

Acts 10: Cornelius, Peter & The Conversion Of Gentiles.

I. (1-8) Cornelius's Vision.

Caesarea was a city on the shores of the Mediterranean. It was the headquarters of the Roman governor of the province of Judea, Pontius Pilate. Cornelius served in the Roman Army, something that would have made him all the more hated by any patriotic Jew. Cornelius **feared God** and was supportive of the Jewish people. An angel appears to Cornelius requesting him to invite Peter (not knowing whether or not he would come) who was supposed to tell him what to do.

First, there was so much animosity between Jews and gentiles; secondly the Jews were proud of being God's own. A Jewish man would begin every day with a prayer thanking God that he was not a slave, a Gentile, or a woman. Jewish prejudice was an oath that promised that one would never help a Gentile under any circumstances, such as giving directions if they were asked, refusing to help a Gentile woman giving birth - because the result would only be bringing another Gentile into the world.

If a Jew married a Gentile, the Jewish community would have a funeral for the Jew and consider them dead. It was thought that to even enter the house of a Gentile made a Jew unclean before God.

Isaiah 60:1-3 - Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

The Gentiles gave as good as they got from the Jews. Gentiles despised Jews as weird traditionalists, and believed that they were evil plotters who worshipped pigs. After all, Jews betrayed Jesus and refused to eat pork, so they must worship pigs!

II. (9-23) Peter's Vision.

As God was speaking to Cornelius, He was also speaking to Peter himself. That's how God operates. He speaks to several people about a matter, not just one.

Peter's vision obviously goes against his commitment as a Jew, which was to never eat anything except animals, plants and birds deemed clean by the Law. This was a mixture of clean and unclean animals. God responds clearly to Peter: What God has cleansed (declared clean) you must not call common (impure, unholy, and unacceptable to God).

At this point, Peter believes that God is speaking about food. But shortly, Peter is up for a surprise. Normally, a godly Jew like Peter would not associate with Gentiles - worse yet, a Roman soldier. Peter had to put away his traditions and prejudices in light of God's command.

III. (24-48) Conversion of Gentiles.

By entering a Gentile's home, Peter is showing that his heart and mind have changed, and that he has learned the lesson of the vision of the great sheet. Peter understood that the vision was about people, not food. Jesus spoke of this principle:

Mark 7:19 - *Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart, but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?*

Our sinful/selfish mind tells us to discriminate people according to their external appearance; skin color, tribe, economic status, nationality or bad past experiences with them. Christianity disregards racial, cultural, national or any differences.

Deuteronomy 10:17 - *For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.*

God does not discriminate; His love is the same for all because He made us all in His image, **whoever believes** Jew or Gentile! Black or white! Rich or poor!

God promised Abraham, and his descendants, that the blessing that came through him would extend to all nations ***Genesis 12:1-4***. We must not discriminate anyone for any reason.

James 2:1-4 - *My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?*

James 2:8-9 - *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*