



Many Questions, One Answer

Text: Acts 10:24-43

Note: The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

Acts 10:24-43

24 And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.
25 As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.
26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."
27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.
28 Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.
29 "Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"
30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,
31 "and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.
32 'Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'
33 "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."
34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.
35 "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.
36 "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ-- He is Lord of all--
37 "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:
38 "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who 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 things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

40 "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

41 "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

42 "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Who was Cornelius?

Cornelius was a Roman Centurion, a Gentile military officer of the empire that had authority over Israel.

Who was Peter, how would you describe him?

Peter was a workingman's Jew. He had not grown up being educated in the finer points of Jewish religious laws like the Pharisees who tried to trap Jesus but he did grow up with the common traditions of the Jews deeply embracing them.

How might Peter's Jewish traditions impact how he regarded Cornelius?

One of those traditions that molded Peter's attitude was that to be acceptable to God a person had to be a Jew. In fact Jews regarded Gentiles to be unclean and so they did not associate with them.

So with Peter's prejudice, why did he go to the house of Cornelius?

Peter had a vision during his prayer time in which God revealed a truth to him that went against everything Peter had ever been taught about unclean animals (Acts 10:9-17). Peter did not yet understand the meaning of the vision when the Holy Spirit sent him on a mission to test and clarify his confusing new knowledge: Peter was going to preach Jesus to the Gentiles!

v-24 How did Cornelius know Peter was coming?

Cornelius himself had a vision from God and he did what the Lord's angel told him to do and sent servants to summon Peter to a meeting.

Acts 10:3-8

3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

5 "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.

6 "He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

7 And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.

8 So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

How important do you think Cornelius thought this meeting to be?

Cornelius must have considered this very important, a life-changing experience since visions of angels don't happen every day. He demonstrated his anticipation that this was to be an important meeting by gathering his relatives and close friends to participate.

How did Cornelius receive Peter?

Cornelius prostrated himself at the apostle's feet in an attitude of homage and supplication.

Why did Cornelius do this?

Cornelius knew that Peter was God's emissary to him and he wanted to show him all the respect he could muster.

How did Peter respond to this reception?

Peter wanted to make sure there was no misunderstanding and quickly corrected Cornelius.

What was the danger here if Peter had encouraged the worship of Cornelius?

Peter would have been taking credit for what God was doing and not only would this have caused Cornelius to have a flawed understanding of how God worked but would have impacted Peter's own relationship with God.

V28-29 – What did Peter tell Cornelius and His household?

Peter gave them a testimony of how his Jewish tradition would prevent him from even meeting with Cornelius. But he went on to explain how a revelation from God had changed him. God revealed to Peter His perspective about men of different nations and adopted God's view.

How did Peter's testimony give glory to God?

Peter was acknowledging that it was God's work on him that changed his attitude about people of other nations. And his presence there in the house of Cornelius was proof of the change God made in Peter.

Did Peter know why he was at Cornelius's house?

No, per verse 29 he had to ask why he was sent for. Peter knew the Lord was working in this situation and he was open to what the Lord was doing and he knew he was going to learn something more about His Savior. In Peter's previous spiritual growth he had learned not to put God in a box, only expecting Him to operate in ways Peter was familiar with. Peter was looking forward to further spiritual growth in this situation.

How would you describe the growth process in Peter's life?

God spoke to Peter by the Holy Spirit through prayer to reveal His ways. This led to a crisis of belief that required faith and action. Peter certainly made major adjustments in his life to join God in what He was doing.

In one word, what is the biggest contrast in your life now from before you became a Christian?

Hope. Before I considered life after death a myth, a fairytale. But now I know it is true and it has changed my perspective on everything.

v30-33 – What was Cornelius's testimony?

While Cornelius was fasting and praying he was visited by a man in bright clothing who told him to send for Peter to hear from God.

Who was this man in bright clothing?

The man in bright clothing was probably an angel. This would be a typical human description of an angel or someone else who had been in the presence of God. Other places in scripture angels are described this way...

Matt 28:1-3 - Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

See also Luke 24:4. Jesus was also described this way on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:3, and Luke 9:29). Even Moses' face received luminescence from God in Exodus 34:29-35.

What reason did the angel give Cornelius for why he was being blessed with a revelation from God?

His prayer was heard and alms remembered.

What are alms?

Alms are gifts to the poor.

Why was Cornelius giving alms?

He was sincerely seeking a relationship with God and acting in obedience to the will of God who says we should help the poor among us...

Lev 25:35 - If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.

So did Cornelius earn favor with God by giving to the poor?

It no doubt started out on Cornelius' part by thinking he could earn favor with God but it was God who chose Cornelius and He made sure Cornelius knew this by the miraculous visions which brought Cornelius and Peter together.

What did Cornelius do in response to his visit by an angel?

Cornelius believed the message the angel brought him from God and sent for Peter immediately, without hesitating. Note that this is what angels do: they are messengers from God.

What did Cornelius say in verse 33 that surely made it clear to Peter that God's had was in this meeting?

Cornelius stated the agenda for the meeting, that they were all there to hear what God told Peter to tell them.

V34-43 – What did Peter tell Cornelius and his household?

Peter shared the good news of who Jesus is, what He did to make it possible for our sins to be forgiven, and what we must do to be saved. He started this by relating the particular lesson he had learned from this experience, that the good news about Jesus was intended for all people, *“that God shows no partiality.”*

What does it mean in verse 35 that God will accept every nation that works righteously? Is this saying that salvation is by works?

First off, this is talking about nations, which in the Greek is “ethnos.” This refers to races. Matthew 25 talks about God judging the nations or ethnos or races. This does not have to do directly with individual salvation. However, God's dealing with nations is a type or example of His dealing with individuals so there is application here...

What makes people righteous?

Having their sins forgiven by believing in the provision God has made for salvation...

Romans 5:19 - For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

What were the key elements of the presentation of the Gospel that Peter gave in verses 36-43?

- God gave His Word through the nation of Israel and this Word proclaimed that men may have peace with God by His anointed who is Lord of all. Jesus is God's anointed (v36).
- John the Baptist prepared Israel for the Messiah by preaching the coming of the Kingdom of God (v37).
- Jesus of Nazareth proved He was the Messiah by performing great miracles (v38).
- Peter and others were eye-witnesses to the great things that Jesus did and witnessed His crucifixion (v39).
- God raised Jesus from the dead and He was seen by chosen people, those who were His followers (v40-41).
- Jesus' resurrected body was not just a spiritual apparition, it had physical characteristics because He ate and drank with them (v41).
- Jesus commissioned His followers to testify as to who He is to all people and that whoever believes in Him will have their sins forgiven as so spend eternity with Him in the same type of resurrected body that He has (v42-43).

Is there any person or group of people you have trouble respecting because of their cultural or social background?

I admit that there has been certain races I struggle with being accepting. Since September 11, 2001, it has been hard not to lump all Moslems especially Arab Moslems in with the radicals who are anxious to die killing people to further Islam. I have read portions of the Koran and know that the terrorists are only being true to what their bible tells them to do.

How do you believe Jesus would treat Arab Moslems?

Jesus created all people. Jesus loves all people and seeks a relationship with all people regardless of their race, including Arab Moslems.

Is there any reason we should not treat Arab Moslems as Jesus would?

No, we should seek relationships with all people the Lord brings into our lives. If we have the opportunity to befriend an Arab Moslem, we should do so because this may make it possible to lead them to Christ.