

## **Why Did God Interrupt Peter's Sermon? 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?**

1. Remember, Peter was not told that there would be a change in the divine program. He was not instructed to **continue** going to the Gentiles. He was simply instructed to go to this one household and, as far as Scripture is concerned, this is the only Gentile household that we know of Peter ever going to evangelize.

2. In fact, when the Gentiles in Antioch of Syria got saved and word got back to Jerusalem, it wasn't Peter nor any of the twelve who were dispatched to go there. They sent Barnabas, who would later get Paul to help. 11:22
  - Antioch was the first great center of world-wide Gentile evangelism, and neither Peter nor any of the twelve had anything to do with it.
3. At the Jerusalem Council, when Peter spoke and gave testimony, he could only point to this one Gentile experience. It was Paul and Barnabas who declared the "*miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles **by them.***" 15:12
4. Also at the Jerusalem Council, Peter and the twelve agreed to continue to confine their ministry to the circumcision, and recognized Paul's mission as being to the Gentiles. Galatians 2:8-9
5. Peter even withdrew his fellowship from saved Gentiles at one point due to pressure from his Jewish brethren, and Paul had to rebuke Peter. Galatians 2:11-14
6. When Peter wrote his letters to the little flock of believing Israel he admonished them to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles. This was so they might see believing Israel's good works and be saved at Christ's coming. 1 Peter 2:12
7. But, as far as Peter actively evangelizing Gentiles after this event with Cornelius, he did not (as far as the scriptural record is concerned).

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

1. Remember, Peter did not go to Cornelius' house with an understanding of what God was doing and what God would ultimately do with the Gentiles in the dispensation of grace.
2. He knew that God wanted him to go, but when he got to Cornelius' house, he basically looked at them and said, "I'm here, now what do you guys want?"
3. When Peter saw and heard their longing to know about God and spiritual truth (10:30-33), Peter said, "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.*" 10:34
  - Peter had been previously instructed to evangelize Israel first. Peter knew that, through Israel's conversion, the Gentiles would be evangelized and disciplined into Christ's kingdom. 3:25-26
  - Now God had sent him to a Gentile's house **before** Israel's conversion. Although Peter did not understand all that God was doing, he did perceive that "*God is no respecter of persons,*" and that no person was to be considered cut off and unclean simply because he was a Gentile. Cornelius was not accepted **as saved**, but he was accepted **for salvation** if he would but believe on Christ. 10:35
    - **Illustration:** What if a business sends out letters of acceptance to five individuals letting them know that they have been accepted for positions in the company, but only one of the five believes the letter and responds? Five were accepted **for** positions, but only one is accepted **as** an actual employee of the company.

- All who seek God (no matter what nationality they are) are accepted **for** a position in God's family, but they must believe the invitation and trust Christ in order to be accepted **as** members of God's family. 13:26
  - We later learn through Paul why God put a difference between Israel and the Gentiles. It was to demonstrate that there essentially **is** no difference. Both are sinners, both have fallen short, and neither is better than the other. If either is to be saved, it is only by their faith in what Christ has done for them. Romans 3:9, 22, 10:11-12, 11:32
4. So Peter proceeded to preach Christ to these Gentiles. He didn't preach the blessedness of the cross-work, as would later be revealed through Paul, but he **did** present the **facts** of the gospel to these Gentiles. Christ died, but He resurrected on the third day, and witnesses saw Him. 10:38-41
    - Peter said, "We saw Him and ate and drank with Him. We are eyewitnesses of His mighty resurrection."
  5. Peter proceeded to proclaim that "*Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*" 10:43
  6. Up to this point, Peter's sermon has been in strict accordance with the prophetic plan.
    - He began with "*The Word which God sent unto the children of Israel...after the baptism which John preached.*" 10:36-37
    - He proceeded with Christ's earthly ministry and the miracles and healings that He did. 10:38
    - He then told them how they slew Christ and hung Him on a tree. 10:39
    - God raised Him up the third day. 10:40
    - There were eyewitnesses to His bodily resurrection. 10:41
    - Christ commanded Peter and the twelve to proclaim Him as the risen Judge. 10:42
    - He preached that remission of sins only comes through faith in Christ. 10:42
  7. Peter's sermon was in strict accordance with the prophetic plan. Even according to prophecy, salvation was to come through faith in the person of Christ. Peter's statement in verse 43 corresponds in perfect harmony with the gospel of grace for our dispensation.
    - In both prophesy and the mystery, faith in Christ is essential.
  8. But before Peter could continue his sermon, God interrupted it and sent the Holy Spirit into the believing hearts of these Gentiles. 10:44; cf. 11:15
  9. Right after Peter preached that they needed to believe on Christ, the Holy Spirit interrupted Peter's sermon and saved these Gentiles. Why?
  10. Had Peter kept preaching, he surely would have preached what he preached a few chapters earlier. He would have explained that these Gentiles needed to submit to Peter for water baptism (Acts 2:38), to the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17), and they needed to submit fully to the law of God and be circumcised.
  11. But God stopped Peter's sermon right after he preached faith in Christ, and took the matter right out of his hands. Peter later said, "*What was I, that I could withstand God?*" 11:17

12. Peter and his Jewish comrades were astonished when the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit (10:45). Why would this astonish them? It was because they received the Holy Spirit without submitting to water baptism. There was no laying on of hands and, to top it all off, they were uncircumcised! They were saved apart from water or the law.
13. This was something totally new that they had never witnessed before. Of course, we now know that God was laying the groundwork for Paul's gospel message and Gentile ministry later.