

Cornelius

To the Ends of the Earth

Foundation

Bible passage : Acts 10

We learn from the Bible that Israel had been specially called by God. Sometimes other people became part of the people of Israel and so obeyed the Old Testament laws and rituals. All the first disciples of Jesus were Israelites (aka Jews) but Jesus had told them to go and tell everyone about him. We see from the Bible that this was hard for some of them because it was so different. At first they didn't know whether it still meant that people had to follow all the rules and rituals given to Israel. From the book of Acts and the letters of Paul we see how and why things changed.

Cornelius was a centurion in the Roman army which occupied Israel. Many Israelites did not like the Romans, but we learn that he was a God-fearing man, and how he had a vision in which an angel from God told him to summon Peter, one of the Apostles.

Meanwhile Peter also had a vision. Like all Israelites he tried to keep God's rules including about which foods he ate. Some of the food laws seem to be intended to protect the Israelites from various diseases but other laws seem to be about marking out Israelites as different. In his vision Peter was told to eat "unclean food", that is food God had previously said the Israelites should not eat. This was shocking for Peter but it showed that the coming of Jesus had changed things and some of the special rules given to Israel would no longer be important because the light was to be spread to people everywhere. Whilst Peter was still wondering about

Roman Centurion reenactment from Wikipedia which says "the vambraces in this reconstruction are an anachronism"!



the vision the people arrived calling him to Cornelius' house. So he went with them, realising that Cornelius and others did not need to follow the rules that marked out Israelites as special in order to follow Jesus. When Peter got there Cornelius had called his relatives and close friends to hear Peter. So

Peter preached told them about Jesus, His ministry, death and resurrection and that He will be the judge of the living and the dead.

Whilst Peter was speaking the Holy Spirit came upon those who were listening.

Therefore, all of them were baptized. This was a very important event. There would still be early followers of Jesus who wanted everyone to follow the old rituals but now things were different and what mattered was that they trusted in Jesus and were given the Holy Spirit. We learn from later writers that most of the first disciples travelled to distant places such as India, Persia and Ethiopia to spread the light of Christ. But the Acts of the Apostles mostly focuses on how Paul spread the light in the Roman Empire from Jerusalem to Rome.

Jesus said "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have ...to fulfil them."

Mtt5:17



Jesus came to fulfil the law and so that by trusting in Him people everywhere can be part of Gods people.