapters as the church grew. Jewish people, whether they were native born Israelis or Hellenists (those born outside of Israel) we have record of any more Jews speaking in tongues when they got saved from Acts 2 through 7.
2. **Samaria – Acts 8** – First Group of Believers in Messiah, Jesus Christ – Samaritans
3. **Caesarea – Cornelius' household – Acts 10-11** – First Group of **Gentile God-Fearers** who believe in Jesus Christ. Peter says, that what happened to him and the 120 on the Day of Pentecost is exactly what happened to Cornelius' and his household (see Acts 10:47; 11:17; 15:7-9) – Same Gift, Same Experience, Same "Receiving of the Holy Spirit" – same Salvation, same New Covenant Applied to their hearts, etc.
4. **Ephesus – Acts 19:1-7** – Gentile Disciples of John the Baptist (yes, a distinct people group) – The First Group of those type of Believers.

We do not see this kind of thing happen when Paul planted churches in Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, etc. But we do hear about a similar pattern on the Mission Field when the Gospel invades a brand new, never been reached before, people group. I heard it myself from Missionaries, who were my teachers at BIOLA. The first group of believers experienced powerful miracles and signs and wonders. The first village, group, etc. powerful .. then as time went on, the miraculous waned and more of maturity and discipleship in learning and growing in God's Word and their personal relationship with God. Miracles still occurred but much less frequent. So, we see God being consistent, like always.

The First Church of Caesarea was planted, and it was completely and fully Gentiles. No Jews were just saved. All Gentiles.