

# Cornelius And His Household

**Introduction.** This lesson is about the conversion of Cornelius and his household and the events by which salvation through Jesus Christ was offered to the Gentiles.

## I. *Historical Background*

- A. At the time the events in Acts 10 occurred, the Roman army of occupation in Judea consisted of 5 cohorts, containing a total of approximately 3,000 men.
  - 1. A typical cohort consisted of 600 men. The Italian cohort of which Cornelius was a centurion was composed of Romans. The other four cohorts were composed mainly of Samaritans and Syrian Greeks.
  - 2. In Acts 27:1, it is mentioned that Julius was a centurion in the Augustan cohort also stationed at Caesarea. In Acts 23:18, Claudius Lysias is named as the commander of the large cohort (1,000 men) stationed at Jerusalem.
- B. The covenant of God with Abraham separated mankind into two groups: the Israelites and the Gentiles.
  - 1. This distinction was to be temporary, with the Jews being entrusted with the oracles of God. The Gentiles were not excluded from sharing in God's love by this arrangement.
  - 2. However, by the time of Christ, a great gulf separated the two groups. This was based upon nationalism, Jewish traditions, etc. The new covenant which Jesus made with mankind abolished the distinction made by Abraham's covenant but did not easily or always abolish those made by man.

## II. *Attributes Of Cornelius*

- A. His name meant "of a horn" and was that of a distinguished Roman family. Cornelius may, therefore, have been a man of political importance.
- B. His attributes (Acts 10:2, 22).
  - 1. Devout.
  - 2. Feared God with his household.
  - 3. Benevolent.
  - 4. Prayerful.
  - 5. Well-spoken of by the entire Jewish nation.
  - 6. A soldier.

## III. *God Selected Cornelius (Acts 10:3-48)*

- A. Cornelius' vision (vss. 3-8).
  - 1. The angel told Cornelius that he was pleasing to God.

2. He was instructed to send for Simon Peter.
  3. He immediately sent three men to Joppa for him.
- B. Peter's vision (vss. 9-16).
1. A voice instructed Peter to kill and eat unclean things three times.
  2. Peter refused each time as he had "never eaten anything that is common or unclean."
  3. Peter was perplexed by his vision.
- C. Peter sent to Cornelius (vss. 17-23).
1. Cornelius' servants arrived at Peter's lodging asking for him.
  2. The Spirit told Peter to accompany the men as "I have sent them."
  3. After inquiring of the men as to their mission, Peter gave them lodging and on the following day accompanied them to Caesarea. He took six brethren with him.
- D. Peter taught Cornelius (vss. 24-48).
1. Cornelius was prepared for Peter's arrival.
  2. He fell down to worship Peter. Peter forbade this worship saying, "I too am a man."
  3. Peter explained his vision.
  4. Cornelius told of his vision and why he had sent for Peter. Cornelius requested that Peter instruct him and his household.
  5. Peter preached the first gospel sermon to the Gentiles.
    - a) All righteous men were welcome to God.
    - b) He recounted Jesus' ministry, crucifixion and resurrection.
    - c) He was a chosen witness and was ordered to preach.
    - d) The Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household.
    - e) Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ after they had received the Holy Spirit as the apostles had on Pentecost.
- E. The Gentiles included in the church (Acts 11:1-26).
1. The brethren throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles has received the word of God.
  2. The brethren in Jerusalem took issue with Peter, saying, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."
  3. Peter told them of the events concerning himself and Cornelius.
  4. Peter summarized the matter, saying, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, ... what was I, that I could withstand God?"
  5. They then withdrew their opposition and glorified God.
  6. The gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles.
  7. Antioch became a center of Gentile conversion.
  8. Barnabas and Saul began their missionary work to the Gentiles from Antioch.

- F. Appropriate principles.
1. God's eternal plan included all men.
  2. God hears the prayers of righteous people.
  3. Man should submit to God and conform to his ways.
  4. God only is to be worshipped.
  5. Baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins.

**Conclusion.** Thus, through Cornelius, the Jews who accompanied Peter to Joppa learned that God loved and desired the salvation of the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6).

**Questions:**

1. What separated the Gentiles from God?
2. How could Cornelius, a Roman centurion, be well-spoken of by the entire Jewish nation?
3. Why was it necessary for the Holy Spirit to instruct Peter to accompany Cornelius' servants?
4. Since Cornelius was righteous and the Spirit fell upon him, why did he need to be baptized?
5. Describe the attitude of the Jewish brethren when they heard of the inclusion of the Gentiles.