

Verse 1,2—

Last time we left off with the account of Peter healing a certain man named Aeneas in Lydda, and raising a certain disciple named Tabitha from the dead in Joppa. Acts 9:43 says, Peter tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon the tanner. In chapter 10 we are introduced to **a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius**. This man was a Roman **centurion** who was captain over **band** of men (anywhere from 60 to 100). He was not a Jew, rather he was of the uncircumcised. But he was **devout, and one that feared God**, in that he was godly, and showed reverence to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (although we would have to imply this from the context). Yet, as a Roman soldier, he would have also sworn an oath to the emperor. Plainly stated, he was religious, but had no solid foundation for his beliefs (which may attest as to why, in verse 25, Cornelius bows down to worship Peter).¹ **Cornelius** was filled with good works in that he **gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always**—we might say he gave to the poor and prayed about everything.



Verses 3-6—

He saw clearly (evidently) in a vision about the ninth hour of the day (which was the *hour of prayer*, see Acts 3:1). Cornelius, a Gentile, while perhaps not a convert², was sympathetic to Judaism, and God took notice of his daily **memorial before God**, in the form of **thy prayers, and thine alms** (all works based). In the vision **an angel of God** appeared and instructed him to **send men to Joppa, and call for...Peter**. The Lord instructed Cornelius where to send the men, and where they would find Peter, **He lodgeth with one Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea side**. Peter would tell **thee what thou oughtest to do**. The word **afraid** in Greek is *emphobos*, which also translates as *tremble* and *affrighted*. Essentially, he was *terrified*. As we have seen over and over again, coming in contact with (the Lord, or) an angel in Scripture is nearly always a terrifying experience.

When it comes to visions, we must remember one of the rules of interpretation, *Do not make a doctrine out of an historic account*. Because Cornelius and Peter had visions is not a determining factor as to whether or not we will have visions. What is a vision? It is some sort of revelation from God. We have God's complete revelation through His word. Nonetheless, what is happening early on in the book of Acts is what was prophesied by the prophet Joel in Joel 2:28-32 (See Acts 2:16-17). We have to rightly divide.

Verse 7,8—

Cornelius called two of his household servants, indicating that although a Roman centurion (some speculate he was a retired centurion), he was a powerful man who commanded **servants, and a devout** (like himself) **soldier that waited on him**

¹ While Cornelius was not a Christian, and not part of the body of Christ as we are, we can't make a true comparison, but many in the church today struggle with not having a Biblical foundation because they do not study (they do not think and/or wrestle with the text). There is a lot of "vain jangling" going on in the church today (See 1 Timothy 1:6).

² There is no mention of Cornelius being circumcised which would have likely been a requirement for a proselyte.

continually. Rather than Cornelius going to Peter in Joppa, for an unknown reason, Peter is going to be sent to Cornelius (perhaps this encounter is going to be more for Peter's instruction than it will be for Cornelius?).

Verse 9—

The next day, **on the morrow**, the scene switches to **Peter** in Joppa who **went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour** (noon). The word **trance** in Greek is *ekstasis*, *ek* = out of, and *stasis* = *standing*. Literally rendered, he was *standing beside himself* (shocked, or astonished).

Verse 10,11—

Peter while in his *trance* he saw a **certain vessel** coming down from **heaven; a sheet** being let down by the **four corners**. Acts 11:5 confirms this was only a vision and a physical sheet was not let down. Why Luke mentions Peter's hunger is not clear, except to cement the time of day, around noon, when a meal would have been prepared, and perhaps to alert us to the fact that there would be food ready when the guests arrived, sent by Cornelius. Noon doesn't appear to be a set time of prayer, so Peter may have gone up on the roof to await *lunch* and while he was waiting and hungry, he prayed. Nonetheless, while he is hungry and the meal is being prepared, God offers him food from heaven which shocks (*ekstatis*) Peter.

Verses 12,14—

In the vision Peter saw **all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth...wild...creeping...and fowls of the air**. We have to conclude that all of these animals in the sheet were unclean to the Jew. Peter was instructed to kill and eat these animals, to which he, as a devout Jew, replied **Not so Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean**. Peter would have known the Law given to Moses in Leviticus 11 which prohibited eating any of the animals Peter is now being shown. This new revelation is so shocking to Peter, he doesn't believe it and is repulsed by the thought. We might think of certain foods eaten in some cultures that would be revolting to us.

[There is a common belief among Christians (and I held this belief once, before I started actually reading the Bible) that the Church as we know it today began on the Day of Pentecost. If that is true, we would have to say that the dispensation of grace began on the day of Pentecost too. However, the vision that Peter is seeing takes place about A.D. 41, which is eight years after Pentecost in Acts 2. If the dispensation of grace began in Acts 2, then we must come up with a reason for why Peter has been observing the Law for those eight years. Since Grace and the Law do not mix, how could Peter have been living under grace and still be observing the Law? I think the only conclusion that makes sense is that salvation by grace through faith has not been revealed yet, and God is only offering the Kingdom to the nation of Israel.]

Verses 15,16—

This is not the first time Peter gets corrected by God. It is not so much the uncleanness of the animal that needs to be accepted, but the eating the foods and eating with Gentiles or as a Jew might have referred to as *common*. God repeats the command to him three times. Does this repetition parallel the three times Peter denied the Lord (Luke 22:34)? In other words, is the Scripture underscoring Peter's resisting of God's purpose? It is most likely repeated for emphasis for Peter's benefit.

