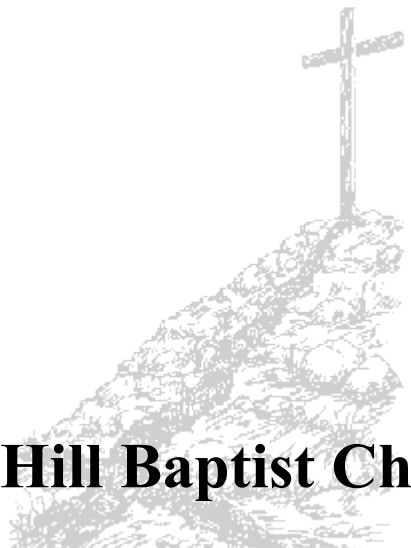


# The Sixth Hour

Acts 10:7-16



## Rock Hill Baptist Church

605 Rock Hill Road  
Lexington, Tennessee 38351

Brother David Buffaloe  
731-845-6104

[bibleteacher.org](http://bibleteacher.org)

**FOCAL** (Acts 10:7-16 KJV) "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; {8} And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. {9} On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: {10} And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, {11} And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: {12} Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. {13} And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. {14} But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." {15} And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. {16} This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."

Before I can even begin this sermon I must first of all ask the obvious question - at least, it's obvious to me. The Roman soldier Cornelius is in prayer seeking God. An angel comes from God and tells Cornelius to send men to Peter. But here's the question: *Why didn't the angel just tell Cornelius about Jesus?* Why have this man send three other men to Peter, just to have Peter come and share the Gospel with Cornelius? Because Jesus Christ Himself mandated that salvation come to all nations

through *the Church He died for*. Because that Great Commission we preach did not come from our imaginations, nor from our fancies, but it is introduced with these words:

1. An angel comes from God and tells Cornelius to send men to Peter. But here's the question: *Why didn't the angel just tell Cornelius about Jesus?* (Matthew 28:18-19) \_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 28:18-19 (KJV) "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. {19} Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"**

**All power** for salvation is given to Jesus Christ, and it is He, that Grand General, King of Kings and Lord of Lords Who **commands us to carry out His Commission**. It would be well for each Christian in the Lord's Army to realize that we are all but *soldiers*, not Generals. There is only one General, and that is Christ. And Jesus Christ, our Commander in Chief, is ever in control of the situation. Do not deceive yourself, nor allow yourself to be deceived by that old Tempter, Satan, into believing that God sleeps on His Throne. Do not believe that He Who purchased our salvation with His own Beloved Body sits distracted in yonder Heaven, for Christ is ever in the midst of His Church *looking* and *watching* and *directing* and *loving*. As we are told in His Word:

**(Matthew 28:20 KJV) "... lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."**

God is in Christ, and Christ is in God - and if you are in Him then God watches over you. The *message* of salvation is given to the Church, but the *power* of salvation belongs to Christ alone! The *message* of the Cross was given to the Church *as the Body of Christ*, and the Body must uniformly carry out that message to the world around us. Each member, working together, to achieve God's goal, and nothing less will do.

What is the message entrusted to us - not to angels, but to us - by Christ our Lord?

### **1. The Law Cannot Save, It Can Only POINT To Salvation**

**FOCAL** (Acts 10:7-8 KJV) "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; {8} And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa."

Before Peter went up on his rooftop to pray, God had already set been to the house of a man named *Cornelius*. This man was a high ranking officer in the Roman Army,

a *centurion*, a leader of men. This centurion Cornelius had been stationed in Caesarea, a town on the Mediterranean Sea in Judea. Cornelius was there to oversee the Jews and make sure that they didn't rise up in revolt against Rome. You see, back in those days a conquered people have no rights other than those granted by the occupying army. Cornelius was Israel's *watcher* in Caesarea.

**Cornelius watched the Israelites in his care.** As he watched them he came to a conclusion. These Jews obeyed a Law given them by God through the Prophet Moses. This Law was extremely harsh, extremely ritualistic, and extremely condemning. In fact, as Cornelius watched the Jews worship God through this harsh Law he became convinced that there *was a God above*. Cornelius sought the Lord:

**Isaiah 55:6-8 (KJV) "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: {7} Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. {8} For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."**

Even though the average Jew would have nothing to do with Cornelius (for he was, after all, a Roman, and unclean according to the Law<sup>1</sup>), this Law convinced

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<sup>1</sup>Leviticus 5:2

Cornelius that there is a God Who is over all. The Scripture says:

**(Romans 5:20a KJV) "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound..."**

Cornelius was convinced that there is a God, but *how to reach Him*? So this man began to pray - and God came to him in his prayers! What the angel told Cornelius led him to send a delegation to Joppa to see Peter.

In our day and age many people have begun to believe that *being good enough* will get a person into God's Heaven, or into a right relationship with God. There are many people today who, when I ask them if they have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, they quickly reply:

**I've been a member of such and such  
a Church for years,**

or,

**I'm a good person.**

You can follow the Law in all its glory *perfectly* and yet still go to Hell. I can prove that statement if you care to listen. You see, the Apostle Paul said *in Holy Scripture* that he himself followed the Law *blamelessly* in:

**(Philippians 3:4-6 KJV) "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that**

he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: {5} Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; {6} Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless<sup>2</sup>."

BLAMELESS! Paul followed the Law of God blamelessly, perfectly, but He never followed God until God knocked him down on the Damascus Road. Paul followed the Law blamelessly, and was separated from God. The more he followed the Law, the farther he was from God. Being good or following the Law *cannot save*. Cornelius saw this and, instead of seeking perfection through the Law, he sought the *solution* that can only be found in Jesus Christ. The Bible says:

2. Paul followed the Law blamelessly, and was separated from God. The more he followed the Law, the farther he was from God. Being good or following the Law \_\_\_\_\_ . (Isaiah 55:6-8; Romans 5:20; Philippians 3:4-6; Galatians 3:24-25)

(Galatians 3:24-25 KJV) "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. {25} But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

That schoolmaster, the Law, led Cornelius to pray and

<sup>2</sup> amemptos {pronounced am'-emp-tos }, free from fault or defect, clearly without fault

seek God's Grace. God came to that dear man and told him to send men to Peter. The Law could not save Cornelius, but Peter could come to Cornelius and show him salvation through faith in Christ!

## 2. Salvation Comes TO ALL By Faith Alone In Christ Alone

**FOCAL** (Acts 10:9-10 KJV) "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: {10} And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,"

God heard Cornelius' prayers, and Cornelius heard God's command. So now everything is set in motion. There's only one more thing to do, and that is to get Peter to Cornelius with the message of The Gospel. That's going to be hard, though, because Peter, though saved by faith in Christ, was raised following the Mosaic Law. When our Lord Jesus left this earth He commissioned the Church to carry the Gospel into the whole world:

(Matthew 28:19 KJV) "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

(Acts 1:8 KJV) "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be

witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The Great Commission was clearly stated to the one hundred and twenty, and specifically to the Apostle Peter. The Church was to go *to Jerusalem* then *Judea*, areas specifically tied to Israel - the Jews. Following this they were to go to *Samaria*. Now Samaria was a place occupied by those who were *despised* by the Jews. The Samaritans were people who were what we would call *half breeds*, part Jewish and part Gentile. They were a people that the average Orthodox Jew avoided. After the Church went to *Samaria* we were then to go to *the uttermost part of the earth*, that is, the rest of the world.

Peter knew this - or at least, Peter heard this. But he did as many of us do. He heard God, heard the Great Commission, then ignored the parts of it that he disagreed with. I do not believe that Peter did this maliciously or with malice aforethought. It's just that Peter was a *good Jew*, and good Jews historically avoided contact with Gentiles and Samaritans. Peter even admitted this to Cornelius later when he said:

3. Peter ... heard God, heard the Great Commission, then ignored the parts of it that he disagreed with. Peter was a \_\_\_\_\_ and good Jews historically avoided contact with Gentiles and Samaritans. (Acts 10:28)

(Acts 10:28 KJV) "And he said unto them, 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 showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

You see, Peter - though now saved by faith in Christ - was still living his life under the old Mosaic Law. He was still doing what the Jewish Rabbis said. The Rabbis of Israel said that Samaritans and Gentiles were *unclean* and *common*, so Peter, good Jew that he was, avoided these areas. Even though the Great Commission our Lord gave the Church told him to take the Gospel to the Samaritans and the Gentiles, Peter failed to obey.

So now God is going to do something fantastic! He is going to come to Peter in a vision. Look at the beauty of this vision:

### **Look To The Sixth Hour:**

**FOCAL** (Acts 10:9) "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour"

As I studied and prayed over this Scripture, God touched my heart and told me to tell you to *look at the sixth hour*. Listen Beloved: This *sixth hour* is *very important* in the Scripture. God uses numbers in the Scripture to emphasize great Bible truths.

Think about the number *six*. Six is the *number of man*. As a matter of fact, the *sixth* commandment warns us "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). I do not believe that it was a coincidence that Peter was in prayer about the *sixth hour* when the Lord spoke to him in a vision. You see, Peter was with Jesus when our Lord went through Samaria *about the sixth hour*:

**(John 4:6-10 KJV) "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. {7} There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. {8} (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) {9} Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. {10} Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."**

Peter saw Jesus witness to the hated Samaritan<sup>3</sup> by talking with an unnamed woman at a well. The sixth hour is also significant because this was the time that

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<sup>3</sup> The Jews despised the Samaritans because, under the reign of Rehoboam, Israel split into two camps (see **1 Kings 12**). Northern Israel and Southern Israel (Benjamin and Judah) divided, and Northern Israel developed into its own nation. While in this state of disobedience Northern Israel was conquered by Assyria (about 722 BC) and as conquered people they intermarried with the Gentiles. The children of this alliance were considered unclean by the orthodox Jewry - and the descendents of these intermarried people populated the area called Samaria.

*our Savior had all the sins of the world poured out on Him*. We read:

**(Matthew 27:45-46 KJV) "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. {46} And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"**

**(Mark 15:33-34 KJV) "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. {34} And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"**

From the *sixth* to the *ninth* hours the sun stopped shining. God the Father poured out the sins of all humankind on Jesus, so many sins that He cried out "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**" This was the only time in history that the Father turned His back on the Son, but this sacrifice was so necessary. **God saves sinners** not through the Law, but through the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the Cross. His sacrifice from the sixth to the ninth hour *tore the veil of the holy of holies* in two:

**(Luke 23:44-45 KJV) "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth**

**until the ninth hour. {45} And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst."**

4. What happened at the sixth hour? (Acts 10:9; John 4:6-10; Matthew 27:45-46; Mark 15:33-34; Luke 23:44-45)

The Law could not save, but it could point to faith in Christ, Who alone saves! Peter perhaps was reminded of this as he went to pray at the sixth hour.

### **Three Times, The Number of God**

(Acts 10:11-12, 16 KJV) "And [Peter] saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: {12} Wherein were **all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. ... {16} This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."**

There was no ambiguity in God's vision. He did not show a muddled vision, nor were there any distractions or fogs while this vision was shown. **Please note that all manner of beasts were shown lowered to Peter in the vision. For whom did Christ die? For the whole world. Whom should hear the Gospel of salvation? All who will hear and believe.** Our precious Savior spilt His own

Blood in a terrible sacrifice for all. We are told:

(Hebrews 13:12 KJV) "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

Jesus suffered humiliation and reproach for all, so that *whosoever will* can come to God by Him. To further emphasize God's Will in this matter, the sheet was lowered *three times* before Peter's eyes. Three is the number of completion, the number of God. Peter prayed in the sixth hour, a holy hour in the New Testament, and God confirmed the vision three times. This *number three* is also important because *three Gentile men* came to see Peter that day.

5. Please note that **all manner** of beasts were shown lowered to Peter in the vision. For whom did Christ die? \_\_\_\_\_ Whom should hear the Gospel of salvation? \_\_\_\_\_ (Hebrews 13:12)

Salvation has been offered to all who will believe.

### **3. Those In Christ Are Neither Common Nor Unclean**

**FOCAL** (Acts 10:13-15 KJV) "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. {14} But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing

that is common or unclean." {15} And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed<sup>4</sup>, that call not thou common."

Peter was still focused on the Mosaic Law, but he had to learn this central truth about salvation: The message of salvation is given to the Church, but the method of salvation belongs entirely to Christ our Savior.

6. The message of salvation is given to the Church, but the \_\_\_\_\_ of salvation belongs entirely to Christ our Savior.

Peter looked at the animals in that sheet and considered them *ceremonially unclean* (unclean by the standards of the Law) and *common or ordinary*. No Lord, I'll not associate with nor eat such a thing. Peter had to put away all his old ways of believing, and come away from those old limiting thoughts that the Law brought.

A Christian is *not* someone under Law, but you are under *relationship*. If you are *in Christ* you are neither *unclean* nor *ordinary*. A Christian is someone who is *in partnership with God* because he or she *is in the family of God*. You are *in union with Christ*! You share *thirty five things* with the Eternal God because you have been united with God through the Blood of Christ. You are a priest after the Order of Melchizedek - not after the order of Levi (I will discuss this later on tonight). You have been given a *mission* and a *message* that *angels cannot carry* - the message that salvation has now come to all

<sup>4</sup> katharizo {pronounced kath-ar-id'-zo}, Aorist Active Indicative, has made ceremonially clean or purified

who believe in Jesus Christ!

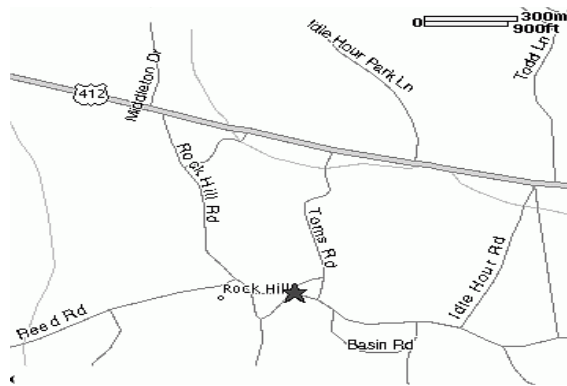
The sad truth is, many Christians today have begun to consider themselves *common* or the message of salvation that we carry *common*. Many Churches are going into the *entertainment industry*, trying to compete with ABC or CBS or the movies. Many Churches are experiencing phenomenal growth in numbers by downgrading the message of the Cross, while upgrading our services. In the Christmas Season particularly we are often swallowed up in family gatherings and present buying and mistletoe and Christmas trees. There's nothing wrong with these things, Beloved, but they do become wrong when these things become greater in our minds than the uncommon message that we carry from our most Excellent Savior.

It is *simplicity in itself* to be saved: Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, and thou shalt be saved (Romans 10:9-10). But once saved you move into a relationship with a *complex and infinite Being, the Lord of all Creation*. That common looking Baby in the Manger was anything but common .... He was Eternal God Who came to love us, live for us, die for us, and rise again for us. He came to us through a manger and a Cross and an empty tomb, and all the while He used means that appeared common. Do not call that which God has made clean common or unclean.

If you are in Christ, you have been given an uncommon

message. If you are in Christ, you are part of an uncommon Body. If you are in Christ, you are not like the world, but you are in the Family of God. If you are in Christ you are in His Kingdom, and His Kingdom is in you<sup>5</sup>. A child-like faith in Christ brings a person into an enduring relationship with God in Christ - a belief in Him and Him alone.

What a Savior! Jesus Christ our Lord!



by His hand and for His glory:

Brother David Buffaloe,  
Rock Hill Baptist Church

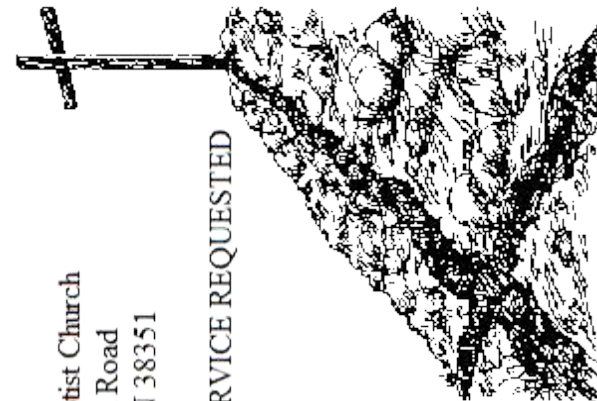
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**731-845-6104**

5 Luke 17:20-21 (KJV) "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: {21} Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."



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