

Acts 10: The Consummation of the Acceptance of Gentiles

Cornelius - never met him until now, but we have met centurions before:

Matthew(8) & Luke(7) all share the account of:

- A centurion of great faith whose beloved servant was healed.

Matthew(27), Mark(15) & Luke(23) share the account of:

- A centurion who witness the crucifixion of Christ and professed that Jesus both WAS innocent and WAS truly the Son of God.

A Roman Centurion

- Could have been in charge of as many as 100 men
- Similar to rank of captain in modern military
- Scripture always paints centurions in favorable light as men of upstanding character
- Commentators have said that, for the rank of centurion, Rome sought men of stable, even tempered judgement, faithfulness and trustworthiness.
 - If the battle went poorly for the Romans, the centurion would be the last man fighting, the last man standing, the last to die at their post.

V1- Cornelius:

- Is a Centurion
- V2 - Is devout
Is God fearing
Gives to the poor "generously"
Prays continually...
To God (the one true God)

V3: If Jewish day begins at 6am, puts this at 3pm.

V4: Angel addresses him

- (aggelos, messenger from God)
- He's terrified. Not what we picture of angels
 - o Either he's afraid of naked babies with halos and wings, or we have wrong concept.
- *Stares in terror, but answers "What is it Lord?"*
- *"Your prayers/alms have ascended as memorial.*
 - Cornelius is not addressed because of his alms giving/good deeds.
 - His alms-giving and good deeds reveal the openness of his heart.

V5-6: *Send for Simon (called Peter)*

- Staying w/ Simon tanner in Joppa

V7-8: He does it. Just like that.

V9: @Noon, Cornelius' people approach Joppa
(these guys had traveled around 35-40 miles)

- Peter on rooftop to pray

V10: While he was praying

- Starts getting hungry
- Calls down to get the meal prepared
- While they were preparing food, he falls into trance.
 - Not a "hunger trance", definitely divine, but food and hunger came into play

V11: The Vision:

"11 and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. 12In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

Second vision of this pericope.

- All kinds of animals
- Reptiles! Yuk!
- Kill and eat. No "cook", no direction on what to avoid.

V14: Peter, being Holier than Jesus, tells God "no"

- Why? "I've never eaten anything unclean, (and I'm not about to start)".

V15: The voice comes again, "What God has made clean, don't call "common"

- V16: Just to be sure, this happens 3x

V17-18: Peter is perplexed.

- Not sure what this all means, probably not thinking God literally wanted him to start eating reptiles.
 - Right then, the expedition from Caesarea arrive at the gate.

V19-20: The voice who has been conversing with Peter is identified: The Spirit

- Tells him to go with them.
- Under normal circumstances (at this time) this could have gone WAY bad.
 - o But Peter trusts the Spirit and obeys.

V21: • "I'm who you're looking for"

- What's your purpose/mission?

V22: They relate the story to Him

V23: *He invites them in to be his guests.*

- Hasn't pushed the envelope, nothing any Jew would denounce him for.
 - They all leave the next day.

V24: Cornelius has invited everyone, friend/family to hear from God through Peter.

V25-26: Cornelius falls at Peter's feet.

- Peter stands him up
- • No special ceremony to approach Peter.
- • Appropriate, he's just another sinner like him.

V27: Peter sees gathered crowd.

- Usually no bueno for Jews to enter Gentile homes/touch gentiles (ceremonial cleansing)
- But God just taught me a lesson about clean/unclean
 - o Jesus had previously schooled Pharisees on this:
 - (Mark 7:15) *Not what goes into mouth that defiles, but what comes out.*

V34: So now, Peter begins:

“34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: *“Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*”

V44-46

- While Peter is speaking “the Spirit Holy Spirit fell” on all who listened
- Jewish believers with Peter were blown away.
 - Cuz Spirit poured upon gentiles.

V47: Lets get some water up in here.

- An outward act of obedience
- A declaration for Jesus
- Calvary Cork having class after service today.

V48: *“And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.”*

While there are key figures involved...

The One Orchestrating This Entire Episode: The Holy Spirit

3 Major Interactions With the Holy Spirit:

1. The drawing of the Spirit
 - Spirit drew BOTH sides, not just the one or the other

2. The yielding to the Spirit
 - Both sides had to be yielded to the Spirit's working, not just the one or the other.
3. The ratification by the Spirit
 - The radical outpouring of the Spirit illustrates the acceptance/unity in the body.

The fruit: The credit all goes to the Spirit

- No one party could take credit for the work of the Spirit.

Why did Spirit Become So Directly Involved in Church Matters?

- Whether knew it or not, all parties had **"room for more"**.

Cornelius had room for more: (growth toward maturity)

Peter had room for more: (growth toward maturity)

The church had room for more: (growth numerically, in maturity)

Cornelius had room to grow:

- Although he was devout, ignorant concerning salvation through Christ.
 - Probably knew about Jesus simply by having ear to grapevine.
- Obvious by his lifestyle and his actions after encountering God that he was a God-fearing seeker.
 - Jer. 29:13 - *you will seek me and find me, if you seek with whole heart.*
 - God looks at the hearts of such people and gives opportunity for fuller knowledge of Him.

Peter had room to grow:

- Raised in devout Jewish community in Galileo.
 - Zionist movements/rebellions came several times from this region
 - Region of radical, militant fundamentalism.
 - Bar Mitzvah-ed at 13
 - Would have deep knowledge of both law and traditions.
- But up until this point, never had to let go of his traditions and embraced unity with gentile believers.
- This was good practice in the present pericope, but would need to be refreshed (Galatians 2:11)

Church had room to grow:

- God had always intended to bring gentiles and Jews together for a common salvation.
 - Gen. 3:15 - salvation for mankind, not just Jew-kind.
 - Gen. 22:18 - Abraham's seed= all nations shall be blessed.
 - As Jesus prophesied - Luke 20 - Parable of Evil Tenants - after rejection of Son, Vineyard owner would destroy tenants and give vineyard to others (temporary)

- This event began a movement that would catch like wildfire throughout the known world for the next 2,000 years
 - Of which we are direct beneficiaries

We have room to grow. (maturity)

- Neither Cornelius nor Peter were particularly “looking” for areas of incomplete understanding or application of the gospel in their lives, outside of a general pursuit.
 - Yet the Spirit saw the need for a more complete revelation for both.
 - There is always room for a greater understanding on our part.
- Paul declares that he isn’t done/perfect (Phil. 3:12)
 - Paul’s didactical advice isn’t for “less matured” believers.
 - It's for all of us, even for himself. We all need to grow.
- 1 John 1:8: If we say that we have no sin...

The church continues to have room to grow (mature)

- Paul later **equates unity** in the church **to maturity**
- “when the **whole body, held together** by **every joint** that it has been equipped or **provided with**, when **each part** is **working properly**, makes the body grow, and builds itself up in love.”

Ephesians 4:11-16:

11 and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”