

Cornelius: Why Peter, and not Paul?

Acts 10

Introduction:

1. One of the hardest things in life to do is to wait. Our fleshly human nature despises waiting.
2. Yet, waiting is a vital part of the Christian life. Over and over again we see examples of this in the Bible. Here are just a few:
 - David – Psalm 27:13-14, 40:1
 - The apostles – Acts 1:4
 - Church-age saints – 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10;
2 Thessalonians 3:5
3. We are, by nature, impatient people (some of us are worse than others).
4. The apostle Paul had to go through one of those “waiting” time periods. After fleeing Jerusalem in Acts 9:30, Paul was sent to his hometown of Tarsus.
5. Paul is not mentioned again until Acts 11:25 when Barnabas brought him to Antioch to help in the ministry there. Paul had to wait for several years before he came back into the spotlight and his life’s ministry began.
6. The Tarsus experience is a preparation not easily accepted by the flesh, for it involves an indefinite waiting period. Think about it. Paul was, at that point, in possession of his gospel (he got it in Arabia), and was aware that it was to be the mission of his life to preach it to the Gentiles. Yet he had to wait a long time before his ministry would begin. This waiting period was probably five to eight years.
7. Why did Paul have to wait patiently in Tarsus? What was God’s purpose?

First, God made Paul wait to prepare him for an effective ministry to others.

Second, God made Paul wait to prepare others for Paul’s unique ministry.

1. God was preparing Paul for an awesome ministry, but God was also preparing others to receive Paul’s ministry.

- After Paul's conversion, Paul was forced to flee Damascus and go to Jerusalem. Acts 9:26
 - While in Jerusalem, God made it clear to Paul what his life's ministry was to entail. Acts 22:17-21
2. Paul's mission in life would be to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Acts 22:17-21, 26:14-18
3. But, there were some major obstacles to overcome before this could happen.
- Paul was a Jew and very familiar with Jewish law and customs, being a Pharisee. He was a leader in the religion of Judaism.
 - Up to that point, the spiritual blessings of God had been almost exclusively for the Jews. In Acts 1-9, the church is composed of believing Israel.
 - The Jews were God's chosen people and were forbidden to have anything to do with the Gentiles. The Gentiles were considered unclean, dogs, outcasts, and outside the fold God.
 - The church in Acts was exclusively Jewish.
 - They twelve didn't go into all nations (Acts 8:1). They concentrated their efforts on Jerusalem and the surrounding areas of Israel.
 - Why? God's prophetic plan was for Israel to be converted first, and through their conversion the blessing would flow from Israel to the Gentiles. Jesus told them to start in Jerusalem, and so the twelve were working feverishly to convert Israel in Acts 1-9.
4. Suddenly, Paul got saved in Acts. Paul was to minister to the Gentiles, but his ministry would have never been received, or accepted, by the Jerusalem church at that time. So, Paul went back to his hometown of Tarsus and waited for several years before God finally opened the door for Paul's unique and distinct ministry.
- The church simply wasn't ready for Paul's ministry yet. The timing was not right. God had to do some things first, and until then Paul would have to wait.
5. What happened during this time? During this waiting time period in Tarsus, a major event took place that would open the door for Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 10). A major event happened that opened the door for Paul.

6. God commissioned the apostle Peter to go into the home of a Gentile (Cornelius) and share with him the good news of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. Acts 10
 - Cornelius was a Roman soldier who believed in Israel's God, but was very limited in his knowledge and understanding. He desired more divine revelation (vs. 1-6). God said, "Send men for Peter." vs. 7-8
 - Meanwhile, God began preparing Peter's heart for their visit and their call. vs. 9-16
 - While Peter is pondering, Cornelius' men show up at the door (vs. 17-22). Peter went with them. vs. 23
 - Here is Peter, a devout Jew, standing among a bunch of heathen Gentiles! (vs. 27). Peter basically says, "What do you guys want?" vs. 28-29
 - Cornelius explains everything to Peter and says, "We're all here, tell us what we need to know." vs. 33-34
 - Peter proceeds to explain to them the death and resurrection of Christ (vs. 39-40, 43), and before he can finish, these Gentiles believed Peter's message, the Holy Spirit came and filled them, and they were all saved.
7. This is one of the most momentous events in history.
 - Peter learned that, in this present age of grace, God would be no respecter of persons. vs. 34
 - Jews or Gentiles could be saved and brought into the church through faith in Jesus Christ. Because Israel continued to reject their Messiah, God would send salvation to Gentiles, not **through** Israel, but **in spite of** Israel. This was something completely new. vs. 43
8. The church did not readily accept this change, but Peter explained it to them, and they did accept it. Acts 11:1-18
9. Had **Paul** tried to convince the church of the change, the church would never have accepted it. Paul would have been viewed as a radical and a heretic. He was the new guy on the block that everybody was suspicious of anyway.
10. But Peter was universally accepted by the church. He could do what Paul could **not** do regarding the change towards the Gentiles.

11. After this change had occurred, then Paul could come on the scene, and his ministry to the Gentiles began. God was preparing the way for him to fulfill his ministry.
 - If Peter recognized the salvation of uncircumcised Gentiles, the church could take no legitimate exception to Paul's Gentile ministry. It is no coincidence that the next chapter (Acts 11), Paul shows up again and begins his Gentile ministry.
 - It was on the basis of Peter's experience that Paul's ministry among the Gentiles was later officially recognized. Acts 15
12. The idea of Gentile salvation had to be accepted in the church before Paul could begin his life's work. When this happened, we soon read in Scripture of Barnabas going after Paul to bring him back into the work. The time was then acceptable for Paul to commence his great ministry. Acts 11:25

In Conclusion:

1. Why did Paul have to wait?
 - Paul had to be prepared.
 - Others had to be prepared.
2. There is no record of Peter doing anything like this again. It was all part of God's plan.
 - Acts 9 – Paul gets saved. He goes to Jerusalem, and they send him home to Tarsus (we don't need you). He's not mentioned for 5 to 8 years.
 - Acts 10 – Peter goes to Cornelius, and the church accepts the change based on Peter's testimony.
 - Acts 11 – Paul shows up again, begins his Gentile ministry, and dominates the rest of the book of Acts.

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Acts 10

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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.
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 - 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?

1. The Bible describes the character of this man Cornelius in our text (vs. 2, 22, 30). He was a devout man who believed in Israel's God, gave alms to the poor, and fasted and prayed to God.
2. Does this mean that Cornelius was already saved? Had he already received forgiveness of sins and eternal life? Absolutely not, and for the following reasons:
 - God instructed him to send for Peter so that he might know what to do, and the words whereby he could be saved. 10:4-6, 11:14
 - When Peter began to talk to Cornelius and his house, he instructed them as to how they could receive remission of sins. 10:43
 - Cornelius did not know about Jesus Christ and had not received the Holy Spirit. 10:36-44
 - After this event in Acts 10, when Peter explained it to the church at Jerusalem, they glorified God, saying, "*Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*" 11:18
3. There are some who teach that Cornelius was a Gentile who had been proselytized into Judaism in some manner.
 - Scripture knows of only one kind of proselyte, and that is a Gentile who believed in Israel's God, submitted to the Jewish rite of circumcision, and who also adhered to Israel's Mosaic Law.

- Cornelius did not meet the Scriptural criteria of a proselyte. Peter called him “*one of another nation*” and considered him a Gentile. 10:45; 11:1, 3
 - Cornelius was a Gentile who believed in God and did many good things, but he was lost and needed Christ.
4. Then what did Peter mean when he said, “...*in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him?*” 10:35
- This simply means that no longer would God-fearing Gentiles be cut off from God’s favor because of their uncircumcision.
 - Peter had thought that only the Jews were acceptable to God and could be saved at that point. The Gentiles were unclean, but God showed Peter that He would be no respecter of persons, and Jews and Gentiles would be on level ground.
 - If Gentiles believed in God and desired God’s truth, they would be accepted in the sense that they were no longer on the outside of God’s plans looking in. They could also be included in God’s family and God’s plans. No longer would they be considered “*unclean.*”
 - But they could not be saved and forgiven of their sins until they placed their faith in Christ. This is why Paul would launch out into Gentile territories and preach the gospel.
5. Lesson learned: Good works and believing in God cannot impart the power to save us and bring forgiveness of our sins. Only faith in Christ can do that.

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

1. It is crucial that the Bible student understand that, up to this point, there had been no knowledge given to Peter or the twelve about God postponing His kingdom/prophetic program for Israel and ushering in the dispensation of grace.
2. This is why Peter was reluctant to go into a Gentile’s house. The prophetic program called for the conversion of Israel **first**, and then the blessing would flow from them to all nations, and they would make disciples of all nations.
3. Peter’s commission was a departure from the prophetic order (Acts 3:25-26). The revelation of the mystery of the one new body in Christ and the dispensation of grace would come later through the apostle Paul.
4. Consider these facts:
 - Peter did not go to Cornelius’ house as a result of a previous “commission,” but rather it took a special commission from God.
 - In the case of Cornelius, we read for the first time that God had put “no difference” between the Jew and the Gentile. It took a special vision from God to get Peter to understand this. 10:10-16
 - When Peter arrived at Cornelius’ house, he didn’t know what to say or do. He knew that God had sent him there, but he had no idea as to why (10:28-29). It was only after Cornelius’ testimony that he began to share God’s truth with them.

- When Peter preached, he did not present the cross as a blessed accomplishment as Paul later would (10:38-39). He presented it just as he did to Israel in early Acts.
 - Peter and his fellow Jewish brethren were astonished when the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit (10:44-45), and his only defense to the church was, “*What was I, that I could withstand God?*” This wasn’t something that had been previously revealed to Peter and that he was expecting.
11:17
5. All of these facts clearly reveal that the dispensation of grace and the revelation of the mystery (Jews and Gentiles reconciled in one body) had not been revealed yet.
 6. These divine truths would be revealed to Paul (the apostle to the Gentiles), and this event would pave the way for Paul to begin his great Gentile ministry and begin to share these precious truths with the church.
 7. It was on the basis of Peter’s ministry to Cornelius that Paul’s Gentile ministry would later be officially recognized.

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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?

1. Some have accused Peter of being a prejudiced bigot who knew he should have been going to the Gentiles all along, but needed a kick in the seat of the pants by God to go.
2. This is extremely unfair and unkind to Peter. When we fail to rightly divide God's Word and understand the unfolding of God's purpose and plan of the dispensation of grace through Paul, we can arrive at some very unscriptural and unkind conclusions.
3. A casual reading of the first nine chapters of the book of Acts presents a man in Peter who is God's man and who is sold out to his Savior.
 - We see Peter preaching boldly to the ones who had just crucified Christ. Acts 2
 - We see Peter doing incredible miracles through God's help and power. Acts 3, 5:12-16

- We see Peter standing up boldly against Israel's leadership, being imprisoned, and his life threatened. Acts 4, 5:17-42
 - We see Peter actually raising a lady from the dead after praying to God. Acts 9:36-43
 - When God gave Peter the vision about Cornelius, Peter was praying. Acts 10:9
4. This is not the heart of a prideful, stubborn, and rebellious man!
 5. Peter was a man who was working tirelessly for the repentance and restoration of Israel so that she might be a channel of blessing to the world. He knew that the conversion of Israel must take place first, and this is why Christ instructed the apostles to begin at Jerusalem.
 6. Peter was eager that the "great commission" might get under way so that the good news of the kingdom might be sent to all nations. He was, in fact, hungering for the Gentiles to hear the good news of Christ and the kingdom. Acts 3:25-26
 7. Does this sound like a man prejudiced against the salvation of the Gentiles? When you read Acts 11:18, 11:23, and 15:3, you see that there was genuine rejoicing among Jewish believers when Gentiles were saved.
 8. What Peter did not understand was why God would have him go to Gentiles while Israel was still unconverted. This was a purpose involving the mystery of God's dispensation of grace which was hidden in the mind of God. This information had not been made public yet.
 9. We look back with 20/20 hindsight and wonder how Peter could miss it, but we forget that the Bible is a book of progressive revelation. Peter didn't have all the information we have today. He was operating based on what Christ had revealed up to that point.
 10. Paul had just been saved in Acts 9 and was waiting in Tarsus. None of the glorious truths for the dispensation of grace that God would give to Paul had been revealed yet.
 11. When the time came for God to send Peter to Cornelius' house, Christ didn't appear to Peter and say, "Hey Pete, remember what I told you? Get with the program!" He also didn't point Peter to an Old Testament passage to convince him.
 - It was by a special vision and special divine revelation that God got Peter to Cornelius' house.
 - Why? Because there was **nothing to point back to** that would have taught Peter to go to the Gentiles **before** Israel's conversion. Yes, Peter knew that Gentiles would ultimately be converted, but it would be **through** Israel, not **in spite of** Israel.

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

1. When the sheet descended from heaven with all of the various animals in it, there came a voice that said, "*Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.*" 10:13

2. Peter obviously knew that this was a vision from the Lord (10:14), yet he responds, “*Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.*”
3. Peter had no clue as to what this vision meant (10:17). He was probably thinking, “Was this a test from the Lord? Is there some hidden, secret meaning to this vision?”
4. As saved Gentiles, we are reading this today, thinking, “What’s the big deal, Pete? Dive in, and enjoy. All meats are created by God to be received with thanksgiving. *For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused ...*”
5. But we must be careful that we don’t read future revelation into the story. Peter, the twelve, and all the church were still law-observing Jews. This included a strict prohibition against eating unclean meat. Leviticus 20:25
6. This was the Law of Moses and could not be taken lightly. To disregard it would be a serious matter. When Christ trained the twelve, never did He indicate that they were no longer to observe the Mosaic Law.
 - Christ kept the law in totality.
 - Christ instructed His followers to “*observe and do*” all that the scribes and Pharisees commanded because they occupied Moses’ seat of authority.
 - In some of His last words to the apostles, Christ told them that they would ultimately make disciples of all nations, “*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” This included the Law of Moses.
7. As you read the early part of Acts, it is clear that the disciples were not striving to start a religious sect separate from Judaism. They were the **true** Israelites who had accepted Christ as their Messiah and faithfully observed the law.
 - There would be no revelation to the law being done away with until it was given through Paul.
8. So, naturally, Peter was quite perplexed. He knew there had to be some meaning other than God giving him permission to break one of the law’s commands.
9. While Peter was scratching his head, two things happened that brought clarity to this.
 - There came a knock at the door, and there stood three Gentile men asking for Peter. 10:17
 - The Holy Spirit informed Peter that God had sent these men, and instructed him to go with them. 10:19-22

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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?

1. As soon as Peter entered Cornelius' house, before he even inquired as to what they wanted, he let them know that it was an *"unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation..."* 10:28
2. What did Peter mean by such a statement? In what sense was it unlawful? Was there a prohibition against this in Israel's law?
 - The Jews were not to eat the *"unclean"* meats that Gentiles ate. Leviticus 20:25
 - The Jews were not to make covenants with Gentiles. Deuteronomy 7:2

- The Jews were not to intermarry with Gentiles. Deuteronomy 7:3; Ezra 9:2
3. So, there was certainly a line of separation that existed between Israel and the heathen nations. This was designed to protect Israel from learning the ways of the heathen, and to draw a clear contrast for the nations to see clearly the true God of Israel.
 4. But, there was no explicit law stating that the Jews could not interact with Gentiles. In fact, they were not prohibited from doing business with them, and they were to treat them kindly if they came in their midst. Leviticus 19:33-34
 5. So, why did Peter consider it unlawful to even meet with these Gentiles? I believe there were several factors at work:
 - It was definitely culturally taboo for a law-observing, orthodox Jew to socialize with uncircumcised Gentiles. Even though it may not have explicitly stated this in the law, they felt that it violated the spirit of the law to interact socially with Gentiles.
 - But beyond this, Peter remembered the first commission he ever received from Christ in Matthew 10:5 which clearly said, *“Go not into the way of the Gentiles...”*
 - Christ himself kept aloof from the Gentiles during His earthly ministry. He interacted with a couple of Gentiles who approached Him, but made it clear in Matthew 15:24, *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*
 - This was not because of a lack of compassion or lack of love for the Gentiles, but because Christ recognized the divine plan of prophecy to send light to the Gentiles through redeemed Israel. Israel must first be saved before salvation would be sent to the Gentiles (Isaiah 60:1-5). This is why Christ said to the Gentile woman, *“Let the children first be filled.”*
 - After His resurrection, Christ did not change this prophetic and biblical plan. The apostles were to begin their commission in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. After Israel was converted and received Christ, disciples would be made of all nations.
 - In Acts 1:6, right before Christ’s ascension, the twelve are still fully anticipating the restoration of Israel’s kingdom. In Acts 3:25-26, Peter understood that Israel’s repentance and salvation would be the means through which the nations would be blessed.
 - By Acts 10, there were pockets of believers all throughout Israel and Samaria (northern Israel), but the nation was still, by and large, in rebellion, and the leadership of Israel still remained unconverted.
 - This is why the apostles remained in Jerusalem in Acts 8:1 despite the risk of being killed. They longed for the repentance of Israel’s leadership *“beginning at Jerusalem”* so that the good news of Christ could expand through redeemed Israel to the nations.
 6. With this background and understanding, it explains why Peter and the church at Jerusalem thought it *“unlawful”* to fellowship with Gentiles. According to the prophetic plan, Israel must be converted first.

- They were far from prejudiced against the Gentiles and, in fact, were quick to rejoice once they realized that God had overridden the prophetic plan, and saved these Gentiles despite Israel's rebellion. 11:18
7. We know now that God saved Paul in Acts 9 and would interrupt the prophetic program with the dispensation of the grace of God. Of course, Peter did not know any of this as of yet, which explains his reluctance to go to a Gentile's house.

Peter & Cornelius: A Deeper Look (Part 3)

Acts 10

Introduction:

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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?

1. As soon as Peter entered Cornelius' house, before he even inquired as to what they wanted, he let them know that it was an *"unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation..."* 10:28
2. What did Peter mean by such a statement? In what sense was it unlawful? Was there a prohibition against this in Israel's law?
 - The Jews were not to eat the *"unclean"* meats that Gentiles ate. Leviticus 20:25
 - The Jews were not to make covenants with Gentiles. Deuteronomy 7:2

- The Jews were not to intermarry with Gentiles. Deuteronomy 7:3; Ezra 9:2
3. So, there was certainly a line of separation that existed between Israel and the heathen nations. This was designed to protect Israel from learning the ways of the heathen, and to draw a clear contrast for the nations to see clearly the true God of Israel.
 4. But, there was no explicit law stating that the Jews could not interact with Gentiles. In fact, they were not prohibited from doing business with them, and they were to treat them kindly if they came in their midst. Leviticus 19:33-34
 5. So, why did Peter consider it unlawful to even meet with these Gentiles? I believe there were several factors at work:
 - It was definitely culturally taboo for a law-observing, orthodox Jew to socialize with uncircumcised Gentiles. Even though it may not have explicitly stated this in the law, they felt that it violated the spirit of the law to interact socially with Gentiles.
 - But beyond this, Peter remembered the first commission he ever received from Christ in Matthew 10:5 which clearly said, *“Go not into the way of the Gentiles...”*
 - Christ himself kept aloof from the Gentiles during His earthly ministry. He interacted with a couple of Gentiles who approached Him, but made it clear in Matthew 15:24, *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*
 - This was not because of a lack of compassion or lack of love for the Gentiles, but because Christ recognized the divine plan of prophecy to send light to the Gentiles through redeemed Israel. Israel must first be saved before salvation would be sent to the Gentiles (Isaiah 60:1-5). This is why Christ said to the Gentile woman, *“Let the children first be filled.”*
 - After His resurrection, Christ did not change this prophetic and biblical plan. The apostles were to begin their commission in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. After Israel was converted and received Christ, disciples would be made of all nations.
 - In Acts 1:6, right before Christ’s ascension, the twelve are still fully anticipating the restoration of Israel’s kingdom. In Acts 3:25-26, Peter understood that Israel’s repentance and salvation would be the means through which the nations would be blessed.
 - By Acts 10, there were pockets of believers all throughout Israel and Samaria (northern Israel), but the nation was still, by and large, in rebellion, and the leadership of Israel still remained unconverted.
 - This is why the apostles remained in Jerusalem in Acts 8:1 despite the risk of being killed. They longed for the repentance of Israel’s leadership *“beginning at Jerusalem”* so that the good news of Christ could expand through redeemed Israel to the nations.
 6. With this background and understanding, it explains why Peter and the church at Jerusalem thought it *“unlawful”* to fellowship with Gentiles. According to the prophetic plan, Israel must be converted first.

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7. We know now that God saved Paul in Acts 9 and would interrupt the prophetic program with the dispensation of the grace of God. Of course, Peter did not know any of this as of yet, which explains his reluctance to go to a Gentile's house.

Why Did God Interrupt Peter's Sermon? Acts 10

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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.

Why Did Cornelius and the Gentiles Speak in Tongues? Acts 10

Introduction:

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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?

1. What was the gift of tongues in the Bible?
 - It was the supernatural ability to speak in a language that had never been learned. It was an unknown tongue to the speaker. Acts 2:5-8, 11
 - The word "tongue" means "language." The gift of tongues was not the ability to speak in a string of gibberish. There is nothing supernatural about this. This profits nobody and can easily be faked or simply learned.
2. How many times do we see the gift of tongues exercised in God's Word?
 - There are only three instances in the entire Word of God where the gift of tongues is actually exercised.
 - The three instances are Acts 2, 10, and 19.
 - With the exception of the book of 1 Corinthians, the gift of tongues is never referred to in any of the epistles of Paul.
3. What was the purpose of the gift of tongues?
 - God sheds great light on the purpose of the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:22. It clearly states, "*Wherefore tongues are **for a sign**, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not...*"
4. One thing is clear. The gift of tongues was a sign to unbelievers. In the context (vs. 21), it is obvious that Paul had unbelieving Israel in mind. When we cross-reference with 1:22, we find that "*The **Jews** require a sign...*"
 - The nation of Israel was born through the use of miraculous signs. Exodus 4:30-31
 - Because of their stubbornness and unbelief, God has always dealt with Israel through the use of miraculous signs. Psalm 74:9
 - In the Old Testament, strange tongues were a sign to Israel of impending judgment. Isaiah 28:11-12; Jeremiah 5:15; Deuteronomy 28:15-68
5. The Bible is clear. Tongues are **for a sign**. The Jews **require** a sign.
6. To put it simply, the gift of tongues was a sign to Israel in the book of Acts.
 - The gift was never given as a means of personal edification (heavenly prayer language). It was a gift used to get God's truth out and to be a sign to Israel.
 - Tongues are never spoken - or even mentioned - outside of the Acts time period, because Israel's program was set aside in Acts 28:26-28. 1 Corinthians was written during the book of Acts.
7. How does the story of Peter and Cornelius fit in with all of this teaching about tongues?
 - When the apostles were filled with the Spirit in Acts 2, they immediately spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4-8). This was a miraculous sign to Israel that authenticated the apostles' message and the fact that they were filled with God's Spirit.
 - When Cornelius and his entire house of Gentiles believed Peter's message, God immediately gave those Gentiles the Holy Spirit. But how would Peter know this?

- God gave these Gentiles the same gift that He gave to Peter and the twelve on the day of Pentecost – the gift of tongues. Being a Roman soldier, he would have known Latin, and maybe Greek. Peter and the other Jews recognized it, so it may have been Aramaic or Hebrew.
 - This was an outward, visible, miraculous sign to Peter and the other Jews with Peter that these Gentiles had, in fact, truly received God’s Spirit. There was no denying it. 10:44-46
 - When Peter had to give an account to his Jewish brethren at Jerusalem, it was the sign gift of tongues that kept Peter out of hot water. 11:15-18
8. Tongues were for a sign. The Jews require a sign. This would explain why we never see tongues spoken unless there were Jews present.
 9. There are those who would like to take this story and try to make it the standard for every person that gets saved, but this is quite ludicrous.
 10. This was a unique, one-of-a-kind event. These Gentiles spoke in tongues to outwardly demonstrate to Peter and all the believing Jews that God had, in fact, given His Holy Spirit to these Gentiles by faith alone. This was a groundbreaking event that would require a miraculous sign to convince the Jews of its validity.
 11. This event would be crucial for the future of the church and for Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles. At the Jerusalem Council, it was this event that Peter would refer back to in demonstrating that the Gentiles do not have to keep the Jewish law to be saved, and that Gentiles should be included in the church by grace through faith alone. 15:7-11

Peter and Cornelius: What About Water Baptism?

Acts 10

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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?

1. Peter didn't know what to do at this point, so he looked around at those with him and asked the question, "*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?*" 10:47
2. Peter then commanded them to be baptized. Water had been an integral part of Peter's message and ministry from the beginning, going all the way back to John the Baptist.
3. Christ had told Peter, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). But this was different. They believed, were immediately saved, and then were baptized.
 - Could this be why Peter did not use the baptismal mode that Christ gave him in Matthew 28:19? He baptized these Gentiles in the name of the Lord, not in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
4. It is interesting that we don't see this emphasis on water with Paul as we do with Peter. There is not one mention of any water baptisms on Paul's entire first missionary journey. Never do we see Paul commanding a Gentile to be baptized.
5. Paul later wrote (after his second journey) that he baptized a few, but was glad he hadn't baptized very many. Then he said that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. 1 Corinthians 1:14, 17
6. This event with Peter and Cornelius was setting the stage for the new dispensation of grace. This was something different that had never happened before.
 - Acts 2 – Jews must repent and be baptized, and then they will receive the Holy Spirit.
 - Acts 8 – Samaritans must believe on Christ, be baptized, have the apostles lay hands on them, and then they receive the Holy Spirit.
 - Acts 10 – Gentiles simply believe on Christ and immediately receive the Holy Spirit. Water baptism came after their salvation.

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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.