

# Acts The Gospel on the Move

## Study 10

### Conversion of Cornelius: Birth of Missions

#### Acts 10-11

##### A. Introduction to Cornelius

###### **Acts 10:1-8 (NIV)**

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. 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!"

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. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

Then the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

##### **1. Fill in the Blanks. According to the video lecture, fill in the blanks on the sequence of events that happened in Acts 10-11.**

Verse	Event
Acts 10:1-8	Cornelius vision
Acts 10:9-16	Peter's vision
Acts 10:19-33	Spirit tells Peter to go with Gentiles
Acts 10:34-47	Peter preaches the gospel with Cornelius
Acts 11:1-18	Peter reports back to Jerusalem church

## B. God Redefined Clean

### Acts 10:9-15 (NIV)

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

2. a) **Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Which of the following does the Clean and Unclean (pure and impure) system illustrate?**

A. Hygiene

B. Spiritual distance from God

b) **Fill in the Blanks. According to the video lecture, fill in the blanks on the Three Categories of the Holy, Clean, and Unclean system.**

	Holy	Clean	Unclean
Animal	Sacrificed	Eaten	Not Eaten
People	Priest	Israel	Gentiles
Space	Temple	Land	Nations

## C. Gentiles Made Clean

### Acts 10:25-28 (NIV)

As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit

a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.

**3. Discussion Question. According to the video lecture, what is significant about this occasion?**

The divide between Jews and Gentiles has been broken and it is okay for a Jew to go to a Gentile's house.

D. The Praying Seeker

**Acts 10:30-31 (NLT)**

Cornelius replied, "Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. He told me, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God!'"

**Acts 10:34-36 (NLT)**

Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. 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."

**Acts 10:42-43 (NLT)**

And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."

**4. Discussion Question. It seems like Cornelius is not a Jew but is God-fearing and acceptable to God, does this mean that even non-believers like these are saved?**

No. If they were saved then there is no need for Cornelius to find Simon Peter to hear and accept the gospel to be saved (Acts 10:22, 42-43, Acts 11:13-14), he could have just stayed home and continued his own god-fearing life without meeting Simon Peter.

E. Peter's Gospel

**Acts 10:37-43 (NIV)**

You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 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.

“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 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. 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. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

**5. Reflection Question. If you are an audience listening to Peter’s gospel, which part of his testimony would stand out to you the most?**

#### F. Gentile Pentecost

##### **Acts 10:44-46a (NIV)**

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

**6. Discussion Question. Why was it surprising and important that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles?**

Because Gentiles were considered unclean in the Jewish system but the gifts from the Holy Spirit indicate that they are accepted by God if they believe. This was promised in the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 12:2-3 and the prophecy that nations will come to God’s light though the Jews in Isaiah 60:1-3.

##### **Quick Verse Reference**

Genesis 12:2-3 (NIV)

“I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth

will be blessed through you.”

Isaiah 60:1-3 (NIV)

“Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.  
See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the Lord rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.  
Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

#### G. Baptism Sequence

**Acts 10:46b-48 (NIV)**

Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” 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.

**7. Discussion Question. The Gentiles received the Holy Spirit before they were baptised with water and it appears vice versa elsewhere. What is the problem with insisting there is a two-step baptism sequence with tongues?**

- The teaching is nowhere else taught in the NT, hence to base theology on something that happened 3 times is difficult (Acts 2, Acts 10 and Acts 19)
- These three were special circumstances in Jerusalem, Samaria, Cornelius’s house, and Ephesus that made speaking in tongues especially helpful in communicating the truth that the Holy Spirit was creating a new unified body of Jew and Samaritan and Gentile.
- Acts records at least nine other conversion stories, but never again mentions a two step sequence with tongues
- Paul says in 1 Cor 12:30 that “not all speak in tongues
- Jesus taught in Acts 1: 8 that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to bring power to witness, not tongues specifically

#### H. Jewish Response

**Acts 11:18 (NLT)**

**When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They**

said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

8. Reflection Question. Do you see the act of repenting as "privilege"?

#### Takeaway

In Acts 10-11, we see the convicting factors for Apostle Peter to accept Gentile Christians, these were:

- Vision of unclean animals
- Spirit commands him to go with the men
- News of angel appearing to Cornelius
- Holy Spirit experience similar to the disciples

#### Case Study

##### Case 1 – The Hebrew Roots Movement

Although there are many different and diverse Hebrew Roots assemblies with variations in their teachings, they all adhere to a common emphasis on recovering the "original" Jewishness of Christianity. Their assumption is that the Church has lost its Jewish roots and is unaware that Jesus and His disciples were Jews living in obedience to the Torah.

For the most part, those involved advocate the need for every believer to walk a Torah-observant life. This means that the ordinances of the Mosaic Covenant must be a central focus in the lifestyle of believers today as it was with the Old Testament Jews of Israel.

Keeping the Torah includes keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week (Saturday), celebrating the Jewish feasts and festivals, keeping the dietary laws, avoiding the "paganism" of Christianity (Christmas, Easter, etc.), and learning to understand the Scriptures from a Hebrew mindset. They teach that Gentile Christians have been grafted into Israel, and this is one reason every born-again believer in Jesus the Messiah is to participate in these observances. It is expressed that doing this is not required out of legalistic bondage, but out of a heart of love and obedience. However, they teach that to live a life that pleases God, this Torah-observant walk must be part of that life.

Full article: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Hebrew-roots.html>

1. a) Discussion question. Is there anything wrong with the Hebrew Roots Movement?

**b) Discussion question. Is there anything wrong with celebrating the Sabbath on Saturday and keeping the Jewish dietary laws?**

**c) Discussion question. Is there anything wrong with celebrating the Jewish feasts and festivals, avoiding the "paganism" of Christianity (Christmas, Easter, etc.)?**

**d) Discussion question. What are the bible passages you would point to against dietary laws?**

**Romans 14:20 (NIV)**

**Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.**

**e) Discussion question. Is one culture or language superior to others? Does God have a preference for one culture over another?**

**f) Discussion question. Do we need to be Jewish to be believers/Christians?**