

Cornelius Learned About Jesus

Acts 10:24-36

Good morning,

The most important question ever posed, will be asked to every person who ever existed by Jesus, “***Who do you say that I am?***”

Even skeptics cannot honestly claim that Jesus never existed, because there are too many historical documents that prove a man from Nazareth named Jesus once lived on Earth.

Throughout history, the Jewish religious leaders had the most to gain by denying Jesus’ existence, but even several Jewish writings refer to Jesus as a real person whom they opposed.

We read in ***Matthew 28*** that some of the guards who were at Jesus’ tomb told the religious leaders that Jesus had risen from the grave, so the leaders bribed them not to repeat that report.

Matthew 28:15 So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. NKJV

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus often wrote about Jesus, the so-called Christ, giving undeniable proof of His existence.

Please open your Bibles to the ***Book of Acts 10***...

Last time we were in ***Acts***, we learned about two separate visions: one given to a Roman Centurion and another to Peter, teaching that what the Lord had made clean is clean indeed.

Cornelius was a virtuous, moral, decent, and generous man, who lacked the most important thing: he didn't **know** Jesus at the time of that narrative!

We learned that just as the LORD does not discriminate against people because of any outward factors, such as nationality or social status, neither should we.

Today, Peter will meet Cornelius face-to-face and explain to him exactly who Jesus is.

I. Peter met Cornelius.

Read *Acts 10:24-26*

Last time, we learned that an angel appeared to Cornelius in a vision and instructed him to send men to get Peter from Joppa.

Here we see Cornelius with friends and family waiting for these men to return to Caesarea with Peter and others with him.

Cornelius, as a Centurion, was probably in full uniform, and he fell on his face at the sight of Peter and worshipped him because Cornelius believed Peter was a **special** man of God.

Before the Holy Spirit was in his life, Peter probably would have loved to have Cornelius bow before him.

The temptation to bask in praise from people is hard to ignore when the LORD uses us for something.

The greatest struggle for the follower of God is **not** to steal God's glory in these situations.

What a blasphemy for a child of God to take credit for God's workings in a situation. **but notice...**

Re-read *Acts 10:26*

This was like when John saw an angel in the *Book of Revelation*, where the angel told him to worship only God.

Revelation 19:10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! NKJV*

Only the LORD is worthy of worship; we are not to worship angels, other people, or anything else other than God Himself.

Even the angels do not allow themselves to be worshipped; they always direct worship to where it belongs, because worship belongs to the LORD and Him **alone**.

The writer of *Hebrews*, inspired by the Holy Spirit, instructs us to worship Jesus **only** because He is the King of angels.

Hebrews 1:6 *But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."*

Cornelius wanted to honor Peter, and Peter honored Cornelius by visiting his home.

John Stott said, "*Peter refused both to be treated by Cornelius as if he were a god, and to treat Cornelius as if he were a dog.*"

Ironically, Peter later wrote in *1 Peter 2:17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. NKJV*

Christians should honor, which means to value, all people because they are made in God's image and are worthy of honor.

We should show people respect and honor because their souls are valuable. But today, we tend to value things and act indifferently towards people.

We should treat everyone with dignity, not based on their beliefs, race, or social status, but because they are human beings created by the LORD in His image.

II. Unlikely community.

Read *Acts 10:27-29*

Notice, “*He went in*”. Peter entered the house of a Gentile man.

Remember from last time we were in *Acts*, we learned that back then, Jews would not associate with Gentiles, which was an obstacle to incorporating them into the Christian community.

The vision Peter received emphasized that the LORD had purified the Gentiles, so that any person who gets saved should be viewed as "clean", without fear of defilement.

The first thing Peter did when he went into the house was to begin to describe how the LORD changed his thinking.

If you ever want to get people to open up and talk in this type of setting, talk to them about their favorite subject, *i.e.*, themselves.

Once you get people to open up and talk, you will find out what they are passionate about by **listening** to what they have to say.

Peter used to be the big mouth, speak first and think after guy, but now, he is a new creation in Christ. Peter didn't glorify his past sin, but he was honest about his past failures.

Peter was being honest about his shortcomings and ultimately pointing these people to Christ.

Peter didn't put on his Sunday morning, everything was wonderful, go to church, hypocritical fake smile. He was being vulnerable and honest with those seekers.

The worst thing we can do in front of a new believer or a seeker is to be phony! So first, Peter told them what the Lord had been doing within his heart and life...and then he asked a question.

Notice *Acts 10:29*, "***For what reason have you sent for me?***"

It is important when we witness for the Lord to ask leading questions about where a person is spiritually, and to listen for **opportunities** to share Christ!

1 Peter 3:15 *always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. NKJV (gentleness and respect, NIV)*

Cornelius was going to be converted, but Peter also got converted. Cornelius was about to be introduced to Jesus, but Peter had to learn that he was no longer under legalism.

Peter explained to Cornelius and his guests, as a godly Jew who accepted Christ, how odd it was to enter a Gentile's house.

Peter explained the message he received in the vision, realizing that the LORD wasn't only talking about unclean food in the vision he received.

III. Cornelius' explanation.

Read *Acts 10:30-33*

Cornelius told Peter exactly what had happened four days earlier that caused him to send the three men to Joppa to find Peter.

Cornelius, his family, and friends were all anxious to hear about the Lord from this leader of the early Church. What a privilege for Peter to speak to such a hungry audience.

Cornelius said, "*I prayed in my house*".

Cornelius had a desire to draw close to God, and the LORD answered his prayer by Peter bringing the Gospel to Cornelius.

James 4:7 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

James 4:8 *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

Next, Cornelius said, "*I was fasting.*"

The intensity of his prayer was such that he sought the LORD, and food became less important to Cornelius.

Some people try to mystify the spiritual discipline of *fasting*, but fasting helps us to focus on our relationship with the LORD by temporarily setting aside physical appetites and praying.

By *fasting*, we also humble ourselves before the LORD, as we turn over our temptations to Him, and seek to draw closer to the LORD, experiencing spiritual strength given by His Spirit.

Notice Cornelius said, “*Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.*”

Peter’s audience was attentive and prepared by the Holy Spirit.

Charles Spurgeon, was once asked, “*What makes a great preacher?*” and he quickly responded, “*A great congregation.*”

You see, there are only two things that are needed for great preaching!

1. The pure Word of God being taught by a Holy Spirit filled person who the Lord has called to teach.
2. Some people who have a sincere desire to hear what God has to say through His Word.

Even the most liturgical, mild-mannered preacher in the world, who teaches the pure Word, when called to preach by the Lord, can be great and mighty when He speaks.

When people have a desire to hear the Word and the speaker is led by the Spirit of God, there will be great preaching.

We must come to Church **expecting** God to do Great Things!

Boice, “*When you go to church, do you want to receive a good message? If so, the best way is to come with a prepared heart.*

I know that the preacher must be prepared, too. But when God prepares the messenger as well as those who are to hear him, then tremendous things happen.” (Boice)

In our passage, there’s a room full of people hungry to hear God.

1) The Word of God has awesome power!

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. NKJV*

2) The preacher is simply a vessel for the LORD.

2 Corinthians 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels (jars of Clay, NIV), that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. NKJV*

3) God’s true children desire to hear what He has to say.

John 10:25 *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.*

John 10:26 *But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.*

John 10:27 *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. NKJV*

The Holy Spirit prepared Peter, and He also prepared the people at Cornelius' house to hear the message.

Our blessing is greatly increased, as we meet as the Church, when we come prepared to hear the Word of God.

IV. Lord of all.

Read *Acts 10:34-36*

As Peter began to speak, we see how the Lord changed his heart, and he said, "***In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality***".

Peter finally realized that the Gospel went to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, because the LORD **did not** show partiality, favoring the Jews, and being against the Gentiles.

Many of the Jews in Peter's time thought that God loved the Jews and hated the Gentiles, even though the LORD proclaimed His love for the whole world.

William Barclay said it was common for a Jewish man to begin the day with a prayer thanking God that he was not a slave, a Gentile, or a woman.

Christianity has done more to disregard racial, cultural, and national limitations than any belief system in history.

Notice, "***But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him***".

Peter was not communicating that Cornelius was saved without accepting Christ.

Peter was saying that he discovered that Jesus is “*Lord of all*” mankind, also demonstrating the deity of Jesus.

Remember from last time, we learned Cornelius was a just, moral man, but he didn’t know Jesus. Here, Peter wanted Cornelius to know Jesus was more than a prophet; He is Lord.

Ironically, Peter was faced with this very question about Jesus.

Matthew 16:13 *When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"*

Matthew 16:14 *So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

Matthew 16:15 *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

Matthew 16:16 *Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Matthew 16:17 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. NKJV*

Eternity hinges on the answer to the question "*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*"

Jesus is asking us the same thing, “*Who do you say that I am?*”

What are some of the popular opinions about Jesus?

Today, the popular opinion about Jesus is that He is a good teacher, a prophet, or a good man.

The Jews rejected the idea of Jesus being God; even today, Judaism still says Jesus is not the Messiah

Some religions teach that Jesus was the Archangel Michael.

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote about the foolishness of claiming Christ as nothing more than a good teacher. He stated that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord of all.

A good moral teacher would never make the claims Jesus made, because if the claims He made about being God in the flesh were not true, then He was neither good nor was He moral.

Lewis said, “*You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse.*”

There are some points that we should note from this...

1. It is not enough to believe what **others** believe about Jesus.
2. Even **history** records time by the birth of Jesus Christ.

The term **Before Christ**, abbreviated B.C. which is how we label years before the birth of Christ.

The term **anno Domini**, abbreviated AD, is a Latin term that means "in the year of the Lord," which is how we label years since the birth of Christ.

If someone rejects the person of Jesus Christ, they will spend an eternity apart from Him.

For those who claim to be followers...

3. If Jesus is Lord of your life (boss, master, owner), then it stands to reason that you should **submit** to Him.

1 Corinthians 6:19 *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*

1 Corinthians 6:20 *For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

When asked, Peter did not hesitate but called Jesus the Christ.

Peter had witnessed Jesus fulfill the duty of Messiah with the power of God, and he said, *"You are the One Jesus, who all of the prophets spoke of and have fulfilled the prophecies.*

i.e., I know you are God's One and Only Son.

The "Son of God" title in the Jewish culture communicates that the Son has the same NATURE as the Father. Jesus is the "Son" of God and therefore shares the distinctive nature of His Father.

Hebrews 1:8 *But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. NKJV*

V. Practical Application.

Jesus still offers to heal the broken-hearted, He proclaims liberty to the captives, and He **frees** those who are bound to sin.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

John 8:35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

John 8:36 Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. NKJV

Jesus informed Peter that the only way he knew Jesus was the Promised **Messiah** was because God Himself revealed it to him.

Even though Peter had been with Jesus for a long time, witnessing His miracles, it was not Peter's observation that revealed Jesus' deity to Peter.

The NLT of *Matthew 16:17 Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. NLT*

"Blessed" means Oh how happy; "Oh how happy you are" because My Father in heaven has revealed this to you.

Unsaved people, even with a tremendous intellect, cannot find Jesus apart from the Lord enabling them.

1 Corinthians 2:14 *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. NKJV*

Jesus said in *John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. NKJV*

Spurgeon said, “*We might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Ghost be with the word, to give it power to convert the soul.*”

No one seeks the Lord without the Holy Spirit involved.

Man was originally made to know the LORD personally, but once sin entered the world, man became spiritually dead and now has no way of seeking the LORD on their own.

Sin separates us from God, and we are all born in natural sin.

No one can be educated into salvation; no one can be argued into the kingdom; human wisdom cannot convert a single soul.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. NKJV

Without the Lord drawing, a person cannot believe in Jesus for Salvation, be freed from sin, and inherit eternal life!

But Jesus said in *John 12:32*, “If I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” NKJV

1. It is not enough to believe what **others** believe about Jesus.
2. If a person rejects the person of Jesus Christ, they will spend an eternity apart from Him.
3. If Jesus is Lord of your life (Kyrios = boss, master, owner), then it stands to reason that you **submit** to Him.

Christianity Today had an article on Charles Spurgeon...

Spurgeon woke one January Sunday in 1850 with a deep sense of his need for deliverance, but because of a snowstorm, the 15-year-old's path to church was diverted down a side street.

For shelter, he ducked into the Primitive Methodist Chapel on Artillery Street. An unknown substitute lay preacher stepped into the pulpit and read his text—

Isaiah 45:22 “***Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.***”

Spurgeon said. “*Then, stopping, the substitute lay preacher pointed to where I was sitting and said, ‘That young man there looks very miserable’, ‘Look! Look, young man! Look now!’*

Then I saw what a Savior Christ was.

Spurgeon came to faith by hearing the plain Word of God!

Romans 10:16 ***But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?”***

Romans 10:17 ***So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. NKJV***

Jesus is the only way to heaven, and Jesus is also the key to the Kingdom!

Everyone alive will someday give an account to the Lord Jesus Christ for the question, “***But who do you say that I am?***”

Jesus wants you to know Him, and I pray you know Him as well; turn to Jesus and be saved!