

## **Peter and Cornelius Meet**

Text: Acts 10:24-33

### **Introduction:**

The Roman (Gentile) centurion, Cornelius, has received a vision from God, calling him to send for Peter in Joppa, so that Peter could tell him what he must do. And so, he sent a few of his household servants and a devout soldier, to Joppa, to retrieve Peter, and to bring him up to Caesarea. Meanwhile, as the messengers reach Joppa, Peter is on the roof (of the home, in which he is staying), praying, and he himself receives a vision, in preparation for these men, who were coming to take him to Cornelius. Peter, who was very hungry, fell into a trance, while on the roof, and he saw a vision, which was given three times, so as to emphasize the significance and certainty of the message. A large sheet, containing many unclean animals was brought down to the earth, before Peter, and God had called Peter to "Arise, kill and eat." Naturally repulsed by the unclean animals, which contradicted the Jewish dietary laws, Peter at first refused (even God), as he had never eaten anything unclean before. However, God responded with the words, which ought to serve as the bold print teaching, that would express the primary purpose of this entire, lengthy portion of Scripture (given in chapter 10 and half of chapter 11): "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

Peter wrestles with this statement (and the vision he has received), trying to grasp its full meaning, when Cornelius's messengers finally arrive, and call for him. The Holy Spirit then orders Peter to go with these men, doubting nothing, because He has sent them. And when Peter interacts with the men, his understanding of the vision, finally comes into full focus. He realizes that the primary emphasis of the vision is not merely about foods, but rather human souls. God was welcoming Gentile heathen, into the fellowship of His church, regardless of their uncircumcision and their lack of commitment to the Mosaic ceremonial/dietary laws. Peter was to go to Caesarea, and to do what no Jew could ever do before. He was to align himself; to fellowship with gentiles, offering them the same Gospel hope, which had been given to the Jews, in Christ! Christ was to be Lord over all nations, and His shed blood, would break down the barrier, which once, properly separated Jew and Gentile, bringing them now into one body; to be one man, in Christ Jesus! And so, Peter invites the men in, so that they lodge with him for the night, preparing to head for Caesarea the next morning. And, it is at Caesarea, that Peter, and the

disciples/witnesses that go with him, will see the clearest testimony, confirming that God was welcoming the Gentiles into His kingdom. And for the first time, Peter will have to set his Jewishness aside, clinging to the New Covenant concept and reality, of "one man" in Christ!

### **I. Peter and Cornelius Meet**

"And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends" (vs. 24).

Four days had passed, and Cornelius was every bit as anxious to see Peter, as he had been at the beginning. And we notice here that his interests went beyond his own needs and concerns. Notice that Cornelius had called together his relatives and close friends, so that they could hear the good news with him, and benefit just the same. Cornelius, indeed, had a heart for others! We saw this already in his alms giving, and now, he is prepared to receive the benefit of Peter's ministry, along with his relatives and friends. Such is the heart of one who fears the Lord! If we have news, which concerns the eternal welfare of the soul, how could we possibly hide that news from others? [See also John 1:35-42, 43-46]

"As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him" (vs. 25).

A Roman Centurion, who ruled over a hundred soldiers, and who had authority over Jews, in the presence of his family and close friends, falls down before Peter (the fisherman) and worships him! While Peter will correct him, we can certainly at least note again, brethren, the great level of honor Cornelius had for Peter, as an Apostle. Clearly, the Centurion saw through the temporary reality of his "this world" position, recognizing the far deeper importance and significance of the Kingdom of God. Such humility in the heart of a man; especially when he is in such a position as Cornelius was in, is clearly a work of God! It is an evidence of trusting in God's grace alone, and abhorring any form of self-trust. And again, the absence of such humility in any individual, is a clear evidence that grace is not present as well! [Note also Isaiah 45:14 fulfillment].

"But Peter lifted him up, saying, 'Stand up; I myself am also a man" (vs. 26). Too bad all of the popes throughout history could not learn this lesson, from the so-called, "first pontiff." Unlike Jesus, who gladly and properly received the worship that came to him from men, Peter, like the angel in Revelation, and like the Apostle Paul later on in Acts, refuses that which

belongs to God alone. Peter humbly and properly acknowledges here, that he is a mere messenger sent by God (who alone is to be worshiped). Peter's apostleship is a delegated privilege, given him by God, and to no merit of his own.

"And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, 'You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean' (vs. 27-28).

And here, we see that Peter has truly grasped the meaning of the visions that he has received. In coming now to Caesarea, and entering the home of Cornelius, a gentile, and inviting gentiles into the fellowship of Christ and His redemption, contrary to Jewish Law, Peter has just, "arisen, killed and eaten," that which was ceremonially unclean. Why? Because God has cleansed them! There is now, no longer a distinction to be made between Jew and gentile, but all are one man, one fellowship, one body, in Christ! [See Galatians 3:26-29]

"Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for [in obedience to the Holy Spirit, from verses 19-20]. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?" (vs. 29). Peter would not have budged, were it not for the Spirit compelling him to go. His Jewish heritage would have prevented him from going with gentiles. But God broke down that wall of a hindrance, and Peter obeyed. [Compare to the "stiff necked" nature of the religious leaders, who always resisted the Holy Spirit--Are we in the Word? And if we are, does our pride keep us from following the Spirit's lead, in changing how we live and act, and respond to life situations, as He contradicts us with God's truth?---see also Galatians 5:16-18, Ex: Anah- Angry because her sister stepped on her artwork...God's design for her response...etc]. For Peter, a foundation was here crumbling, and it was not an easy thing to grasp. But he had a willing and submissive heart, which gradually improved. Thank God, that He is patient with us, as He was with Peter!

And so, Peter inquires as to the reason Cornelius had sent for him. He wants to gauge where Cornelius is at, before speaking God's truth to him. Often times, it is indeed, wise to be a "good listener," before we speak, so that we can meet people right where they are, with God's life changing truth!

"So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore

to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God" (vs. 30-33).

And so, Cornelius here reiterates exactly what had happened to him, when he had received the vision, four days ago. Only here, we are given a little additional information, concerning the event, such as Cornelius's description of the angel ("a man" standing in "bright clothing"), and the fact that Cornelius was also "fasting," while he was praying. And clearly, the implication here then, is that Cornelius was seeking God with a sense of fervency, with a desire to receive a response from God, concerning an urgent matter. There was a longing on the part of Cornelius to fulfill a void of some sort, which had hindered him from laying hold of God, in the freest sense. There was a blockage that he longed to have removed. And in the angel's response, we find a God-given solution. God orders him to send for Peter, who will then tell him what he must do. And next week, Lord willing, we will find that Peter's message is merely a proclamation of the fullness of the Gospel of Christ, which Cornelius (and those with him), have yet to grasp. But when they do, as the Spirit utilizes the truth preached by Peter, to open their understanding, Cornelius's prayer will have been answered, and God will have accomplished His perfect design in Cornelius, Cornelius's family and friends, and Peter and company, who are to witness God's affirmation of His acceptance of the gentiles, into the fellowship of His people, in Christ! And so, the fasting, if nothing else, tells us that Cornelius was in fervent pursuit of God, concerning an urgent matter, which troubled his soul. This led Cornelius to send for Peter. And now Peter was here, ordained to speak the life-changing truth of Christ and His Gospel, to these ready and attentive gentiles!

Again, note that Peter is hearing all of this for the first time! God would have Peter learn from Cornelius, the specifics of the mission. Following, receiving the vision, Peter was simply told to go with the messengers, doubting nothing, because they were sent by God. Peter went, and after inquiring, was finally informed, regarding what he was actually called to do here. Peter evidenced God, at work in, and communicating with and through, the gentile, Cornelius, again further attesting to the fact that the Jew/Gentile barrier was completely broken down, in Christ!

Next time, Lord willing, we will consider Peter's response, as he gives, "The Message!"

AMEN!!!