

# Who Has Believed?

**Key Verse:** “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”  
—Romans 10:17

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Romans 10:1-17**

**IN ANSWERING THE QUESTION** of our title, “Who Has Believed?” we understand there are times and seasons in God’s plan for the revealing of himself to mankind. For example, not until the conversion of Cornelius was it the due time for the Gospel to go to the Gentiles. Prior to Jesus’ death, he said to his disciples, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”—Matt. 10:5,6

We are not to understand from this that Jesus did not love the Gentiles, nor that the plan of God did not make provision for their salvation through belief and faith. What it does mean is that for a time, and for a special purpose, God was dealing exclusively with the Jewish nation. Centuries before this the Lord had said to Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” (Amos 3:2) Jesus understood this and knew that even in his day it was still true.

In a prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:24-27, the Lord promised a continuance of his exclusive favor upon Israel for seventy symbolic weeks, or a period of 490 literal years. This period began to count from the year a decree was issued for rebuilding the walls and the city of Jerusalem, following their seventy years of captivity in Babylon. In this prophecy it is stated that in the “midst”

of the last of these prophetic weeks, the Messiah would be cut off in death. This would be in the middle of the last seven years, or symbolic weeks, of this 490 year period. Thus, three and one-half years after Jesus' death, God's exclusive favor to the Jews was to end. It was at this time that God arranged for Peter to take the Gospel to Cornelius, who became the first Gentile convert.

Cornelius was a devout man, and while praying was given a vision in which he was instructed to send for Peter. After meeting, Cornelius explained to Peter why he had sent for him—that it was in obedience to a vision from the Lord. Peter, by comparing this account with his own experience, was readily able to realize the significance of God's providences, and said, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. ... God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."—Acts 10:1-35

To believe in God and in his beloved Son, and to work righteousness, it is necessary to be enlightened. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14,15) The implied answer to these inspired questions was a controlling factor in the experience of Cornelius.

Had it been the due time before this for the Gospel to go to the Gentiles, God would have seen to it that a "preacher" was sent to enlighten them. The fact that this did not take place until Peter was sent to Cornelius was in keeping with the prophecy of special favor which God had promised Israel. It is good to remember that these times and seasons are under divine supervision. We thank God, however, that he has arranged in his plan that there is ultimately to be a "day of visitation" for all.—I Pet. 2:12 ■