

Week 18

The Ministry of Peter to the Gentiles

Cornelius & Peter

As we begin chapter 10, we see the ministry of Peter broadens in scope after his encounter with God in a vision, in verses 9-16. This is a turning point in the book as we see the God showing not only Peter, as an Apostle, but to Cornelius and his family that the good news of the gospel is for everyone, regardless of race.

Cornelius is a Centurion, which gives him command over 100 men. His regiment is called the “Italian Cohort”, which is known to be a group of Roman men who were not accepted into the Roman Praetorian Guard, and thus volunteered to go to Caesarea and serve. Caesarea was an important port city in the northern part of the nation of Israel, which was also the summer palace of King Herod the Great who built up the city as a seaport and naming it for Caesar.

It is important to note a few things about Cornelius. Luke tells us that although he was Roman, he was a believer in the God of Jews, Yahweh. Luke also notes importantly that he wasn’t just any believer, but that he was “God-fearing”, and one who gave generously the needs of God’s people.

God chose Cornelius for his righteousness, though not even a convert to the Jewish faith, through which to open the faith to the whole world. Cornelius is revered as a saint by some churches in both the East and the West.

It is also important to note that Cornelius obeys exactly what God tells him to do, by sending for the Apostle Peter.

On the very next day, we read about Peter’s vision from the Lord, while he was in a time of prayer. It had to be shocking to Peter to hear God telling him to eat everything that was considered unclean, from the beginning of the Mosaic law. The dietary laws had always been a major distinction between God’s chosen people and the world, and now that was going away, what a culture shock that must have been for Peter.

Luke tells us that Peter received the vision three times, suggesting that Peter was having trouble processing this as an authentic command from the Lord. Certainly, Peter was reminded of his thrice denial of Jesus before the crucifixion, and Jesus restoring him three times after the resurrection (John 21:15-21). However, the Lord was clear that nothing He made should be considered “unclean.” This is in keeping with the original Creation account when God said that everything, He made was good. The time of ‘uncleanness’ was only for a time, but now that Christ had come, He was not only Redeemer of humanity, but of all creations.

B. THE CONVERSION OF SAUL (9:1-30). KEY PERSON # 3

1. Saul's Vision of Jesus (9:1-9)
2. Ananias Ministers to Saul (9:10-19a)
3. Paul Proclaims Jesus as the Christ (9:19b-30)

C. THE STATE OF THE CHURCH (9:31)

D. THE MINISTRY OF PETER (9:32-11:18)

1. Peter in Lydda: Aeneas is healed (9:32-35)
2. Peter in Joppa: Tabitha is raised from the dead (9:36-43)
3. Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8)
4. Peter's Vision (10:9-16)
5. Peter Goes with the Men from Cornelius (10:17-22)
6. The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit (10:23-48)
7. Peter Defends Himself Before the Jerusalem Church (11:1-18)

