

**The Way**  
**Birth of the Church**  
Lesson 07: Jesus Sent Peter to Teach the Gentiles  
*\*We are indebted to [Ethnos360](#) for providing the basis of these lessons\**

**Review (Where We've Been)**

***The Way of the Early Church...***

- They believed, were baptized, and behaved
- They preached Jesus as the only way to salvation
- They were bold in the face of persecution (Peter/John, Stephen, church)
- Saul (once a persecutor of Christians) believes, is baptized, and begins preaching

**BIG Idea**

Following the death and resurrection of Christ, Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) who were in Christ were united into one family.

**Ephesians 2:14 (NLT)** For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

This was complicated because Jews despised Gentiles because they were not from the family of Abraham and were not circumcised, as the law of Moses commanded.

***How was this displayed in daily life?***

- **Limited Witness** - The Jews had only witnessed to those who were circumcised and worshipped the Lord according to the laws given to Moses
- **Refusal to Fellowship** - The Jews refused to go into the homes of Gentiles and eat with them unless they had become members of the Jewish religion by being circumcised
- **Lack of Understanding** - The Jews who had accepted Jesus as Deliverer had not yet realized that a change had taken place through the death and resurrection of Jesus. They didn't realize that circumcision (and other ceremonies) had ceased to be necessary because Jesus had fully satisfied God on the behalf of all those who trusted in Him.

Since the good news was now being spread to the whole world, God would need to break down the hatred that existed between the two so that the Gospel could go to the ends of the earth.

## Information (What You Need to Know)

It has always been God's plan to offer salvation to all people through the Deliverer promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 (Land, Nation, Deliverer).

**Genesis 12:3 (ESV)** "...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

**Galatians 3:8 (ESV)** ...the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you."

The Lord taught *salvation for all* to the Apostle Peter and used him to tell the story of the Deliverer to uncircumcised Gentiles, starting with a man named **Cornelius**.

### **The Story of Cornelius and Peter...**

#### ■ **Cornelius was a Roman soldier and Gentile Believer**

##### ✓ **Roman soldier**

**Acts 10:1 (ESV)** At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort...

"He lived in Caesarea (headquarters of the Roman governor of the province of Judea) and was a captain in charge of 100 soldiers from Italy."



##### ✓ **Gentile Believer**

**Acts 10:2 (ESV)** ...a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.

"Cornelius was in the category of what the Jews called *God-fearers* (one who feared God). These were Gentiles who loved the God of Israel; they were sympathetic to and supportive of the Jewish faith. Yet they stopped short of becoming full Jews in lifestyle and in circumcision. – David Guzik

#### ■ **An angel of God tells Cornelius in a vision to have Peter brought to his house**

**Acts 10:3 (ESV)** ...he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." **4** And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. **5** And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. **6** He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. **7** When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, **8** and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa."

■ **God prepares Peter to enter the house of an uncircumcised Gentile**

- ✓ Peter prays and falls into a trance

**Acts 10:9 (NLT)** The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, **10** and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

- ✓ Peter sees (in a vision) all sorts of kosher and non-kosher animals displayed on a sheet-like background

**Acts 10:11 (NLT)** He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. **12** In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds.

“Leviticus 11 lists dietary restrictions given to Israel, including prohibitions against eating pork, shrimp, shellfish and many types of seafood, most insects, scavenger birds, and various other animals. The dietary rules were never intended to apply to anyone other than the Israelites. The purpose of the food laws was to make the Israelites distinct from all other nations.” – Got Questions

- ✓ The voice of God tells Peter to kill and eat the animals, but he refused

**Acts 10:13 (NLT)** Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.” **14** “No, Lord,” Peter declared. “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.”

- ✓ The Lord used this vision to prepare Peter to go to Cornelius, a Gentile

**Acts 10:15 (NLT)** But the voice spoke again: “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.” **16** The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

“More than just abolishing the OT dietary restrictions, God made unity possible in the church of both Jews, symbolized by the clean animals, and Gentiles, symbolized by the unclean animals, through the comprehensive sacrificial death of Christ.” – John MacArthur

*What was this vision supposed to teach?*

- Jewish dietary laws were abolished through the death of Jesus
- All who believed in Jesus are made clean through His death and resurrection
- Jews could associate with Gentiles to bring them the gospel

- ✓ Peter is taken to the house of Cornelius

**Acts 10:23 (NLT)** The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa. **24** They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

## Application (What You Need To Do):

### *What was the result of Peter entering the home of the Gentile, Cornelius?*

- Peter's heart was changed toward Gentiles  
**Acts 10:28 (NLT)** Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean."
- Peter preached the Gospel to Cornelius and his household  
**Acts 10:33 (NLT)** "So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you." **34** Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. **35** In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. **36** This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all... **43** He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."
- Cornelius and his household believed and were baptized  
**Acts 10:44 (NLT)** Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. **45** The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. **46** For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, **47** "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" **48** So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

"These Gentiles had come to genuine saving faith in Christ and had received the new covenant power and fullness of the Holy Spirit, which was a sign that they had been accepted by God as full and equal members of his people. The fact that they had not followed any Mosaic ceremonial laws (such as those concerning circumcision, sacrifice, and dietary restrictions) before receiving the gift of the Spirit is an important point." – ESV Study Bible