

Peter and Cornelius – A Deeper Look Acts 10

Introduction:

1. Acts 10 tells the story of a Gentile man by the name of Cornelius who, along with his entire household, trusts Christ.
2. This is a very significant event in God's Word and will provide a bridge from the apostle Peter to the apostle Paul. It will also provide a bridge from God's kingdom program for the nation of Israel to the dispensation of grace today.
 - Paul is sent home to Tarsus in Acts 9:30, but then shows up again in Acts 11:25.
 - Peter dominates the early part of Acts. Acts 1-12
 - Paul dominates the middle and latter part of Acts. Acts 13-28
 - Wedged in between the time that Paul was sent home and the time he showed up again is this event that involves Peter and Cornelius.
3. God knew that the apostle Paul would be the apostle to the Gentiles, but the church at Jerusalem would never have accepted this change in program if initiated by Paul.
4. God used Peter to open the door for Paul's great ministry to the Gentiles. This is why this is such a significant event in the Bible. We examined this story on the surface in a previous message.
5. It is so crucial to our understanding of God's Word that we need to delve into this text a bit deeper and answer several key questions.

First, was Cornelius a lost Gentile or a saved Jewish proselyte?

Second, did Peter understand the revelation of the mystery and dispensation of grace when he went to meet Cornelius?

Third, was it because of Peter's rebellion and disobedience that he did not want to go to Cornelius house?

Fourth, why was Peter so vehemently opposed to eating the meats that God told him to eat?

Fifth, why did Peter consider it unlawful for him to keep company with Gentiles?

Sixth, did Peter continue to reach out and evangelize Gentiles after this event?

Seventh, why did God interrupt Peter's sermon to Cornelius?

Eighth, why did the Gentiles speak in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit?

Ninth, why did Peter command these Gentiles to be baptized?

Tenth, why did the church at Jerusalem initially object to Peter going to Cornelius' house?

1. Word got back to the church at Jerusalem of this event involving Peter and Cornelius (11:1). The Bible says that the apostles and brethren had heard about it.
2. They contended with Peter and desired an explanation. 11:2-3
3. But why would they have this attitude? Why would the other 11 apostles hold Peter accountable for his actions?
4. Again, if you believe and assume that the apostles and early church knew all about the mystery and dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:2-6), then this passage will puzzle and baffle you. When we read future revelation into a passage, it simply will not make sense.
5. If you think that these believers knew all about the divine truth of the mystery and the body of Christ (Galatians 3:22-29), you are left with one of two conclusions:
 - Jesus communicated very poorly to the twelve regarding the mystery and all the changes that would come.
 - Or, you may conclude that these people in the early church were very carnal and very disobedient.
 - Both of these conclusions are rather preposterous when the scriptural record of Acts 1-10 is considered.
6. The simple answer is that God was preparing the way for this new revelation and new dispensation, but that it had not been revealed yet. This revelation would come later through a distinct and separate apostle, Paul. Colossians 1:25-27
7. They understood one thing, and they had been schooled and instructed in one thing – the prophetic program whereby Israel would be converted, they would become a kingdom of priests on earth (“*an holy nation*”), and then Israel would legitimately reach out to Gentile people with truth and make disciples of them.
8. Israel had not been converted yet, but Peter had gone into a Gentile household. In their minds, they were wondering what in the world Peter was doing. He should have been working zealously to convert Israel. He was not following the prophetic plan.
 - They were thinking, “Hey Pete, what are you doing over there evangelizing a bunch of Gentiles when God’s chosen nation hasn’t even been converted yet?”
9. When Peter defended his actions, he did not appeal to previous instruction from Christ; he did not explain that a new dispensation had begun. He simply rehearsed the matter from the beginning and expounded it by order unto them. 11:4-17
10. After they heard the complete story of what had happened, the apostles and brethren at the Jerusalem church glorified God and said, “*Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*”

11. Again, they did not understand the mystery or all of the blessed truths that would eventually come through Paul, but they understood that God had also allowed Gentiles to repent of crucifying Christ and had given them divine life also.