

## Acts 10 Exegetical Meditation



Acts 10 is one of my very favorite events in the entire Bible. St Luke pronounces two visions involving angels, a Roman soldier devoted to the true God of Israel becomes a Christian, and St Peter and his disciples are left dumbfounded once again.

### **Acts 10 Breakdown:**

Angel visitations to Cornelius and St Peter- Acts 10:1-16

St Peter visits Cornelius and his household- Acts 10:17-33

St Peter instructs and baptizes Cornelius and his household- Acts 10:34-48

The chapter begins with a glimpse at the character of Cornelius and his household. It seems that they came to believe in God because they established a bond with Jews that they supported via alms (see Acts 10:2). An angel then appears to him and suggests to him that he is pleasing in the eyes of God for his life of righteousness. As a reward, the angel requests a meeting between his household and Simon Peter. Meanwhile, St Peter in the midst of fasting and prayer has a mysterious vision in which he sees heaven open up and a large sheet with “all the earth’s four-legged animals, reptiles, and birds of the sky” (Acts 10:12) placed upon it. An angel declares to Peter that he should “slaughter and eat” (Acts 10:13). Furthermore, this angel (as traditionally understood) clarifies to a confused Peter “What God has made clean; you are not to call profane” (Acts 10:15). Peter has this vision three times. It is as if God says to Peter, “Look, listen up Peter, this is real.”

Peter arrives to Cornelius’s house, and the soldier shows the utmost reverence for the Vicar of Christ. Peter, on a mission to reveal that the message he carries with him is for the Gentiles as well states “I myself am also a human being” (Acts 10:26). He presses on to announce the vision that he had to Cornelius, and Cornelius follows up with a description of his vision (see Acts 10:28-33).

Peter then moves into the basics of Jesus Christ crucified and His Church. This catechetical lesson lands on rich soil (see Mt 13:23). St Luke states that the “Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word” (Acts 10:44). The Christians who accompanied Peter were astounded. They could not believe that Jesus was so powerful

that He was even Lord of the Gentiles! Cornelius and his household are buried into Christ and rise anew in Baptism. Recognize in this scene the centrality of Baptism as well as the actual grace manifested in the Gentiles before they received the sacrament. The Christians were astounded before their baptism. They could not believe that there was evident grace working in their souls simply after they heard Peter speak. This does not mean that Baptism is superfluous, but rather it proves how necessary it is. The grace that was evident in them needed to be strengthened and given stability. This is what the sanctifying grace of Baptism does! Praise God for this gift.