



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

## Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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### **Acts 10:19-33 & 34-38**

### **English Standard Version**

### **August 27, 2017**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 27, 2017**, is from **Acts 10:19-33 & 34-38**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Acts 10:19) And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you."**

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." (Acts 2:17). His own God-inspired words were fulfilled once again when he was on the roof of Simon the tanner. He could not interpret the dream or vision by himself; therefore, the Holy Spirit explained it to him and said three men were looking for him. According to the Old Testament, for a testimony to be accepted it must be verified by two or three people, and Jesus affirmed this when He told the disciples: "But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'" (Matthew 18:16). Peter at the least had the witness or testimony of the Holy Spirit who gave him the vision and the three men looking for him when they came; therefore, he knew that God was directing his future steps and ministry that the vision began.

**(Acts 10:20) Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."**

The Holy Spirit told Peter what to do. He was to go down from the roof where he had been resting and not hesitate to go with the three men who were knocking on Simon's door. During this time of great persecution of Christians, Peter needed to have the

assurance that he was not being arrested or would not be arrested and taken to prison or worse. The three visitors included a devout Roman soldier and two servants of a Roman Centurion. The vision and the Holy Spirit gave him the assurance that all would be well and his ministry would continue if he would follow these three men and go wherever they took him. Because he knew that the Holy Spirit had sent them, Peter knew he was to do what they asked.

**(Acts 10:21) And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?”**

Because of his rooftop experience, Peter went down and told them who he was; that he was the one they were looking for. The Holy Spirit had not told him why they had come, because the Holy Spirit wanted him to learn by experience and obey His leading through these men. Therefore, Peter asked them why they had come.

**(Acts 10:22) And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.”**

The men told Peter that they had come from a Roman centurion, and they immediately endeavored to assure Peter that he had nothing to fear from the centurion or them. They described the character of Cornelius: he was righteous and endeavored to follow the law of God (that did not mean he was perfect, but he tried to always do what was right according to the law of God). Because he was not perfect, he needed salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Cornelius was God-fearing, which meant he worshiped the true God of Israel and not the pagan gods of the Romans. However, he had not converted to Judaism, and he had not been circumcised according to the Law of Moses. Prior to this, Gentiles who had converted to Judaism had been joyfully welcomed into the Church. For example, Nicolas, one of the first deacons, was first a convert to Judaism before he accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior (see Acts 6:5). Because of his actions and his character, all the Jewish people respected Cornelius and knew him as their friend. By the grace of God, an angel told Cornelius to ask Peter to come to his house so that he could hear what Peter would have to say. The angel was not commissioned to tell Cornelius the good news of Jesus Christ; that was the responsibility of Peter and all the Christians in the Church. The angel did not intend for Cornelius and his family to learn in advance anything about what Peter would tell them.

**(Acts 10:23) So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.**

Two of these three men may have been Jews and Peter would not deny entry to a Roman (devout soldier), who may have converted to Judaism (Acts 10:7); therefore, Peter did not hesitate to invite these men into Simon's house to be his guests. If they had all been Gentiles, Peter probably would not have broken the ceremonial laws of Judaism and invited them into Simon's house. Though the Roman soldier might not have been a Jew or a convert to Judaism, Peter extended hospitality to them as the Holy Spirit led him. Through his ministry to Cornelius, Peter would learn that he was to eat and fellowship with Jews and Gentiles and share the gospel of Christ with all people. It was important that some believers from Joppa accompany Peter, because they would be witnesses of all that would happen and they could verify all that Peter said when he was questioned by other Church leaders about what happened and the future of the Church's mission among the Gentiles.

**(Acts 10:24) And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.**

At the beginning of Acts 10, we learn that an angel appeared to Cornelius and told him that God had heard his prayers and he should send for Simon Peter. Cornelius was a Roman centurion from Italy who commanded 100 soldiers. He worshiped the true God of Israel, but had not converted to Judaism. He had a tremendous spiritual impact on his family and friends, and invited them to hear what Peter would say. Peter, some fellow Christians, and the three men that Cornelius sent to bring Peter arrived from Joppa (about 30 miles from Caesarea).

**(Acts 10:25) When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.**

Cornelius probably did not worship Peter as a god, because he worshiped and prayed to the true God. Cornelius probably fell in reverence or to honor Peter because he knew that God had sent Peter to him in answer to his prayers. Of course, Cornelius still had much to learn about God, so he may have impulsively bowed before Peter in humble gratitude to the true God for sending Peter to him. As a soldier in the service of emperors and kings, Cornelius probably naturally bowed in submission to those of

higher authority, and he recognized Peter as a higher authority sent to him by the Most High God.

**(Acts 10:26) But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.”**

Peter did not claim that he was more important than anyone else, even though he was an apostle sent by Jesus and the rock upon which Jesus built His Church. Peter knew the difference between himself as a mere mortal and Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. Therefore, Peter told Cornelius to stand up so they could face each other as equals in the sight of God, which was a giant step forward for a Jew speaking to a Gentile.

**(Acts 10:27) And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered.**

Luke did not know everything they talked about, but they probably exchanged information about their visions and why Peter had come into the house of a Gentile. Cornelius lived in a house that could accommodate many, and he wanted as many as possible to hear the truth about salvation that the angel said Peter would tell them.

**(Acts 10:28) And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.**

According to Jewish ceremonial food and association laws as the Jewish rabbis had come to misinterpret them, Jews must be holy and set apart from Gentiles (or pagans) who would not convert to Judaism by not having any association with them. In Peter’s vision God declared that previously unclean foods were now clean so Jewish Christians could share the gospel with those who were not Jews. God did not change the distinction between believers and unbelievers, but opened the way for believers to more easily share the gospel with unbelievers. Cornelius believed in God, but he did not know all that he needed to know about Jesus and God’s way of salvation through faith in Him. A person might be impure or unclean in their behavior, but not racially impure or unclean; therefore, Peter and Christians from that time forward were to see all unbelievers as people who needed to learn about Jesus Christ and become one of His disciples.

**(Acts 10:29) So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”**

Peter first demonstrated what he had learned something from his vision and that God wanted him to associate with Gentiles when he invited the three Jews (or possibly two Jews and one Gentile or three Gentiles that Cornelius, a Gentile, sent to him) into Simon the tanner's house to spend the night before leaving the next day to see Cornelius. The second time Peter demonstrated that he understood God's message was when he entered the house of Cornelius, a Gentile God-fearer, to answer his questions.

**(Acts 10:30) And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing**

Cornelius had told this story to his family and friends. Peter had been told this by the three who came to him. However, it was important for Peter and some witnesses from the first Church who went with him to hear about this event from Cornelius himself. Cornelius had been praying during the time for prayer set by the Jews, and God sent an angel to him while he was praying. The angel appeared as a man but more than an ordinary man and in dazzling clothes. Rather than coming in through a door after being invited, the angel appeared before him in the room where he was praying.

**(Acts 10:31) and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.**

Cornelius prayed to God and made a request of God, perhaps about what he needed to do for the forgiveness of his sins. Perhaps he prayed and asked God if he should convert to Judaism and follow Jewish laws to be saved. In the meantime, he supported his local synagogue financially and gave money to help the poor. He did the good that he knew God would want him to do, but he knew that was not enough for salvation.

**(Acts 10:32) Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’**

The angel told Cornelius that Peter had the answer to his prayers, which the angel said Peter would tell him. The angel would not tell him what Peter was supposed to tell him, because God does not send angels to do what He expects Christians to do. Furthermore, it was an act of faith for Cornelius to send for Peter in obedience to the word of God from the angel. The Jews considered a tanner ritually unclean by trade, because he handled dead unclean animals; however, this was no longer important to Peter because the tanner was a Jew who had become a follower of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

**(Acts 10:33) So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”**

Cornelius sent for Peter immediately, and if he were a centurion over a cavalry unit or wealthy enough to have a large house he could probably use horses or donkeys or a carriage to bring Peter to his home within three days (the Bible does not tell us how they traveled). Most importantly, he obeyed the angel immediately. He thanked Peter for kindly coming to a Gentile's home, knowing that Jews were not supposed to go into a Gentile's home. And he knew God was in their presence and the Lord had commanded Peter to tell them the truth about God. Cornelius' words to Peter showed the depth of his faith, and the fact that he was lacking crucial truths that he needed to believe.

**(Acts 10:34) So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,**

Peter told Cornelius and his household (and would later tell everyone) that he had learned that God does not show favoritism because of someone's racial or pagan background, because God wanted everyone to hear the message of saving faith in Jesus Christ. Peter learned that Jews and Gentiles could both worship God up to the level of their understanding but such worship was insufficient; therefore, God would send the good news of Jesus Christ to all who sought to know the true God. Peter learned that God wanted everyone to come to the saving knowledge of and believe in His only Son as their Lord and Savior in order to receive the forgiveness of sins, cleansing from sin, salvation, the Holy Spirit, peace with God, the gift of eternal life, and other blessings.

**(Acts 10:35) but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.**

Cornelius feared God and revered the true God which was the beginning of wisdom, but he needed more wisdom and understanding of the true God and Jesus Christ. Cornelius did what was right, though not perfectly, as God led him and wrote His laws upon his conscience. But Cornelius knew he needed more and he wanted more from God, so he prayed to God to meet his needs; therefore, God sent Peter to him to teach him the good news of saving faith in Jesus Christ. God does not show favoritism and those who seek Him will find Him when they seek Him with all their heart as Cornelius did. In seeking God, he received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as well as the Holy Spirit, who came to indwell him and each member of his household that believed.

**(Acts 10:36) As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),**

Philip and other Christians had preceded Peter to Caesarea, but they had only preached the gospel to Jews. Cornelius knew about Jesus from what he had heard from the Jews and the controversy between the Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah and those who accepted Jesus as Messiah. Until the angel appeared to Cornelius and Peter saw his vision, no one knew that God intended the gospel for both Jews and Gentiles, without the Gentiles first needing to convert to Judaism. Peter did not appeal to the Old Testament to teach Cornelius, but to what Cornelius already knew about Jesus. Jesus came to bring peace between God and man, peace among people, and inner peace of heart and mind to those who repented and believed in Him. Jesus did this as Lord over all – as Lord over Jews and Gentiles, emperors and kings, rich and poor.

**(Acts 10:37) you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed:**

Peter emphasized that what Cornelius knew about Jesus and the beginnings of Jesus' ministry was true. God had arranged for Cornelius to learn much about Jesus before Peter spoke to him so Cornelius and his family would be prepared in advance to believe the true gospel of Jesus Christ. God often does pre-evangelism before sending someone to teach the full gospel to one who truly wants to find God and salvation.

**(Acts 10:38) how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.**

Peter continued to talk about Jesus and Jesus' amazing accomplishments. In his speech, he included God (the Father), Jesus (the Son), and the Holy Spirit. He emphasized Jesus' power over our physical and spiritual enemies, and that God was with Jesus making possible all His accomplishments. Cornelius and his household believed the good news of Jesus and were baptized.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What kind of influence did Cornelius have over others? Why might this influence have been important in this situation?

2. What reason did the angel give for coming to Cornelius?
3. When did Cornelius send for Peter?
4. Why did Peter go with the three men to see Cornelius?
5. What reason did Peter give for going into the house of Cornelius? Was this a good reason in your opinion? Give a reason for your opinion.

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