

## Acts 10:30—“this very hour”

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The question is: to which day and to what hour was Cornelius referring?

We need to try to feel the atmosphere of the situation. Cornelius is a gentile, but he REALLY wants to know God; yet he ‘knows’ that Jehovah has a thing with the Jews and isn’t too big on Gentiles. But he is convinced that Jehovah is the true God and is doing his very best to please Him. So one day God gives him a special dispensation of grace; He sends an angel! Was Cornelius excited, or was he excited!! Like, **wow**. So he sends his messengers hotfooting it to Joppa (some 60 km), and they do it in less than 24 hours. So what does Cornelius do while he waits? He prays and fasts. Surely, he was already a man of prayer (v. 2) so how is he going to show his appreciation to God for the special favor? He fasts—now that he has God’s attention, marvel of marvels, he wants to stay tuned in so as not to miss anything. And after allowing for the minimum time necessary for the roundtrip, he is at the door looking down the road. This man is **serious**.

Enter Peter. He lays on the bit about Jews not contaminating themselves with Gentiles, but God told him to come, and so what does Cornelius want. Now it is his turn—he is looking at a Jew who isn’t exactly oozing enthusiasm at being there, but he is Jehovah’s messenger and the centurion understands about rank and authority; so he plays the only cards he has: his own sincerity and seriousness, and God’s revealed will. “I have been fasting during four days until this very hour” (the first card) and “the ninth hour . . .” (the second card).

To me, ταυτης της ωρας is emphatic, “this very hour”. *νηστευων και* is attested by 95.2% of the Greek manuscripts, including P<sup>50</sup> and D, among the oldest extant, not to mention the old Latin and Syriac versions (another 1.5% have just *νηστευων*). So we have a periphrastic verb phrase, *νητην νηστευων*, which emphasizes the continuous aspect of the action. *απο* and *μεχρι* define the time span, “from . . . until”. Putting it all together we have, “I have been fasting during four days until this very hour.”

About the sequence, we observe the following:

- v. 3—1<sup>st</sup> day: Cornelius sees angel, about 3 p.m., and sends messengers forthwith;
- v. 9—2<sup>nd</sup> day: Peter has vision, after 12 noon, and messengers arrive (and are lodged for the night);
- v. 23—3<sup>rd</sup> day: Peter and company leave Joppa;
- v. 24—4<sup>th</sup> day: they enter Caesarea (probably before noon).

So by western reckoning we have not quite three full days, but by Hebrew and Brazilian reckoning we have a situation that involves four days.

The messengers, under urgent orders, did the 60 km in under 24 hours (whether they went all night, we don’t know, but they were probably obviously tired when they showed up at Peter’s gate). Peter was not about to be stampeded into action; he had to eat, sort things out in his mind, talk it over with the others—since they decided to send a committee, preparations had to be made. So they set out the next day, but they are dignified Jews and are not going to run—they set a steady pace and probably make some 45 km before stopping for the night. The remaining 15 km they knock off before noon the next day. So, the “this very hour” refers to the time of Peter’s arrival, not the time that the angel appeared to Cornelius.