

# ACTS

## Chapter 10

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment.<sup>2</sup> He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.<sup>3</sup> One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”<sup>4</sup> Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.<sup>5</sup> Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.<sup>6</sup> He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”<sup>7</sup> When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.<sup>8</sup> He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

**10:1** *Caesarea.* Located 30 miles north of Joppa and named in honor of Augustus Caesar, it was the headquarters for the Roman forces of occupation (see also note on 8:40).

*Cornelius.* A Latin name made popular when Cornelius Sulla liberated some 10,000 slaves over 100 years earlier. These had all taken his family name, Cornelius.

*centurion.* Commanded a military unit that normally numbered at least 100 men (see note on Lk 7:2). The Roman legion (about 6,000 men) was divided into ten regiments, each of which had a designation. This was the “Italian” (another was the “Imperial,” or “Augustan,” 27:1). A centurion commanded about a sixth of a regiment. Centurions were carefully selected; all of them mentioned in the NT appear to have had noble qualities (e.g., Lk 7:5). The Roman centurions provided necessary stability to the entire Roman system.

**10:2** ALL HIS FAMILY – “Family” really means “household” here and would include servants and slaves, not only wife and children. (PBC)

*devout.* In spite of all his good deeds, Cornelius needed to hear the way of salvation from a human messenger. The role of the angel (v. 3) was to bring Cornelius and Peter together (cf. 8:26; 9:10). – There were two classes of converts to Judaism. They were technically called “proselytes of the gate” and “proselytes of righteousness.” Proselytes of righteousness” were former Gentiles who had become Jews in the full sense of the word, having submitted to all the requirements for membership, including circumcision. “Proselytes of the gate” were not circumcised and were required to observe only the basic requirements of avoiding idolatry, blasphemy, disobedience to magistrates, murder, fornication and incest, robbery and theft, and eating blood. Both the centurion and the Ethiopian treasurer were likely “proselytes of the gate.” Like the Ethiopian, Cornelius was well studied in the Scriptures before his conversion. This is an important point, for it prepared them to receive Jesus as the messiah promised in the OT. (LL)

*God-fearing.* The term used of one who was not a full Jewish proselyte but who believed in one God and respected the moral and ethical teachings of the Jews.

**10:3** *about three in the afternoon.* Another indication that Cornelius followed Jewish religious practices. Three in the afternoon was a Jewish hour of prayer (see 3:1)—the hour of the evening incense.

*a vision.* Not a dream or trance but a revelation through an angel to Cornelius while at prayer (see v. 30; see also note on 9:11).

**10:4** *memorial offering.* A portion of the grain offering burned on the altar was called a “memorial” (Lev 2:2).

**10:5–6** *Joppa ... Simon the tanner.* See notes on 9:36, 43.

<sup>9</sup> About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup> He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup> Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” <sup>14</sup> “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” <sup>15</sup> The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” <sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. <sup>17</sup> While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. <sup>18</sup> They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. <sup>19</sup> While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three <sup>a</sup> men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” <sup>21</sup> Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?” <sup>22</sup> The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” <sup>23</sup> Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

**10:9** *roof to pray.* It was customary for eastern houses to have flat roofs with outside stairways. The roof was used as a convenient place for relaxation and privacy.

**10:10** *fell into a trance.* A state of mind God produced and used to communicate with Peter. It was not merely imagination or a dream. Peter’s consciousness was heightened to receive the vision from God.

**10:12** *all kinds of four-footed animals.* Including animals both clean and unclean according to Lev 11.

**10:14** *Surely not, Lord!* So deeply ingrained was the observance of the laws of clean and unclean that Peter refused to obey immediately.

*impure or unclean.* Anything common (impure) was forbidden by the law to be eaten.

**10:15** *God has made clean.* Jesus had already laid the groundwork for setting aside the laws of clean and unclean food (Mt 15:11; see 1Ti 4:3–5).

**10:16** *three times.* To make a due impression on Peter.

**10:23** *invited the men into the house.* By providing lodging for them, Peter was already taking the first step toward accepting Gentiles. Such intimate relationship with Gentiles was contrary to prescribed Jewish practice

**The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.<sup>24</sup> The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.<sup>25</sup> As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.<sup>26</sup> But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”<sup>27</sup> Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.<sup>28</sup> He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.<sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”<sup>30</sup> Cornelius answered: “Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me<sup>31</sup> and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.<sup>32</sup> Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’<sup>33</sup> So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism<sup>35</sup> but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.<sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.<sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—<sup>8</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.**

<sup>39</sup>“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree,<sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.<sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.<sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.<sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.<sup>45</sup> The circumcised

believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.<sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in tongues<sup>a</sup> and praising God. Then Peter said,<sup>47</sup> “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”<sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

**10:23** *The next day.* It was too late in the day to start out on the long journey to Caesarea (see note on v. 1).

*some of the brothers.* Six in number (11:12), they were Jewish in background (10:45).

**10:26** *I am only a man.* Possibly Cornelius was only intending to honor Peter as one having a rank superior to his own, since he was God’s messenger. But Peter allowed no chance for misunderstanding—he was not to be worshiped as more than a created being.

**10:28** *God has shown me.* Peter recognized that his vision had deeper significance than declaring invalid the distinction between clean and unclean meat; he saw that the barrier between Jew and Gentile had been removed (see Eph 2:11–22).

**10:30** *Four days ago.* The Jews counted a part of a day as a day: (1) the day the angel appeared to Cornelius, (2) the day the messengers came to Joppa and Peter received a vision, (3) the day the group set out from Joppa and (4) the day they arrived at Cornelius’s house.

*a man in shining clothes.* Common language to describe an angel when appearing in the form of a man.

**10:34** *God does not show favoritism.* God does not favor an individual because of his station in life, his nationality or his material possessions (see note on Jas 2:1). He does, however, respect his character and judge his work. This is evident because God “accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (v. 35). Cornelius already worshiped the true God, but this was not enough: He lacked faith in Christ (v. 36).

**10:36** *peace.* Between God and man (reconciliation).

*Lord of all.* Lord of both Jew and Gentile (see vv. 34–35).

**10:37** *after the baptism that John preached.* Similar to the outline of Mark’s Gospel, Peter’s sermon begins with John’s baptism and continues to the resurrection of Jesus. This is significant since the early church fathers viewed Mark as the “interpreter” of Peter (see Introduction to Mark: Author). See previous summaries of Peter’s preaching (2:14–41; 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32); see also note on 2:14–40.

**10:38** *how God anointed Jesus.* See Isa 61:1–3; Lk 4:18–21.

**10:39** *hanging him on a tree.* See note on 5:30.

**10:41** *who ate and drank.* Those who ate with Jesus after he rose from the dead received unmistakable evidence of his bodily resurrection (see Lk 24:42–43; Jn 21:12–15).

**10:44** *the Holy Spirit came on.* See 8:16 and note.

**10:45** **POURED OUT EVEN ON THE GENTILES** – By giving these Gentiles the same gift He gave the apostles and others at Pentecost, the Lord was dramatically demonstrating that He had broken down the wall of separation. They, as Gentiles, were no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household (Eph. 2:19).

*astonished ... even on the Gentiles.* Apparently the early Jewish Christians failed to understand that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews, and that they would share alike in the benefits of redemption. Gentile proselytes to Judaism, however, were accepted (see 6:5).

**10:47** *Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?* † The Gentiles had received the same gift (11:17) as the Jewish believers. This was unavoidable evidence that the invitation to the kingdom was open to Gentiles as well as to Jews.