

## Great Stories of the Bible— 08/14/22

### Peter's Vision

**TEXT – Acts 10:1-48** *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him,*

**INTRO** – This chapter records the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles. Peter had used “the keys of the kingdom” to open the door of faith to the Jews, the Samaritans, and now to the Gentiles.

“the ninth hour” 3 o'clock, p.m. When God wants to do a work, He calls a man of God, empowers him with the Spirit of God, and enables him to preach the Word of God. God had a message to deliver to Cornelius.

### Who Was Cornelius?

Cornelius was: A leading soldier, a “centurion,” which means a leader of 100

- Well-respected by all the Jewish people (Acts 10:22)
- A leader for his friends and family (10:24)

### What Did Cornelius Do?

- He obeyed (sent three men to Joppa, Acts 10:8).
- He believed (he expected Peter by believing God, Acts 10:24).
- He opened his home (invited his relatives and close friends, 10:24)
- He listened to Peter give the gospel Acts 10:33).
- He responded to the gospel (baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit,

We see God's action.

- God gave Peter a dream.
- God gave Cornelius a vision.
- God sent Peter to Cornelius.
- God moved to win the hearts of Cornelius and his household.

This story reveals three significant messages:

1. God responds to us.
2. God strategically expands his kingdom.
3. God cares about the nations.

### I. God Responds to Us

What reasons did God have for choosing Cornelius to be among the first non-Jews to hear the gospel?

#### A. Cornelius's piety.

Cornelius didn't earn God's graces. Rather, he positioned himself to receive them. This principle connects to a biblical truth we all know of God:

**“He rewards those who earnestly seek him.”**

**Hebrews 11:6** *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

**Jeremiah 29:12-14** *Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.*

#### B. Cornelius's generous gifts to the poor.

**Acts 10:4-6** *And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.*

**He was devout, righteous, and God-fearing** (Acts 10:2, 22),

**He took action, and God responded to him.**

Cornelius didn't earn God's favor, but God responded to him.

Cornelius didn't earn the grace. It was a gift of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said the Father rewards us for our prayers and gifts to the poor

**Matthew 6:4** *That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

**Matthew 6:6** *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

The story of Cornelius reveals that God responds to us:

- He hears our prayers.
- He sees our actions.
- He rewards those who earnestly seek him.

God wants us to seek him, and he meets us in our seeking. He rewards us, by his grace, in correspondence with our heartfelt actions of piety.

Why does he care about our actions? **Our actions reveal our hearts.**

### II. God Uses Peter to Expand The Mission

The story of Cornelius reveals the strategy of God's mission to the Gentiles. “Joppa” carried with it the story of Jonah.

To where did Jonah run from God's commission to preach to the Gentiles? Joppa. He boarded a boat in Joppa to run away from God.

God chose Joppa, ironically, to signify to Jews: *God has always had a heart for the nations!*

This dramatic irony tells the Jewish readers of Acts that God was doing a fresh work with regard to his mission to the Gentiles.

#### **A. God's plan**

We don't understand the full reason God does anything—he's mysterious, omniscient, and sovereign—but God's actions give us insight into his heart. When I piece together the clues of this story, I can see God's strategy revealed in Acts 10–12.

Often we think about the strategy of Satan, as Paul talks about it in Ephesians 6: *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Soon after the Cornelius segment concludes, we witness the Gentile mission taking center stage. The primary theme of Acts 13–28 is God's mission "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)—to the Gentiles.

This sets the tone for the rest of Acts and the Gentile mission that Paul led.

#### **B. God Doesn't Favor One Nation Over Another**

We should care for every immigrant and nationality.

### **III. God Cares About all Nations**

"What is the gospel?" We find the answer to this question, in part, in Acts 10 by answering another question:

**Acts 10:36** *The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)*

The essence of the good news is Jesus' lordship as king over all.

Peter then expounded on:

- Jesus' power over the devil (v. 38)
- Jesus' death (v. 39)
- His resurrection (v. 40)

This aligns with God's heart to bringing the gospel to the nations.

#### **The Significance of Cornelius in the Bible**

The story of Cornelius in the Bible shows us how God responds to us, strategically expands his kingdom, and cares about bringing the gospel to the nations. Knowing these aspects of Cornelius's story changes our approach to life today.

- God responds to our actions, which gives us motivation to act.
- God uses his church to accomplish his mission on earth.
- And God still cares about bringing the gospel to the nations.

How can you join his mission today? Even if you're not sent, how can you join those who are sent through prayer or financial support?

- **Preparation of Peter's Heart God (Acts 10:1-22)**

#### **A. The Spirit prepares Cornelius (Act 10:1-8).**

Caesarea was a Roman city, the Roman capital of Palestine. Cornelius was a God-fearing Gentile who did not know the truth of the Gospel. He was devout, honest, generous, and sincere; but he was not a saved man.

#### **B. The Spirit prepares Peter (Acts 10:9-22).**

Peter saw all kinds of creatures, both clean and unclean and was commanded to kill and eat. His "Not so, Lord!" reminds us of [Mat 16:22](#), where he told Christ not to go to the cross. Later, he fully understood the meaning of the vision, that God had, through the cross, broken down all division between Jews and Gentiles.

- **Peter's Response (Acts 10:23-33)**

Peter did not go to the Gentiles because he was obeying the Great Commission (although he was), but because the Spirit had distinctly commanded him to go. In fact, when he arrived at Cornelius' house, he asked, "*For what reason have you sent for me?*"

- **Peter's Preaching (Acts 10:34-48)**

What Peter had said was simply that Christ came to save the nation of Israel, but now he realized that with God there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles.

**Acts 10:43** *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Peter commanded that they be baptized; and Peter and his friends stayed and ate with these new believers

**CONCL** – The church's commission today is found in **Mat 28:19-20.**

We are to make disciples of all nations

We must be busy sowing the seed of the Word, watering it with our prayers and tears and patiently waiting for the harvest.

**Psalms 126:5-6** *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*