

▼ Non-Jews Welcome - Part 3

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• Read the Passage: Acts 10:1-23

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along.

• Read the Passage: Acts 10:23-48

Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the

home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached — how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

▼ **Sermon’s Purpose (what listeners should do)**

- Understand repentance in Acts 2 and how we got here from there.
- Understand that the gospel is never proclaimed as a way to go to heaven.
- Understand the steps leading up to the gospel presentation.
- Understand how the gospel is presented in this passage.
- Understand how this advances God’s agenda.

▼ **Understand repentance in Acts 2 and how we got here from there.**

- Change your mind about Jesus. Subway train: doctor, police officer, misbehaving youth.
- Faith - Niagara Falls wheelbarrow illustration.
- God directs Peter to preach the gospel to the non-Jewish soldier Cornelius and his family and friends and then fills them with the Holy Spirit.
- Yes - it explains why the Jerusalem church began accepting as valid the conversion of non-Jews.
- The church successfully expanded beyond its Jewish borders.

▼ **Understand that the gospel is never proclaimed as a way to go to heaven.**

- Acts 2:29-47
- Acts 3:11-26
- Acts 4:8-13

- Acts 5:27-32
- Acts 7
- Philippians 3:17-21
- God's agenda: To bring everything in heaven and earth under Christ (Ephesians 1:1-10).

▼ **Understand the steps leading up to the gospel presentation.**

- Note that Cornelius is a god-fearer: a gentile who looks to Jews rather than to his own pagan culture for spiritual guidance. He is, in other words, friendly to the synagogue. This will not necessarily be true of future gentile converts.

▼ God sends an angel to tell Cornelius to send for Peter.

- What do angels look like? Notice how Cornelius describes the angel in Acts 10:30.
- Angels are not authorized to present the gospel - that job belongs to human beings.
- The angel didn't tell Cornelius that he was doing pretty well and should pursue salvation through his own culture.
- The angel didn't tell Cornelius that he should just continue being a god-fearer and giving alms to the poor.

▼ Notice the "coincidence"!

- God set up Cornelius' and Peter's schedules.
- God is the master of timing - rely on this!
- God has some timed encounters arranged for you too!
- Peter is not to call unclean what God has made clean. Does this make all foods clean? Note Mark 7:1-23.
- Cornelius is a "man of peace" (Matthew 10:1-16; Luke 10:1-12). Try to connect with what God is already doing!
- Jesus is the authoritative revealer of God the Father (Matthew 11:25-30).

▼ **Understand how the gospel is presented in this passage.**

▼ What do angel's look like?

- How does Luke (the author of Acts) describe the visitor who appeared to Cornelius?
- How do Cornelius' emissaries describe the visitor who appeared to Cornelius?
- How does Cornelius describe the visitor who appeared to him?
- Notice what Peter does and doesn't say.

▼ Peter doesn't say:

- I don't want to impose my religious views on you.

- I don't want to impose my cultural views on you.
- We have so many hypocrites among our people (e.g. Pharisees, Saducees, etc.) that I don't feel it's appropriate for me to say anything to you until we have a better track record.
- ▼ Peter does say:
 - ▼ "God accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what's right."
 - What does "what's right" mean?
 - ▼ Peter assumes that Cornelius knows the message God sent to the people of Israel - the basic story of Jesus.
 - Good news of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all.
 - Why does he assume this?
 - Can we always assume this?
 - ▼ Peter reviews Jesus' anointed ministry, death by crucifixion, burial, resurrection.
 - After John's baptism, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power.
 - He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil because God was with him.
 - The Jews killed him on the cross.
 - God raised him from the dead on the third day.
 - Peter is a witness who has been commanded to preach the story.
 - Jesus has been appointed judge of the living and dead.
 - ▼ Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.
 - What does "believes in him" mean?
 - What does "forgiveness of sins" mean to the audience? Jeremiah 31:31-37; 2 Chronicles 34:14-28; Ezra 9; Nehemiah 1; Acts 1:1-11
 - Peter gives orders for them to be baptized.
- **Understand how this advances God's agenda.**