

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 33

I. Exposition of Chapter Ten (Continued).

A. Verses 3-8 - God gives Cornelius a vision of an Angel.

1. Verse 3 – **“About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, ‘Cornelius!’”**

a. **“...the ninth hour of the day...”** – This was 3:00 in the afternoon. This was possibly mentioned to either emphasize that this happened during broad daylight and/or because it was one of the hours of prayer in Judaism. This suggests that Cornelius was praying when this event occurred and is confirmed in verse 30. (cf. 3:1).

b. **“...he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God...”** – Dr. Stanley Horton makes an interesting statement saying;

“Suddenly an angel appeared to him in a vision (‘something seen’), that is, in an actual appearance or revelation, openly in full daylight. This was no dream or dream type of vision: ‘He distinctly saw an angel.’ Notice verse 7: ‘When the angel...had gone.’ This confirms that the visitation was an actual occurrence, not merely a dream type of vision.”¹

2. Verse 4 – **“And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, ‘What is it, lord?’ So he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.’”**

a. The word **“observed”** means; **“to fix one’s eyes on some object continually and intensely—‘to look straight at, to stare at’”²** This seems to show the shock Cornelius experienced. The New Living Translation states: **“Cornelius stared at him in terror.”**

b. **“...What is it, lord?”** – Scholars debate whether the word **“lord”** here was expressed as a title like **“sir”** or **“mister”** or in referencing the angel as God. Either way, it was a term of respect and the angel quickly turned Cornelius’ attention to God.

c. **“Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.”** – It’s interesting to note here that even though Cornelius was not yet a believer in Christ, God had heard his prayers and his good works didn’t go unnoticed. F.F. Bruce writes:

“Cornelius’ acts of piety were not ignored in heaven: they ‘ascended as a memorial before God’ (10:4). He was not saved by his good works, but God showed his appreciation of Cornelius’ good works by putting him in the way of learning the way of salvation (see Acts 11:14)”³

d. It seems that Cornelius, similar to the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-39), was seeking and praying for God to show him more. Somehow he must have known that what he was doing was not enough. Note the following:

“The difference between Cornelius and many religious people today is this: he knew that his religious devotion was not sufficient to save him. Many religious people today are satisfied that their character and good works will get them to heaven, and they have no concept either of their own sin or of God’s grace. In his prayers, Cornelius was asking God to show him the way of salvation (Acts 11:13-14).”⁴

3. Verses 5-6 – **The Angel gives Cornelius specific Instructions.** – The essence of it was that Cornelius was to send men to Joppa, which again, was about 32 miles south of Caesarea. He was also given the name of the person they were to see – Simon Peter, who was staying at Simon the Tanners house, next to the sea. The angel then said; **“He will tell you what you must do.”** Most modern translations do not include this last phrase due to it not being found in some manuscripts. Nevertheless, it does describe the fact that Peter was going to tell Cornelius and his household how to be saved. Some may ask, **“Why didn’t the angel tell him how to be saved?”** The reason is, God has ordained Christians to preach the Gospel, not angels.

4. Verses 7-8 – Cornelius obeys the command immediately and chooses three men to go to Joppa after explaining everything to them.

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 197.

²Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 281.

³F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), Ac 10:1–8.

⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 445.

B. Verses 9-16 – Peter’s Vision.

“Peter also had to be prepared for this event since he had lived as an orthodox Jew all of his life (Acts 10:14). The Law of Moses was a wall between the Jews and the Gentiles, and this wall had been broken down at the cross (Eph. 2:14–18). The Gentiles were considered aliens and strangers as far as the Jewish covenants and promises were concerned (Eph. 2:11–13). But now, all of that would change, and God would declare that, as far as the Jew and the Gentile were concerned, ‘There is no difference’ either in condemnation (Rom. 3:22–23) or in salvation (Rom. 10:12–13).”⁵

1. Verse 9 – “The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.”

a. As God is orchestrating everything, He now prompts Peter to go to the housetop to pray. The sixth hour was about 12:00 noon. Horton adds:

“The next day ‘about noon’ the three men sent by Cornelius were nearing Joppa. God is always faithful to work on both ends of the line, and it was time to continue Peter’s preparation (which was begun by directing him to the Hellenized coast to stay with a tanner).”⁶

b. The *Fire Bible* makes some very important points about prayer:

“The Holy Spirit, the author of the Scriptures..., has revealed that the NT Christians were people intensely devoted to prayer. They understood that God’s kingdom (i.e., his authority, power, purposes and way of life) could not be demonstrated or experienced in its full power with only a few minutes of prayer each day.”⁷

2. Verse 10 – “Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.”

a. So as Peter was in prayer, waiting for his hosts to prepare a meal, he fell into a “trance.” This word means; “a vision accompanied by an ecstatic psychological state”⁸ Dr. Robert Utley asserts: “This is literally ‘out of himself’ or ‘beside himself,’ often used of astonishment (cf. Mark 5:42; 16:8; Luke 5:26; and several texts in LX9X). We get the English term ‘ecstasy’ from this Greek word. In this verse and 11:5 and 22:17 it means a semiconscious mental state which allows God to speak to the subconscious. This is a different word from the one used in verse 3 to describe Cornelius’ vision.”¹⁰

3. Verses 11-12 – So, in this trance, Peter sees the sky opening up and a “great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.” In this sheet were “...all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.” These different kinds of animals were of the “unclean” variety from a Jewish perspective (Leviticus 11).

4. Verses 13-16 – “And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat...What God has cleansed you must not call common.” – The message was not immediately clear to Peter but shortly thereafter, it became clear. “For three times. Peter remained unconvinced even by the prohibition of God. Here is a striking illustration of obstinacy on the part of one who acknowledges the voice of God to him when the command of the Lord crosses one’s preferences and prejudices. There are abundant examples today of precisely this thing. In a real sense Peter was maintaining a pose of piety beyond the will of the Lord.”¹¹

C. Verses 17-23 - Peter Called to go to Caesarea.

1. Verse 17 – “Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate.”

a. Even though Peter didn’t understand this vision at first, he knew there was a deeper meaning than just what kind of meat to eat. Horton states:

“God did not let him speculate for long, however. The men sent by Cornelius were already ‘at the gate,’ shouting to get attention and inquiring for Peter. So the Holy Spirit interrupted him ‘while [he] was still thinking [pondering, weighing this and that possibility] about the vision’ and told him three men were looking for him.”

⁵Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 445.

⁶Horton, 198.

⁷*Fire Bible: Student Edition*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int'l, 2007), 1534.

⁸Louw and Nida, 444.

⁹Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 135.

¹⁰A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ac 10:16