

# Cornelius

Acts 10

# Cornelius Introduction

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- Jesus told his followers that they were to **make disciples of all the nations**.
- The Christians were still only a new and marginal faction within Judaism.

# Cornelius Introduction

- There were obstacles to change on both sides:
  - **The Jews** harbored serious prejudice against Gentiles.
  - **The Gentiles** were mostly confused by all the outward restrictions of Judaism – even if drawn to Israel's God.

# Cornelius Introduction

- How would Christianity become a movement that intended to reach the world?
- **Acts 10** tells us the story of a key step in this process.

# Cornelius    Acts 10    Outline

1. An angel appears to Cornelius.    10:1-8
2. Peter receives a vision.    10:9-16
3. The messengers come to get Peter.    10:17-23a
4. Peter meets Cornelius    10:23b-33
5. Peter tells Gentiles about Jesus.    10:34-43
6. The Gentiles believe.    10:44-48
7. Peter reviews the whole story.    11:1-18

An angel appears to Cornelius.

10:1-8

# An angel appears to Cornelius.

## 10:1-8

- **10:1** **Caesarea** was the capital of Roman Palestine. This is where Pontius Pilate the governor normally lived.
- A **centurion** was an officer in charge of 100 soldiers.
- **10:2** **one who feared God** Cornelius trusted in the God of Israel (but had not embraced a Jewish identity).

# An angel appears to Cornelius.

10:1-8

- 10:4 prayers and alms God remembered the prayers and generosity of this Roman officer.
- He remembers your prayers and generosity too.

Peter receives a vision.

10:9-16

- Meanwhile, in Joppa ...

Peter receives a vision.

10:9-16

- Up until now Peter had kept a kosher diet.
- God is revealing some of the changes he is making as the gospel is sent around the world.

Peter receives a vision.

10:9-16

*Had he stopped to think about what he was seeing, he might have been struck by the fact that all these animals were being lowered from heaven, suggesting that they were all coming from the hand of God.*

– Paul Mumo Kisau,  
Nairobi International School of Theology



Peter receives a vision.

10:9-16

- Peter did not immediately understand.
- God was preparing him for what was about to take place.

The messengers come to get Peter.

10:17-23a

The messengers come to get Peter.

10:17-23a

- The messengers from Cornelius arrive with perfect timing.
- Peter's vision of the sheet with animals has spiritually prepared him for their arrival.

Peter meets Cornelius.

10:23b-33

# Peter meets Cornelius.

10:23b-33

- 10:25-26 Peter won't receive the kind of honor Cornelius wants to give him.
- Godly men and angels in the Bible never do.
- (Jesus receives it because He deserves it.)

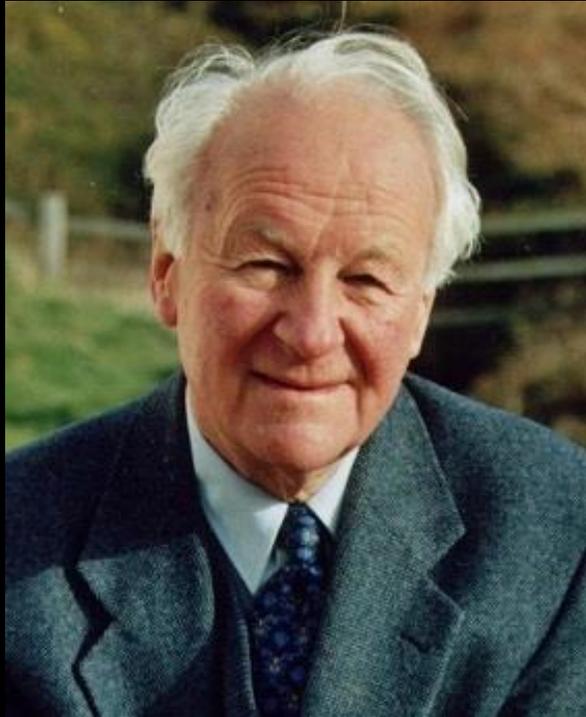
# Peter meets Cornelius.

10:23b-33

- 10:28-29 Peter will however break the Jewish custom of entering a Gentile house.
- The rabbis taught that *“the dwelling places of Gentiles are unclean.”*

Peter meets Cornelius.

10:23b-33

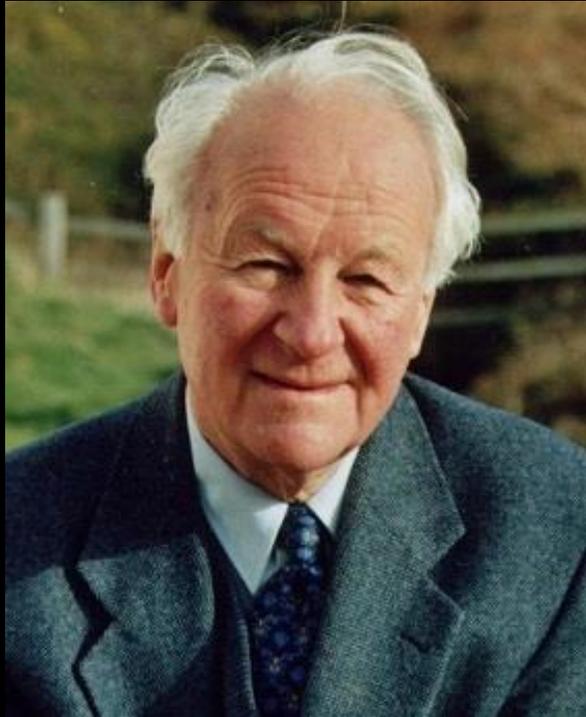


*Whether consciously or unconsciously, Peter had just now repudiated both extreme and opposite attitudes which human beings have sometimes adopted towards one another. He had come to see that it was entirely inappropriate either to worship somebody as if divine (which Cornelius had tried to do to him) ...*

– John Stott (1921 – 2011)

Peter meets Cornelius.

10:23b-33



*... or to reject somebody as if unclean (which he would previously have done to Cornelius). Peter refused both to be treated by Cornelius as if he were a god, and to treat Cornelius as if he were a dog.*

– John Stott (1921 – 2011)

# Peter meets Cornelius.

10:23b-33

- **10:33** Cornelius has a house full of people – Romans, Gentiles, not Jews – to hear what Peter has to say.

Peter tells Gentiles about Jesus.

10:34-43

# Peter tells Gentiles about Jesus.

10:34-43

- Peter explains the gospel.
- **10:36**    **He is Lord of all**    Some believe in a Jesus who has far less authority than this.
- Peter is not talking about a Jesus who is simply a great teacher or prophet or a man who sets a good example.

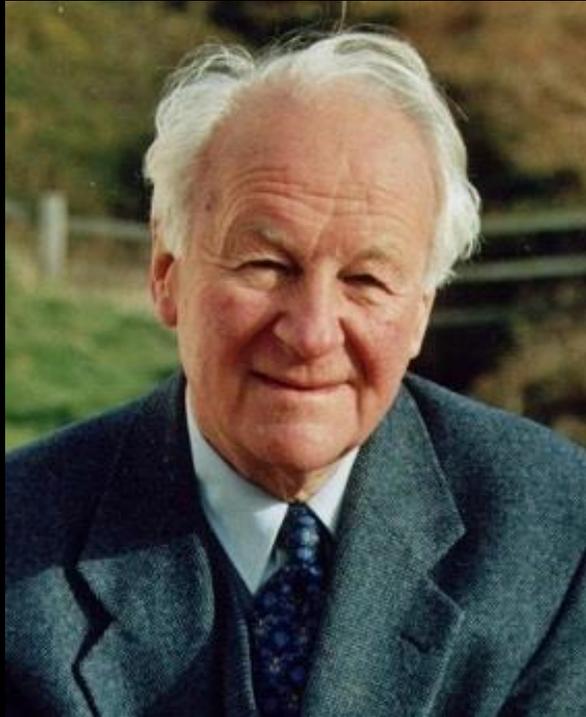
# Peter tells Gentiles about Jesus.

## 10:34-43

- 10:42 Judge of the living and the dead. We will all stand in judgment before Him someday.
- 10:43 forgiveness of sins through his name This is the main thing we need. Jesus offers it.
- Is that the Jesus you believe in?

Peter tells Gentiles about Jesus.

10:34-43

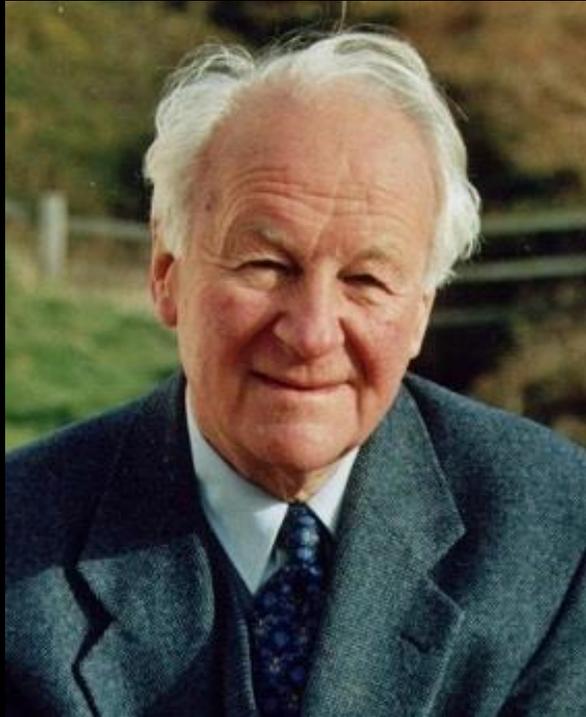


*Focusing on Jesus, Peter presented him as a historical person, in and through whom God was savingly at work, who now offered to believers salvation and escape from judgment ...*

– John Stott (1921 – 2011)

# Peter tells Gentiles about Jesus.

10:34-43



*Thus history, theology and gospel were again combined, as in other apostolic sermons. As Cornelius, his family, relatives, friends and servants listened, their hearts were opened to grasp and believe Peter's message, and so to repent and believe in Jesus.*

– John Stott (1921 – 2011)

The Gentiles believe.

10:44-48

# The Gentiles believe.

## 10:44-48

- **10:44** still saying these things God decided Peter had said enough.
- **10:48** These new Gentile believers were baptized – just like the Jews and Samaritans.
- From this point on the church has a Jewish-Gentile character.

Peter reviews the whole story.

11:1-18

# Peter reviews the whole story.

## 11:1-18

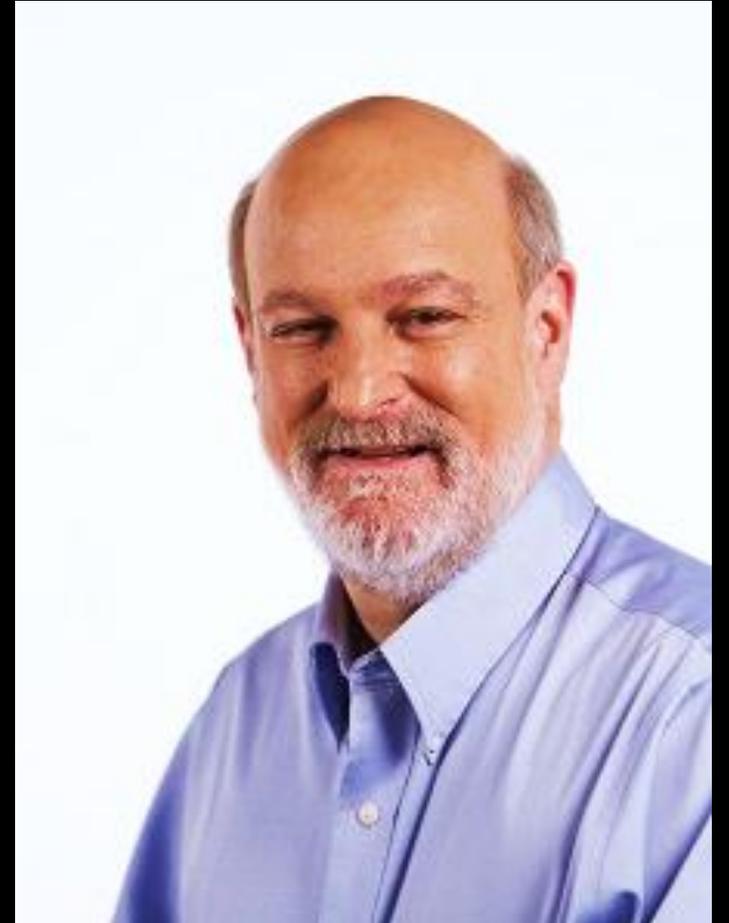
- Some people were opposed to what Peter did.
- He went against all of their ancient traditions.
- Peter explains his experience and others begin to agree.
- **Acts 15** gives the final decision of the Jerusalem Council.

Peter reviews the whole story.

11:1-18

*God takes the initiative. Jesus Christ is at the center of the plan. The Spirit confirms that all of this is God's work. The actions that take place represent the act and will of God working in harmony. The church does not lead here but follows God's leading, thereby learning a great deal about how God views people.*

– Darrell Bock,  
Dallas Theological Seminary



Cornelius

Conclusions

# Cornelius    Conclusions

- From Cornelius we learn:
  1. Religion is not enough – we still need Jesus.
  2. Being a good person is not enough – we still need Jesus.

# Cornelius    Conclusions

- From Peter we learn:
  1. God is making changes regarding Jewish law.
    - Civil and ceremonial aspects of the law are now being phased out by God.
    - (The moral code still applies – and maybe even becomes more rigid.)

# Cornelius    Conclusions

- From Peter we learn:
  2. Ethnic and religious prejudice cannot be part of the new, worldwide Christian movement.
  3. Whoever wants to may come to Jesus.

# Cornelius    Conclusions

- Questions to ask ourselves:
  1. Are there trapping of religion we rigidly hold on to that are not essential to the gospel or faith in Christ?
  2. Are there people we would rather not associate with because we somehow feel we are better than they are?
  3. Is there anyone we believe is simply beyond the reach of the gospel?

Cornelius

Closing Passage

# Cornelius Closing Passage

- **Ephesians 2:11-22** (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—

<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world ...

# Cornelius Closing Passage

- **Ephesians 2:11-22** (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

# Cornelius Closing Passage

- **Ephesians 2:11-22** (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ...

# Cornelius Closing Passage

- **Ephesians 2:11-22** (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.