

## Lesson 9 Handout: Conversion of First Gentile

Acts 10:1-11:18

*Lesson 9 Answers:*

1. What is the character of Cornelius? Is this the reason he was selected by God as the first Gentile convert?

*Acts 10:2: He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. This may be the reason God selected him as the first Gentile convert.*

2. Why did the angel tell Cornelius to “send to Joppa” rather than tell him to go himself? How specific were the instructions?

*Cornelius was the centurion of the Italian Regiment and therefore the leader of the mission in Caesarea. He sent two of his attendants and one trusted soldier with specific instructions to bring Simon Peter from Joppa where he could be found in a house by the sea owned by Simon the tanner.*

3. Who did Cornelius send? What does this show about his authority to lead?

*He sent two attendants and one trusted soldier. Cornelius was a good leader of both civilians and soldiers.*

4. What was the vision Peter experienced?

*A large sheet held by four corners was lowered containing all kinds of Jewish unclean animals. A voice told Peter to kill and eat. But Peter refused saying he was a Jew and could not partake. The voice told him “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened three times before the sheet was withdrawn.*

5. Did Peter understand the meaning at first? Why or why not?

*Peter did not understand the meaning at first; but he was still meditating on it when the men came from Caesarea looking for him.*

6. Why did the Spirit tell Peter to go with the three to Caesarea?

*Peter did not fully comprehend that the Gospel is intended for all humans. Peter needed assurance that he was safe in going as this was the will of God.*

7. Did Peter display courage when inviting the three to stay for the night? Why?

*Peter displayed courage when he invited the three to stay the night. Jews and Gentiles did not associate at that time in history.*

8. Does Peter finally understand that the Gentiles are not unclean?

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Finally Peter understands the Gentiles deserve the Gospel just as the Jews did. But Peter slips later and Paul has to rebuke him; see Galatians 2:11-14.

9. Compare this sermon by Peter to Cornelius to the sermon delivered to the Jews during Pentecost.

Peter does not give the Jewish history and background because for these Gentiles, that information has no meaning. Instead, Peter emphasizes the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Peter testifies as a witness to all these events.

10. Why did the Holy Spirit come on the Gentile listeners before they were baptized?

The same reason the Holy Spirit came on the apostles before the first sermon on Pentecost; that is, to show the Gospel is for Jews first, and then the Gentiles.

11. What was the attitude of the Jewish believers who accompanied Peter to Caesarea?

The six witnessed what happened and rejoiced that Gentiles can be redeemed. However, some of the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem questioned Peter about this.

12. Describe the process of these that converted e.g. hearing, baptized, etc.

Peter preached to God-fearing people. They heard and believed. After the Holy Spirit fell on them, Peter ordered them baptized.

13. What is the defense of Peter to the criticism of the Jewish believers that Peter went into the home of a Gentile?

*Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story. God through a vision and the Holy Spirit urged Peter to go with the three to Caesarea. And when the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles the same as on the Apostles, Peter and the Jewish brethren accepted it.*

14. What is the significance to you that *they praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."*

It is significant that God showed both Jews and Gentiles can be saved. I am a Gentile and can therefore be saved.

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## Cameo 9 - Caesarea

Caesarea was founded in the first century BCE by King Herod in the location of the former town Strato's Tower, which was a former Greek and Phoenician trade post, and named Caesarea in honour of Augustus Caesar. The Jewish historian Josephus Flavius described the city as a walled town with the biggest harbour on the eastern Mediterranean coast, which was called Sebastos after the Greek name of emperor Augustus.

Starting from the year 6 CE, Caesarea was the headquarters of the 10th Roman Legion and the Roman procurators of Provincia Judaea.

It was originally a small Phoenician town known as Straton's Tower, and it was aggressively developed by Herod the Great into a major port city.



Ruins of the Roman aqueduct at Caesarea.

Caesarea had no reliable fresh water supply at the time of construction and the growing population demanded greater supplies of water to furnish the various public and private demands of a Roman city.

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Caesarea had an artificial harbor of large concrete blocks and typical Hellenistic-Roman public buildings. An aqueduct brought water from springs located almost 10 miles (16 km) to the northeast at Shuni. Caesarea served as a base for the Herodian navy, which operated in aid of the Romans as far as the Black Sea.



The Caesarean Colosseum is the most famous Roman amphitheater in Israel.

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Arched passage – covered street of Port of Caesarea on a sunny spring day.

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Excavations undertaken since 1950 have uncovered a Roman temple, amphitheatre, hippodrome (which seated 20,000), the aqueduct, and other ruins of Roman and later times. Of particular interest is a Roman inscription, found in 1961, which mentions Pontius Pilate, Roman procurator of Judaea at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. This is the first mention of Pilate ever found that can be accurately dated within his lifetime.

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In 1961, Italian archaeologist Dr. Antonio Frova and his team came across the “Pilate Stone” while excavating an ancient Roman theatre in Caesarea, Israel, which was built by the decree of King Herod, around 10 BC.

Although weathered by time, fragments of the inscription on the limestone may still be distinguished. From what archaeologists can read, it appears to be a dedication stone. It says: To the Divine Augusti [this] Tiberieum ... Pontius Pilate ... prefect of Judea ... has dedicated [this]. This discovery corroborates Pilate’s position as prefect of Judea, as well as the era in which he held office.

### **Biblical Events at Caesarea**

The first biblical figure associated with Caesarea was Philip the Evangelist, who shared the gospel in Caesarea after a “great persecution” expelled many believers from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1, 40).

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Eventually, Philip settled down in Caesarea, living there with his family and hosting other believers at his home (Acts 21:8).

Paul the apostle traveled through Caesarea several times. Early in his ministry, when his life was threatened in Jerusalem, the believers there helped him escape through Caesarea to Tarsus, undoubtedly aboard a Caesarean ship.

After his second missionary journey, Paul passed through Caesarea on his way to Syrian Antioch, using his time in Caesarea as an opportunity to visit Jerusalem, about 52 miles away (Acts 18:22).

Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for years, facing several trials there before various Roman officials, with whom he was able to share the gospel numerous times (Acts 23-26).

Caesarea was the home of Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10:1).

Caesarea was also the location of Herod Agrippa I's death at the hand of an angel of God (Acts 12:23).

## Communication across the Roman Empire

By Christina Min

The Roman Empire was so strong because they had the ability to communicate with the masses and within their own empire very well. Communication was what held the society together, through believing in common myths laws, and demonstrating a common bond passed down from generation to generation.

They communicated with their people by talking to a mass amount of the public at one time (orations) while using iconography (hand gestures) that could be read from far away, where the voice would not carry. An example of a communication hand gesture is the 'V' sign, commonly known as the peace sign in our modern society. However, in Ancient Rome, it meant the number 5, which was why '5' in Roman numerals is a 'V'. Also, the gesture with the clenched fist pressed against the chest, was used to show anger in the ancient Roman civilization.

Continuing on, another major way of communication was through writing. The Romans introduced writing to the Northern Europe for the first time, and the Latin alphabet is still used there. However, in Ancient Rome, there were only 22 letters in the alphabet. Millions of texts were written, from great stone inscriptions to private letters scrawled on wax tablets, and from elegant poems and histories on papyrus scrolls, to trade accounts scratched on broken pots.

Furthermore, the Ancient Romans also developed a postal service called *cursus publicus*, to aid the governors of distant provinces in communicating with the citizens. This postal system, *cursus publicus*, means 'state runners service', and delivered the messages in a relay system. These relay stages were established at convenient distances along the great roads of the empire, forming a vital part of Ancient Rome's military and administrative system.

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## The Latin Language

By J. E. Lowe

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There was once a language called Indo-European, also known as Indo-Germanic and Aryan. Latin is considered to be one of the oldest Indo-European languages. The Indo-European language family includes Greek, Sanskrit, and Germanic languages. Indo-European is now lost; but we know more or less what it was like from a comparison of the daughter languages of which Indo-European was the mother. Two of these languages were Greek and Latin, which exhibit as many curious similarities and differences as we should expect to find between two sisters.

For example, where Latin has an initial *s*, Greek has an aspirated vowel—e.g., the Latin for six is *sex*, the Greek, (*hex*); cf. English *sextant* and *hexagon*. Again, where Latin has the voiced labial (*b*), Greek has the unvoiced (*p*): thus, Latin *sub* (under) = Greek *viro* (*hupo*); Latin *expello* (*expel*) = Greek (*ekballo*), etc.

Latin was the language spoken by the Latins, who were the inhabitants of Latium, a province of Italy of which Rome was the capital. In very early days Italy was made up of several different states, which were always at war with one another; each state spoke its own dialect or patois. Gradually the Romans gained the upper hand in Italy, and imposed the Roman or Latin dialect upon the tribes they conquered. Thus Latin became the language of all Italy, and finally of the Roman provinces, such as Gaul, Spain, Africa, and Asia Minor.

In its early stages the Latin language was heavy, clumsy, and uncouth. There are some curious examples of this old Latin (it is called *prisca latinitas*) still to be seen on ancient statues, tombstones, etc. Greece was far ahead of Italy in learning and culture.

About the middle of the third century B.C., a Greek named Livius Andronicus was taken prisoner in war, and brought to Rome to act as tutor to the children of some of the leading men there. This Livius Andronicus, although he was a Greek, was the first to attempt any serious composition in Latin. He translated several plays from the Greek, as well as the Homeric poem, the *Odyssey*.

Under the influence of Andronicus, a literary circle was formed at Rome, and gradually plays, poems, and prose works were produced in Latin, but always modeled on Greek originals. (Satire was the only kind of writing which was essentially a Roman production.) In the hands of this literary circle the Latin language soon became less clumsy and uncouth, as each new writer aimed at greater refinement and polish. But the mass of the Roman people cared more about fighting and farming than about literature, and continued to speak the old rough Latin.

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Thus it came about that from the time of Livius Andronicus, two kinds of Latin existed side by side: the Latin of the literary and cultured classes, called *sermo urbanus*, or the language of the town, and the Latin of the ordinary people, called *sermo vulgaris*.

The first century B.C. is known as the Golden Age of Latin Literature. In this period Cicero, orator, statesman and philosopher, brought literary Latin to its zenith, and developed a prose style which became at once the envy and despair of all subsequent Latin authors. No writing, either before or since, has had such a powerful and lasting influence upon the prose style of the literature of Western Europe. The greatest poet of the Golden Age was Vergil, author of the Aeneid, an epic poem which became the Bible, as it were, of the pagan Romans. To this age belong, also, the poets Horace, Propertius, and Ovid, the historian Livy, and the famous general Julius Caesar, who has left us Commentaries on his two great wars.

The Golden Age, which ended, roughly, with the death of the Emperor Augustus in A.D. 14, gave place to what is known as the Silver Age. In this period the literature lacked both deep feeling and spontaneity; style developed at the expense of matter, and a brilliant artificiality replaced the purity of the Golden Age.

By the second century a new influence had crept in: it had become fashionable to talk Greek. Even the children of the upper classes learnt to chatter it with their Greek nurses. Thus literary Latin began to die out, though the mass of the people still continued to use the *sermo vulgaris*. It is this *sermo vulgaris* which finally developed into the different European dialects which we now call Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Roumanian, and so on. For example, the literary Latin word for a horse is *equus*; but the common word was “*caballus*,” from which, we get *caballo* in Spanish, *cavallo* in Italian and Portuguese, *cheval* in French, *cal* in Roumanian, and such derivatives as *cavalry*, *cavalier*, *cavalcade*, etc., in English. These different dialects were known as the Romance (or Roman) languages, and a romance was originally merely a story written in one of these dialects.

The language of the early Church was Greek; thus we find that the New Testament and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers were all in Greek and not Latin. It is in Africa that Ecclesiastical or Church Latin first developed. The inhabitants of that country had learnt to speak the *sermo vulgaris*, or common Latin; they did not understand Greek. About A.D. 160 Tertullian was born at Carthage, and was converted to Christianity about the year 197. He first wrote in Greek, but soon abandoned it in favour of Latin, in order that he might be understood by the common people. His Latin is a mixture of the literary Latin, which was taught in the schools, and the *sermo vulgaris*. He coined a great many new words.

By the third century a Latin translation of the Bible was in circulation, and St. Augustine tells us that everybody who possessed a Greek manuscript tried his hand at turning it into Latin. Thus the need for one authoritative Latin version became imperative.

Towards the end of the fourth century Pope Damasus commissioned St. Jerome, the leading scholar of the day, to bring out a new Latin edition of the Bible. This was the famous Vulgate,

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which was finished in the year 405. It marked the end of ancient Latin, and the complete establishment of mediaeval Latin. From this time onward Latin became the universal language not only of the Church, but also of the State. Scholars of all nationalities could meet and converse without difficulty, since in Latin they had a common language. Thus we find, for example, Erasmus coming to England at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and finding a place at once in the friendship of such men as More, Colet, Grocin, and Charnock, though he knew no word of English. (Erasmus held the living of Aldington in Kent, but resigned it in 1512 because he could not discharge the duties of a parish priest, owing to his inability to speak the language.)

The Latin which is taught in schools to-day is the literary Latin of the Golden Age: we call it Classical Latin. Ecclesiastical Latin differs from it chiefly in being much nearer to the sermo vulgaris, and is, therefore, not so artificially refined and polished as the sermo urbanus. But by the end of the fifth century "the Latin speech that was rhetorical, unsympathetic, and hard, had been softened by emotion, lifted on the wings of prophecy, made something with a soul in it, and a sacred tongue." (Canon Barry, "The Holy Latin Tongue." The Dublin Review, April, 1906.) The chief writers of Ecclesiastical Latin are Tertullian (second century), St. Cyprian (third century), Lactantius and St. Ambrose (fourth century), St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Leo the Great (fifth century), the Venerable Bede (eighth century), St. Bernard (twelfth century), St. Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century), and Thomas a Kempis (fifteenth century).