

## **Acts 10:1-11:18 Cornelius**

**The story of Cornelius and its aftermath in the Jerusalem Church occupies a lengthy and significant place in Acts. It could not have happened sooner ... yet nothing that has happened so far is of greater importance or will have greater consequence in the future for the Churches of Christ.**

**On Pentecost, at Jerusalem only Jews came and obeyed the Gospel. By blood the half breed Samaritans were part Jewish and were circumcised. The Ethiopian eunuch though Gentile by race, was Jewish by faith and a full Jewish proselyte by circumcision. Saul was a “Hebrew of Hebrews”.**

**But Cornelius is a pure Italian an unmixed race Gentile a “God fearer” but not a proselyte by circumcision.**

**Moses forbade social and religious relations with Gentiles and the Jews applied the Mosaic segregation severely. The Gentiles were equally contemptuous in their rejection of the Jewish people. The gulf between Jew and Gentile far surpassed even today’s white versus black racial tensions.**

**The conversion of Cornelius and his household was a breakthrough worthy of the term “revolution” yet it was bloodless and nonviolent ...**

**The repeating of the story in Chapters 10 & 11 stresses its importance.**

**Acts 9:43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.**

**Eight hundred years before the Apostle Peter was born, Jonah fled to Joppa because God had commissioned him to go preach repentance to Nineveh and Jonah was a bigoted Jew who did not want the Gentiles of Nineveh to repent and be saved. Now Peter is called from Joppa to be the first to take the Gospel to a pure blooded Gentile. Now in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> years since Pentecost Peter had grown in his acceptance of men. He was psychologically ready for more light from God. God had forbidden the Jews to socialize with the Gentile nations. He had done this so He could bring Christ into the world through the unique Jewish race. Now that Christ had come, the middle wall of partition was to be broken down and they were to be united in the same family of God.**

**Joppa was known as a center of Phariseeism.**

**Tanners were despised and considered outcasts from handling dead carcasses.**

**Acts 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian [*band*],**

**“... the Italian band.” A Roman cohort was composed of about 600 men. Many of the conquered races served in the Roman Legions as mercenaries, but this cohort was made up of Italians only. At the residence of the Roman procurator would be placed a body of troops like this upon which he could rely.**

**Acts 10:2 [*A*] devout [*man*], and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.**

**“A devout man,” “feared God,” or “God fearers” are terms used of Gentiles from here on in the Book of Acts, and it always means those who had abandoned heathenism, begun practicing the morality of the Law of Moses, with its holiness and they turned to Lord God. But, they had NOT become Jewish proselytes by circumcision, but were trying to worship the one true God. The greater part of the first gentile converts were made up of these types of people.**

**Jesus taught redemption is for the vile as well as the virtuous. But this first Gentile whose life God captured was exemplary in his holiness and walk before God. To this particular “heathen or sinner” no Jew could object on the grounds of character ... Regarding his morality even the mouth of bigot Jew would be shut. His one problem was strictly racial he was an uncircumcised Gentile. He was the pier of the finest Jew.**

**The soul issue was: is the Gospel to be offered to the Gentile as well as the Jew.**

**Acts 10:3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.**

**Acts 10:4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.**

**“... a memorial ...” God does hear and see how non-Christians pray and give.**

**Acts 10:5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for [*one*] Simon, whose surname is Peter:**

**Acts 10:6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.**

**In the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch the angel appeared to the preacher and sent him to inquiring sinner ... in this case the angel appears to the inquiring sinner and tells him to send for the preacher ... in both cases the only work of the angel was to bring the 2 men face to face.**

**In this case, as with Saul the sinner is not saved by the “sinners prayer” but rather the prayers are answered by referring them to inspired authority within the Church ... go to Damascus ... send to Joppa ... the answer these 2 men got is all we should expect to get today from prayer, the referral to a Christian and the scriptures.**

**Acts 10:7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;**

**Acts 10:8 And when he had declared all [*these*] things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.**

**Acts 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:**

**“... on the morrow ... “ The men from Cornelius started immediately in the evening, after three o'clock, traveling all night they could be near Joppa, thirty miles distant, the next day, "at the sixth hour," or about twelve o'clock.**

**“... housetop ...” This was a place of relaxation and beauty, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea ... a beautiful and cool place to pray.**

**Acts 10:10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,**

**A number of things suggest Peter was being pushed towards the Gentiles. He is away from Jerusalem evangelizing but in this episode of expansion to the Gentiles God took the initiative. Peter did not seek the Gentiles apart from visions urging him on step by step.**

**On Pentecost Peter preached that the Gospel for those “a far off”**

**Acts 2:38-39 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift**

**of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [*even*] as many as the Lord our God shall call.**

**But He didn't intent to make the First move, not without God's urging.**

**Even after the vision and the voice of God saying "Rise, Peter kill and eat", he would have refused had not God says "go."**

**All the movement forward and all the progress began with God.**

**Acts 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:**

**Acts 10:12 Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.**

**Acts 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.**

**Acts 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.**

**God's most difficult task was to get the Apostle Peter into the presence of the Gentile Cornelius and the other Gentiles.**

**Acts 10:15 And the voice [*spake*] unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, [*that*] call not thou common.**

**Peter saw the vision as a testing. "No, no no ...You can't catch me off guard, ... I know better than that ... I'm on my toes down here Lord ..." was his attitude.**

**Acts 10:16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.**

**Then came the shock:**

**Acts 10:17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,**

**Acts 10:18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.**

**Acts 10:19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.**

**“...thought ...” He thought through – it is a stronger word than just “thought”**

**Acts 10:20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.**

**“... doubting nothing: ...” This is from the Lord, not man.**

**“...I have sent them.” Note the personality of the Holy Spirit here - the word “I”.**

**Acts 10:21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what [*is*] the cause wherefore ye are come?**

**Acts 10:22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.**

**The barrier breaks, the middle wall of partition in the new coming spiritual Temple the Church of Christ tumbles down.**

**The temple had a “ ... middle wall of partition [*between us*] ...” (between Jews and Gentiles). See pictures at end of lesson.**

**Archaeologist found several of the actual stone inscriptions that came from Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem. The inscription on the one pictured says:**

**“No one of alien racial stock may proceed within the balustrade surrounding the Sanctuary and encompassed court. Whoever ventures inside shall be responsible for his own death.”**

**Reminds me of the KKK paid for and erected a highway sign entering Greenville Texas in the 1950’s stating: “Greenville Welcome, The Blackest Land, The Whitest People. There were many “Sun Down Towns” threatening murder after dark.**

**The Jews Murdered any gentile in Daylight and after Dark ...**

**Acts 10:23 Then called he them in, and lodged [*them*]. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.**

**While he was thinking over the matter the messenger came ... The Spirit had told him their purpose and what he must do. Because of their long journey he, invited**

**them in, a big step for a Jew and took care of them till the next day.**

**Peter then returned with them and six Jewish brethren from Joppa went with him**

**Acts 10:24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.**

**Acts 10:25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped [*him*].**

**Acts 10:26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.**

**Thus again proving he was NOT the first Pope for he refused worship as they accept men bowing down to them even unto this day.**

**Acts 10:27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.**

**Acts 10:28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.**

**“... Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing ...” Contrary to Jewish tradition and customs. Moses prohibited intermarriages and religious intercourse, but the Jews carried their restrictions beyond both the letter and the spirit of the law.**

**They would not eat with the uncircumcised cf: Galatians 2:12.**

**Acts 10:29 Therefore came I [*unto you*] without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?**

**Having gotten to the gentile home and treating Cornelius as an equal.**

**The social barrier has been shattered but now what?**

**Acts 10:30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,**

**Acts 10:31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.**

**Acts 10:32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of [*one*] Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.**

**Acts 10:33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.**

**In our ignorance we need the knowledge of God, in our darkness we need light.**

**The Old Testament had announced the Messiah was to be the light of the Gentiles.**

**Isaiah 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.**

**In the forty days after the resurrection Jesus had thoroughly opened the Apostles “understanding” or minds that they might understand the scriptures ... all about His death, burial and resurrection and its benefits for the Gentiles.**

**Peter knew all about this but he was not about to make the first move.**

**He may have imagined it would take eons to begin such a work with heathen ... the goyim ... But finally he has been forced into a situation that he must preach to the Gentiles. God has ordained that men announce to men the Good News.**

**II Corinthians 4: 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [*give*] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**

**What Peter preached was essentially what he preached on Pentecost to the Jews. There is nothing Jew or Gentile about the Gospel message.**

**It was human, not racial, not nationalist, it is timeless, and universal.**

**God’s word of redemption and salvation is to any man and everyman.**

**Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened [*his*] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:**

**Acts 10:35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.**

**Acts 10:36 The word which [*God*] sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)**

**Acts 10:37 That word, [*I say*], ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;**

**Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.**

**Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:**

**Acts 10:40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;**

**Acts 10:41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, [*even*] to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.**

**Acts 10:42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God [*to be*] the Judge of quick and dead.**

**Acts 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.**

**Acts 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.**

**Why did the Holy Spirit fall upon the household of Cornelius before Baptism?  
It is the only time in all the scriptures such a thing happened.**

**What demanded this special manifestation of the Spirit?**

**Acts 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

**That it was unbelievable and unexpected is clear from the amazement of the six witnesses.**

**“... they of the circumcision ... were astonished ...” Gentile Acceptance!!  
It cannot be ... One wonders if they rejoiced or like Jonah, were sorry.**

**Acts 10:46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,**

**It is always possible to judge the design of the tool by observing to what use it put by the skill of the craftsman ... in this case God is the craftsman.**



**is Immediately upon the descent of the Spirit upon the gentiles, Peter speaking under inspiration of the Holy Spirit turned to the six brethren and asked:**

**Acts 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?**

**To ask the question was to give the obvious answer.**

**Acts 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.**

**The Holy Spirit coming upon Cornelius, demonstrated by the miracle of languages, was to convince the narrow-minded resisting disciples that they had no right to refuse the Gentiles their place in the family of God.**

**The six brethren who are witnesses must be convinced so that they might help Peter convince the Jerusalem Church to accept the Gentiles.**

### **Acts Chapter 11**

**Now comes the sequel ... How can the reception of the Gentiles be told to the Jerusalem Church so as to get a favorable reception.**

**Christ gives not just vertical salvation but a horizontal fellowship, fraternity and brotherhood. The Gentile must not only receive the Gospel but he must be received by the Jews in Jerusalem as brethren.**

**If no distinction is to be made to those whom the Gospel is offered, ... then distinctions must not be made towards them after they have received it. Those who get the same Holy Spirit before God, have the same standing before God as we all do ...**

**Acts 11:1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.**

**Acts 11:2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,**

**“... they that were of the circumcision ...” The Jewish Christians, of whom the church at Jerusalem was entirely composed. The Gentiles of Cæsarea were the first uncircumcised persons admitted to the Church. The Samaritans were half breed Jews and circumcised people. The apostles and church generally seemed to understand that Jesus was the world's Savior, but thought that all who came**

**to him must accept Judaism also and be circumcised before baptism. How deep-rooted their ideas were is shown by Peter's own case. It took (1) a vision, (2) the command of the Lord by voice, (3) the Spirit bade me go (4) the call of Cornelius, and (5) the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, to remove his and his brethren's scruples about baptizing the Gentiles. It is, therefore, no wonder that his actions were called in question.**

**Acts 11:3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.**

**Some Pharisees who believed saw nothing in the Gospel that called on them to abandon the Law ... They were concerned ... paraphrased they asked: You ignored the traditions of the Fathers and treated them as socially equals.**

**Acts 11:4 But Peter rehearsed [*the matter*] from the beginning, and expounded [*it*] by order unto them, saying,**

**The issue introduced by the Jerusalem critics was racial and social. But Peter treated the problem as though it dealt with receiving the Gentiles for Baptism.**

**Acts 11:5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:**

**Acts 11:6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.**

**Acts 11:7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.**

**Acts 11:8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.**

**Acts 11:9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, [*that*] call not thou common.**

**Acts 11:10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.**

**Acts 11:11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.**

**Acts 11:12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:**

**Acts 11:13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;**

**Acts 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.**

**Have you ever met a non-Christian that you just thought was the finest person in the world? One that would do something for anyone and whose lifestyle seemed to make him the finest of husband, fathers, and citizens? A man can not be saved by morality, religion, personal goodness, good family, praying or giving.**

**Yet we must all have a savior.**

**Ezekiel 14: 14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver [*but*] their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.**

**Romans 3:10-12 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one**

**John 14: 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

**Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.**

**Acts 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.**

**Acts 11:17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as [*he did*] unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?**

**Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**

**Their real objection was muted ... the conclusion that repentance unto life brings an equality of benefits of fellowship.**

**To baptize a person and refuse to eat with them fails to recognize the significance of Baptism and the meaning of redemption.**

**Notice the three verbs in 11:18.**

**First: “they held their peace.” The first indicates the criticism was stifled.**

**Second: they “glorified God.” The second says for that even for a believing Jew for a Gentile to be of equal value to God was astounding.**

**Third: that God “granted repentance...” The third is of special note by its structure (aorist tense) Luke points out that these believing Jews were reluctant to adopt such acceptance of the Gentiles as a policy for the future ...**

**The verb indicates that they thought this was probably a onetime action ...**

**But for this once they conceded that God worked a moral miracle ...**

**But they were not committing themselves to a permanent principle.**

**It will be years and many struggles before Saul who became Paul could say:**

**Ephesians 2:12-19 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [*between us*]; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, [*even*] the law of commandments [*contained*] in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, [*so*] making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;**

**The reception of people and other races and cultures is to be a continuing problem throughout the Book of Acts and other generations right up to today.**

**Everywhere but the Main Street Church of Christ ...**

**O yes I am sure God would answer me as he answered Elijah ...**

**I Kings 19:18 Yet I have left [me] seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.**

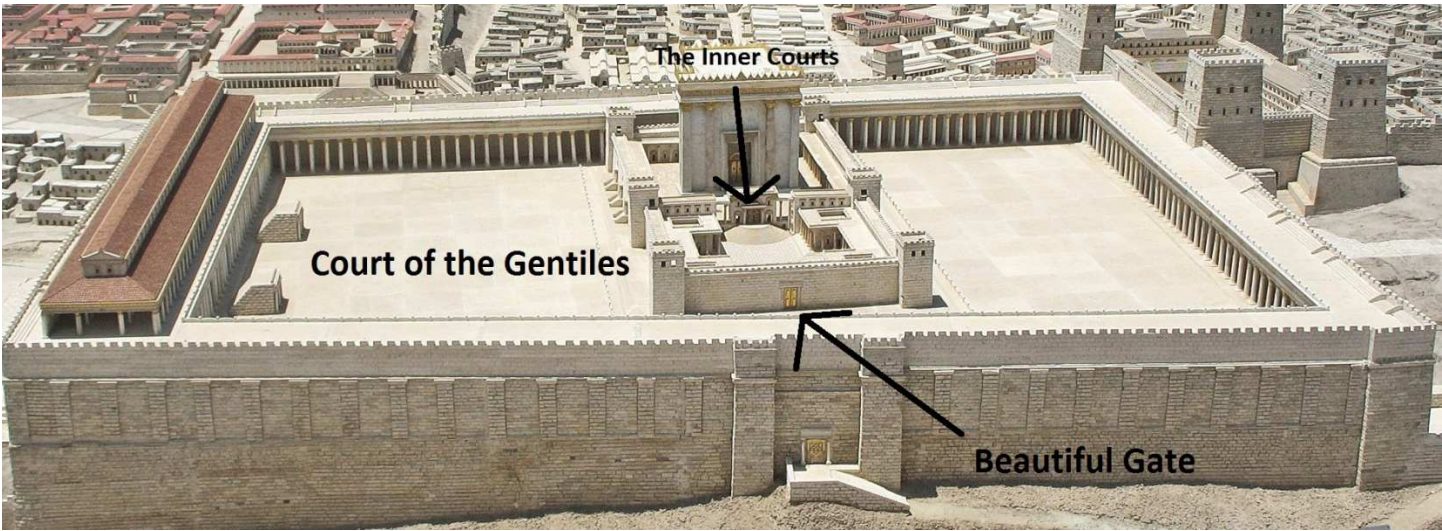
**Sources: KJV, theWord.com, B.W. Johnson, Coffman, Clarke and J.W. McGarvey Commentary, World Conquest, Acts By George Faull & Google Images**



**Translation of Inscription:**

**No one of alien racial stock may proceed within the balustrade surrounding the Sanctuary and encompassed court. Whoever ventures inside shall be responsible for his own death.**





**The Outer Court**



